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# An X-ray of Nigeria's Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum and the Implementation Strategies

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**Abstract.** The revision of Nigeria's 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) represents a strategic response to emerging national and global educational demands. This paper provides a critical examination of the revised 9-Year BEC with a focus on both its conceptual foundations and implementation strategies. Specifically, the study discusses the strategies adopted in reviewing the curriculum, the underlying philosophy, vision, and goals of the revised BEC, and its competency-based orientation aimed at equipping learners with relevant knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. The paper further highlights the major changes introduced in the revised curriculum and examines the fundamental principles guiding its design and delivery. Finally, it offers practical suggestions for effective implementation, emphasizing teacher capacity building, adequate funding, stakeholder collaboration, and effective monitoring. The paper concludes that while the revised 9-Year BEC is robust and forward-looking, its success largely depends on deliberate, coordinated, and sustained implementation efforts.

## 1. Introduction

Education is a major medium through which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to the other. Education has thus been regarded as the tool for achieving desirable change, and the curriculum as the instrument for the delivery of educational goals and objectives. Appropriate and functional curriculum remains fundamental for achieving meaningful and sustainable development. The 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum is a critical instrument through which the government provides broad based knowledge and skills that enable children to pursue various career paths and economic opportunities.

In 2004, Nigeria adopted a 9-Year Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. Between 2005 and 2007, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), pursuant to its mandate and approval of the NCE, developed, printed and distributed the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) to all public primary and Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) for use nationwide, to drive the UBE programme. The curriculum was designed, among other things, to engender the attainment of Nigeria's vision 20-20-20, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) targets, Education for All (EFA), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, feedback from the implementation of the 9-Year BEC, and the 2010 Presidential Summit on the State of Education in Nigeria, indicated the need for reduction in the number of subjects offered at the Basic Education level. Thus in 2011, NERDC was directed to revise and restructure the 9 – Year BEC into teachable, functional and practical subjects capable of eliminating redundancy and repetition without compromising the quality of education received by learners. In response to this directive, NERDC revised and restructured the 9-Year BEC to primarily ensure that learners at the basic education level acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, techniques and values for self-reliance and global competitiveness. The implementation of the revised curriculum commenced nationwide, in September, 2014 beginning from primary 1 and JSS 1 as approved by the NCE. The 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum,

therefore, remained in use for a decade. Since the commencement of implementation, a lot of progress and challenges have been recorded. Furthermore, times have changed, the world has moved on, new ideas have been created, knowledge has advanced, new world goals have been set, new skills have emerged, and new technologies have been developed. The issues stated above call for the urgent review of the curriculum to align with national goals, visions and aspirations. Furthermore, the global trend occasioned by rapid transformation in information technology makes it necessary to review and update the basic education curriculum (NERDC, 2024).

## 2. Strategies Adopted in the Review of 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum

Curriculum development/review is a complex process covering different stages and requiring the involvement of critical stakeholders engaged in the various activities and strategies. The process generally covers review of the aims, objectives, and competencies of the curriculum; revision of the subject objectives, subject competencies, and learning outcomes; selection of the appropriate contents for the revised competencies; and development of teacher's guides and other learning materials as needed. The following strategies were adopted in the review of the curriculum:

**Conduct of Needs Assessment** – This is a critical part of NERDC's curriculum review process. It was carried out before the commencement of the review of the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum. This is important for several preseasons:

First, the needs assessment helps to identify gaps and deficiencies in the existing curriculum. By examining learners' performance, teachers' experiences, and stakeholders' feedback, curriculum planners can determine what content is outdated, missing, or ineffective, thereby avoiding arbitrary or unnecessary changes.

Second, it ensures that the curriculum is aligned with learners' needs and abilities**.** Understanding students' academic levels, interests, learning challenges, and socio-cultural backgrounds enables the development/review of a curriculum that is learner-centred and inclusive.

Third, needs assessment promotes relevance to societal and labour market demands**.** By assessing national priorities, technological trends, and workforce requirements, the reviewed curriculum can equip learners with appropriate skills, values, and competencies for employability and national development.

Fourth, it enhances stakeholder participation and ownership. Involving teachers, parents, employers, policymakers, and communities during needs assessment builds consensus, reduces resistance to change, and increases commitment to successful implementation.

**Conduct of national stakeholders' dialogue and High-Level Policy Committee (HLPC) Meeting**: Since the curriculum is an outcome of the decisions of the people as to what knowledge, skills, values and competencies learners are be taught in schools, NERDC, under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education, on the 8th of August 2024 hosted the national stakeholders' dialogue and HLPC meeting. The Dialogue was attended by Members of the National Assembly, Honourable Commissioners of Education, SUBEB Chairmen, Religious Bodies, Professional Bodies and Associations in education sector, Civil Society Organisations, Development Partners, Teachers, Trade unions, Faith-Based Organisations, FME Parastatals, etc. The dialogue identified:

- critical emerging issues that the basic education curriculum should address;
- critical national issues that need to be addressed through the curriculum review;
- knowledge, skills and competencies that learners should acquire in order to make meaningful contribution to the development of Nigeria;
- the major gaps in the current basic education programme in Nigeria and as well strategies for mitigating those challenges.
- implementation strategies that will lead to effective curriculum delivery.

Furthermore, the High-Level Policy Committee Meeting under the leadership of the Honourable Ministers of Education approved a new basic curriculum structure to drive the basic education programme in Nigeria. The HLPC also approved the outcome/competency-based curriculum framework proposed by NERDC.

**Organisation of specialists/technical workshops for the development of contents of the curriculum**. These included the following:

- Content development workshop;
- Writing workshop;
- Critique workshop;
- Editorial workshop;
- Validation and finalization workshop.

The adopted strategies were based on NERDC's approved curriculum development and review process. These strategies particularly gave stakeholders the opportunity to make inputs into the curriculum review process and implementation strategy. This was a major strength.

### 3. Philosophy, Vision and Goals of the Revised 9-Year BEC

**The Philosophy:** The Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum is premised on social change, sustainable broad-based economic and national development through the acquisition of necessary skills, competencies and values.

**Goal:** To inculcate in learners critical and foundational skills and competences for citizenship, social orientation, national productivity and life-long learning. Specifically, the revised 9-year basic education curriculum prescriptions are directed towards the:
development of generic social skills as well as specialised cognitive, vocational and entrepreneurial skills;
inculcation of national values;
life-long learning; and
talent discovery and development

**The Vision:** To produce a child with functional, transferable, technological, vocational and entrepreneurial skills needed for the country's economic development and individual fulfilment in a competitive and globalised environment

**Generic Learning Outcome**

**Primary Level**: At the primary education level, the emphasis is on foundational knowledge, skill and competencies for:
reading, writing and language development;
the acquisition of subject matter knowledge and digital competencies;
technological, vocational and entrepreneurial trade practices;
the development of problem-solving and creativity capacities for continuing and lifelong
learning as well as
emotional intelligence, social values, interpersonal, leadership and soft skills for character development and citizenship.

**Junior Secondary Level:** Focus and outcomes at the Junior Secondary Schools are on:
the acquisition of subject matter knowledge and competencies for further education at the Senior Secondary School level;
technological, vocational and entrepreneurship practices and training
the inculcation of social values, soft skills for active and effective citizenship; as well as
talent discovery and development

### 4. The Competency-Based Nature of the Revised Curriculum

According to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (2025), the revised curriculum is a competency and outcome-based one which aims at developing in learners' essential skills for mastery and application. The competency framework provides clear expectations, dictates fundamental skills and promotes all-inclusive growth for learners. The curriculum is profoundly skill based, practical and result oriented.

Furthermore, the design and delivery process of the curriculum remains thematic, spiral, cyclical and concentric whereby learning contents are graduated, sequenced, and replicated across the class levels to align with learners' maturation and cognition. The curriculum approach focused on knowledge, skills and competencies. The overriding learning experiences, and achievement of the curriculum are geared towards what learners can do skillfully, thereby making it learner-centred, performative, and result- oriented.

The curriculum is designed in such a way that learners can engage with national and global issues through context-based lessons that promote critical thinking and social responsibility. Concepts and contents that are fundamental to the learners' overall development, growth and effective contribution in human development are integrated into the curriculum, ensuring they gain a broader understanding of their role as global citizens.
The curriculum incorporates major structural components like themes, learning outcomes, and focal competencies, including topics, performance objectives, content, learning activities, resources, and evaluation guides. Its distinct features of interdisciplinarity, compliance with ICT, and activity-driven learning significantly add to its international applicability and competitiveness. It also adopts a student-centred teaching style as suggested by the curriculum overall goals and progressively shits responsibility to the learners. Through this, learners not only acquire conceptual knowledge but also and importantly acquire the necessary skills for functional living in society. Thus, expectations on the learners go

beyond classroom experiences to their everyday lives (NERDC, 2025).

### 5. Sample Layout of the Revised Curriculum

| **Theme:** Grammatical Accuracy | | | | | | **JSS1** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Learning outcome:** Accurately apply grammatical rules | | | | | | |
| **Focal Competency:** This topic is aimed at equipping students with the knowledge of nouns, verbs and adjectives. | | | | | | |
| **TOPIC** | **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES** | **CONTENT-KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS** | **KEY COMPETENCIES AND VALUES** | **LEARNING ACTIVITIES** | **TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES** | **EVALUATION GUIDE** |
| Parts of speech: Nouns, Verbs and Adjectives | Students should be able to:<br>Explain the meaning and features of nouns, verbs and adjectives;<br>list the functions of nouns, verbs and adjectives<br>identify the nouns, verbs and adjectives in texts<br>use nouns, verbs and adjectives appropriately in sentences. | Noun: Meaning, features, types and uses<br>Verb: Meaning, features, types and uses<br>Adjectives: Meaning, features, types and uses.<br><br>**Skills**<br>Identification of nouns, verbs and adjectives in texts. | **Collaboration** as students assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member while working in groups to identify nouns, verbs and adjectives in given sentences. | Students are guided to:<br>Listen attentively to the teacher.<br>Work in groups to identify and give the functions of nouns, verbs and adjectives in given sentences.<br>Make sentences with nouns, verbs and adjectives. | Various passage<br>Course books<br>Substitution tables<br>Pictures/drawings | Students to:<br>identify correctly the features of nouns, verbs and adjectives;<br>write correctly the functions of nouns, verbs and adjectives in a given passage; and<br>generate appropriate sentences using nouns, verbs and adjectives. |

***Source:*** *New Revised English Studies Curriculum for JSS1 (NERDC, 2025).*

**Participation**

The BEC review process benefited from the participation of broad-spectrum stakeholders. They include education policy officials, administrators, curriculum experts, teacher educators, content/subject specialists, teachers, students, parents, community leaders, educational/professional associations and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

**Major Changes Introduced into the Curriculum**

Transition to competency/outcome-based curriculum subject restructure to achieve integration and bring about improved learning outcome (see attached for the new structure).
Skill oriented in terms of contents structuring and arrangement.
Fully learner-centred and hands-on focused.

**Changes at the Lower Basic Education Level (Primary 1-3)**

Replacement of Basic Science and Technology (which comprised Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology and Physical and Health Education) with Basic Science at the Lower Basic Education Level (Primary 1-3)
Removal of National Values Curriculum (which comprised Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education)
Introduction of Physical & Health Education as a stand-alone subject
Introduction of Nigerian History as a stand-alone subject.

**Changes at the Middle Basic Education Level (Primary 4-6)**

Replacement of Basic Science and Technology (which comprised Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology and Physical and Health Education) with Basic Science at the Lower Basic Education Level (Primary 4-6)
Removal of National Values Curriculum (which comprised Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education)
Introduction of Physical & Health Education as a stand-alone subject.
Introduction of Nigerian History as a standalone subject at the Lower Basic Education Level.
Introduction of Basic Digital Literacy
Introduction of Social and Citizenship Studies Curriculum

**Changes at the Upper Basic Education Level (JSS 1-3)**

Introduction of Digital Technology Curriculum
Replacement of Basic Science and Technology Curriculum (which comprised Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology and Physical and Health Education) with Intermediate Science Curriculum.
Introduction of Nigerian History as a standalone subject.
Introduction of trade subjects/entrepreneurship studies at the Junior Secondary Education level.
Removal of National Values Curriculum (which comprised Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education)
Removal of Pre-Vocational Studies (which comprised Home Economics and Agriculture)
Introduction of Social and Citizenship Studies Curriculum

## 6. Fundamental Principles of the Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum

The revised 9-Year BEC aims to prepare learners for the challenges and opportunities of the modern world. The curriculum therefore adopted a holistic approach to education that goes beyond the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge, focusing on the development of essential skills, attitudes, and values that will enable learners to thrive in a fast-evolving technology-driven society. The following were the fundamental principles that guided the design of the curriculum:

**Interdisciplinary learning:** The revised 9-Year BEC is designed to foster interdisciplinary connections and encourage learners to make connections between different subjects. This approach is to help learners to see the relevance and interconnection of various subjects.

**Critical thinking and problem-solving:** The curriculum prioritises the development of critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities. The curriculum is designed to create opportunities for learners to be challenged to analyse complex problems, think creatively, evaluate information, and propose innovative solutions.

**Information literacy and digital skills:** In this digital age, the revised 9-Year BEC aims to equip learners with information literacy skills, including the ability to evaluate, analyse, and synthesise information from various sources. It also focuses on developing the digital skills necessary for effective communication, collaboration, and responsible use of technology.

**Communication and collaboration:** The curriculum emphasises effective communication skills, both oral and written, and provide opportunities for collaborative work. Learners will develop the ability to express themselves clearly, listen actively, collaborate with diverse teams, and work collectively to achieve common goals.

**Global and cultural awareness:** This is a fundamental element of the revised curriculum which seeks to promote global and cultural awareness, encouraging learners to understand and appreciate diverse perspectives, values, and traditions. It also seeks to foster respect, empathy, and openmindedness, thereby preparing learners to thrive in a multicultural and interconnected
society like Nigeria.

**Creativity and innovation:** The curriculum seeks to nurture learners' creativity and innovation by providing a wide range of opportunities for artistic expression, original thinking, and problem-solving through unconventional approaches. It also encourages learners to explore their passions, take risks, and think outside the box to proffer solutions to various community and national challenges.

**Ethical and social responsibility:** The revised curriculum is designed to promote ethical awareness and social responsibility through teaching and learning of civic values. It also encourages learners to develop a strong sense of ethics, integrity and social justice to foster their understanding of local and global issues. These will inspire them to actively contribute to positive change in Nigeria and beyond.

**Adaptability and resilience:** The revised 9-year BEC seeks to prepare learners for a rapidly changing world by developing adaptability and resilience through teaching and learning of life skills. It also provides opportunities for learners to embrace challenges, learn from failures, develop a growth mindset, and cultivate lifelong learning habits.

**Entrepreneurship and financial literacy:** The revised curriculum has incorporated core elements of entrepreneurship education and financial literacy. This is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills to manage finances, understand economic principles, and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, enabling them to succeed in a dynamic and competitive economy.

**Environmental and sustainability education:** The curriculum has fully integrated environmental and sustainability education to promote ecological awareness and responsible stewardship. It also focuses on empowering learners to understand environmental issues, explore sustainable practices, and become active contributors to a more sustainable future.

**Inclusivity and gender sensitivity:** The revised 9-Year BEC incorporated principles and practices of inclusivity and gender responsiveness in terms of the contents, illustrations and delivery methods. Efforts were made to ensure deliberate inclusion of contents that will address gender biases, stigmatisation of persons with disability and other issues that affect our society.

## 7. The Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum Subjects List

One of the aims of the curriculum review is to ensure a reduction in the number of subjects learners at the basic education level take across the class levels. This has been achieved as learners will take a minimum of 9 and maximum of 10 subjects for primary 1-3. At Primary 4-6, learners will take minimum of 11 and maximum of 12 or 13 subjects. At JS 1-3, learners will now take a minimum of 12 subjects and maximum of 13 or 14 subjects. This is a big reduction from 19-20 subjects at the basic education level. The subject offerings were carefully selected taking cognizance of our peculiarities, national visions and aspirations. The subject listing across the levels are presented in the table below:

| **Primary 1- 3** | |
|---|---|
| **S/N** | **Subject** |
| 1. | English Studies |
| 2. | Mathematics |
| 3. | Nigerian Languages (One Nigerian Language) |
| 4. | Basic Science |
| 5. | Physical & Health Education |
| 6. | CRS (For Christian Pupils Only) and IS (For Muslim Pupils Only) |
| 7. | Nigerian History |
| 8. | Social and Citizenship Studies |
| 9. | Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA) |
| 10. | Arabic Language (Optional) |
| **Minimum of 9 and maximum of 10 subjects** | |

***Source:*** *NERDC, 2025*

| **Primary 4- 6** | |
|---|---|
| **S/N** | **Subject** |
| 1. | English Studies |
| 2. | Mathematics |
| 3. | Nigerian Languages (One Nigerian Language) |
| 4. | Basic Science and Technology |
| 5. | Physical & Health Education |
| 6. | Basic Digital Literacy |
| 7. | CRS (For Christian Pupils Only) and IS (For Muslim Pupils Only) |
| 8. | Nigerian History |
| 9. | Social and Citizenship Studies |
| 10. | Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA) |
| 11. | Pre-vocational studies |
| 12 | French (Optional) |
| 13. | Arabic Language (Optional) |
| **Minimum of 11 and maximum of 1 2 or 13 subjects** | |

***Source:*** *NERDC, 2025*

| **Junior Secondary School 1-3** | |
|---|---|
| **S/N** | **Subject** |
| 1. | English Studies |
| 2. | Mathematics |
| 3. | Nigerian Languages (One Nigerian Language) |
| 4. | Intermediate Science |
| 5. | Physical & Health Education |
| 6. | Digital Technology |
| 7. | Christian Religious Studies (CRS) (For Christian Students Only) |
| 8. | Islamic Studies (IS) (For Muslim Students Only) |
| 9. | Nigerian History |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10. | Social and Citizenship Studies |
| 11. | Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA) |
| 12. | Trade Subjects (Students to Choose One Trade Subject)<br>Solar Photovoltaic installation and maintenance<br>Fashion design and garment making<br>Livestock farming<br>Beauty and cosmetology<br>Computer hardware and GSM repairs<br>Horticulture and crop production |
| 12 | Business Studies |
| 13. | French (Optional) |
| 14. | Arabic Language (Optional) |
| **Note**: **Minimum of 12 subjects; Maximum of 13 or 14 subjects** | |

***Source:*** *NERDC, 2025*

## 8. Implementation of the Curriculum in Phases

The revised curriculum shall be introduced in phases starting from Primary 1, Primary 4 and JSS 1 and progressively moves to the next class levels on a yearly basis. Thus, within 3 years the revised curriculum would have been fully introduced at all class levels. The above strategy will:

- allow the acquisition of relevant prior knowledge and skills base for effective teaching and learning of curriculum content in the higher classes (P2 – P3, P5-P6, and JS 2 - JS 3);
- ensure that no schools will introduce the whole curriculum at all levels at the same time.
- give governments (Federal, State and Local), school owners, etc.) ample time for teacher preparation, provision of instructional resources for the introduction of the curriculum at the next level;
- engender efficient mobilisation and utilisation of resources for introduction at each level; as well as
- ensure regular and effective curriculum improvement based on emerging issues and advancement in knowledge.

### 8.1 Curriculum availability and accessibility

To ensure availability and accessibility of the revised curriculum, NERDC has uploaded it in its website (www.nerdc.gov.ng). Hard copies, according to the institution, will also be produced to ensure that the curriculum accessible to schools in the remote and hard-to-reach localities where internet may not be readily available.

### 8.2 Implementation of Trade subjects

One of the new things about the basic education curriculum is the introduction of trade subjects. There are six trade subjects and schools are to select a minimum of 1 and maximum of 3. The criteria for selection are availability of basic resources required for the teaching and learning of the trade(s), availability of qualified teachers for the trade(s) and local needs and economic advantages of a trade. Schools are to give due diligence to these issues before making a final selection of the trade to offer.

## 9. Conclusion

The review process of the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum substantially complied with set standards and guidelines. The process involved needs assessment, national dialogue, High Level Policy Committee (HLPC) meeting, content planning and content selection, review/design, critique and editorial, approval, production/dissemination, teacher capacity building as well as monitoring, mentoring and feedback. The curriculum prioritised the integration of 21st century skills across subjects, functional literacy, values, citizenship education, peace education as well as work-relevant competencies and skills that conform to global educational agenda and our unique social context.

The revised curriculum which is also based on a new curriculum framework (format) that is in line with global best practices comprising elements reflecting the competency and outcome-based approach and/or spiral model is one of the best Nigeria has ever had.

## 10. Suggestions for Effective Implementation

A critical aspect of any curriculum reform initiative is the implementation. Efforts made in curriculum innovation can be of no impact if implementation is not thorough. Curriculum implementation comes with a wide range of challenges which must be properly managed to ensure effectiveness and achievement of

the expected impact. Some of the common challenges include poor funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor teacher motivation and welfare, inadequate instructional materials and facilities, excessively large class sizes, weak teacher preparation and professional development as well as poor supervision and monitoring (Ekwukoma, Adigun & Uwadileke, 2015). To address these challenges, the following are suggested:

**Increased and Sustained Funding for Education:** Insufficient finance has been widely documented as a major challenge to implementation of curriculum in Nigerian schools (Ogar & Aniefiok, 2012). Therefore, for the effective implementation of the Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), adequate funding of basic education is a necessity. Financial resources support the provision of instructional materials, teacher training, and infrastructure. Government and stakeholders should ensure consistent and increased budget allocations to basic education to bridge resource gaps that hinder effective curriculum delivery.

**Recruitment of Qualified Teachers:** Teacher competency is central to curriculum implementation. Recruitment of professionally trained and subject-specialist teachers, coupled with retention strategies, by government at all levels will help ensure that the Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum is delivered as intended.

**Continuous Professional Development of Teachers:** In addition to the recruitment of qualified teachers, all teachers need regular in-service training, capacity-building workshops, seminars, and retraining programmes to update instructional skills and knowledge in order to effectively implement the revised curriculum.

**Improved Infrastructure and Instructional Resources:** Poor infrastructure and lack of teaching materials are frequently cited barriers to effective curriculum implementation in Nigeria. (Leadership, 2024). Therefore, the provision of adequate infrastructure and teaching materials is essential for the effective implementation of the revised curriculum. The government must invest in modern classrooms, laboratories, libraries, ICT tools, and quality textbooks.

**Strengthening of Supervision and Monitoring Mechanisms:** Robust supervision ensures fidelity in curriculum implementation. Thus, regular school inspections, classroom observations, and feedback systems will help identify implementation bottlenecks and ensure quality control in the implementation of the revised curriculum. Without effective monitoring of the curriculum, deviations from its standards and principles may go on unnoticed and unaddressed.

**Collaboration among Stakeholders:** Curriculum implementation is more effective when government, school administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders, and development partners work collaboratively. Shared responsibility ensures resources and support systems are in place for successful execution.

**Integration of Technology and Digital Tools:** There is the need for the integration of technology and digital tools in the implementation of the revised curriculum. Curriculum delivery increasingly benefits from ICT integration, especially in the digital age. Providing access to learning technologies, training teachers in digital pedagogies, and expanding internet connectivity will enhance engagement and learning outcomes on the curriculum.

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