

CONTENT IMPLEMENTATION IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the importance of content implementation in junior secondary school Social Studies. The investigation was guided by four main concepts showing the contents implementation. This involves what the teacher and students should pay attention to during teaching and learning situation. It entails works to be covered at a given period as scheduled in school time-time; it takes a process approach and feeling used in teaching a specified subject-matter and how it leads to change in behavior in the learner. Using this conceptual model, the paper discusses some necessary guides to content implementation. The paper holds the view that emphasis in instructional model is shifting to the concept of content implementation, and this has become the goal of teacher education in recent times around the world. Based on this, students should be encouraged to learn relevant aspect of school curriculum. Acquired knowledge will be put back to develop society.

Curriculum designers should be interested in contents implementation of school subject-matter in whatever discipline, including Social Studies Education. The particular nature of Social Studies Education seems to attract a special attention because, at whatever level it is taught, the problem of content implementation can become an issue. This is because, the themes and concepts seems complex that the process of implementation has also proven complex. A metric in the assessment of the extent to which content implementation is being measured can be seen in students academic performance in Social Studies. Students' performance in Social Studies external examination has being witnessing tremendous decline. The trend has constituted major area of concern among researchers in the discipline.

Buttressing this assertion, Oganwu (2004) attempted a survey of the trends in performance in Social Studies in Warri South Local government. Her findings affirmed a decline. Similarly, Umudi (2011) undertook a survey of Social Studies students' performance in Ethiopie East Local Government Area with the view to substantiating the fallen trend. Results in his study also pointed out that performance in Social Studies when compared with four other core subjects at the Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) revealed a low performance. This observation has prompted inquiry among researchers in Social Studies. Often, majority of these scholars such as Osakwe and Itedjere (2005), Ajaja (2007) have blamed the defect on methodology and instructional materials. On her part, Osakwe (2006) blame it on teaching effectiveness of the subject while she argued that a combination of factors contributes to teaching ineffectiveness. Emphasis seems not to be laid on content implementation procedure in the teaching of Social Studies contents in junior secondary schools.

Content implementation is what makes a designed curriculum meaningful. It is at the implementation stage that the objective, whether general or specific of a curriculum is being achieved. It thus means, more attention should be given to implementation process among teachers of Social Studies at the junior secondary school level of education. The term content implementation is a language in curriculum theory. According to Kapoma and Namusokwe (2011), curriculum content should meet social relevance. That is, the child is the focus for which a curriculum was in the first place designed to guide, train and equips. This is with the intention to present the child to society as a prepared and well informed citizen who will contribute meaningfully to the advancement of society. Therefore, content presentation should find adequate and relevant sequence and procedure to be able to meet this targeted aims.

Curriculum Content Implementation Procedures

The uniqueness of Social Studies Education demands an appropriate presentation procedure. According to Child (1997) content is defined as what the teacher and the students pay attention to

when they are teaching and learning. It is a list of subjects, topics, themes, concepts or works to be covered. It is the subject matter, process, approaches and feelings used in teaching as the curriculum is being implemented. Urevbu (1994) says curriculum content refers to what is taught in schools. It is the subject matter or topics consisting facts, concepts, ideas, knowledge within a particular subject and how they will bring about change in the individual and to the society.

The notation from Child and Urevbu provide a background for what characterizes content implementation of Social Studies curriculum. They observe in the following:

1. Content implementation involves what the teacher and students should pay attention to during teaching and learning situation;
2. It entails works to be covered at a given period as scheduled in school time-table;
3. It takes a process, approaches and feelings used in teaching a specified subject matter;
4. It leads to change in behavior in the learners;

These elements are essential to the understanding of curriculum content implementations.

Guide to Content Implementation

Drawing from the connotation given in the studies of Child and Urevbu, a guide to curriculum content implementation would consist of the following:

Instructional Objectives

Content implementation is what the teacher and students should pay attention to during teaching and learning. Thus, attention of both the teacher and student should be focused on the instructional objectives to be achieved at the end of each lesson. From the beginning of a given lesson, instructional objectives should direct the teaching and student activities in the class. By definition, instructional objective implies the intended educational goal of a lesson or what a teacher intends to achieve during a lesson (Web definition, 2012). The curriculum provides a teacher those intentions he wants a student to learn. His responsibility is how to implement the contents of his lesson to be able to achieve this goal. Learning outcomes among students' are determined by the extent to which change in behavior in a child has taken place that could be relatively permanent. It is also assessed by the level of performance in the domain of knowledge. That is, a child should be taught in a given lesson in such a way that he can perform some responsibilities on his own. Functions that demand the use of the head, hand and heart which corresponds with cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of knowledge are to be examined at the end of each lesson. This is to demonstrate the relevance of the subject-matter that the child is exposed to for which he came to acquire knowledge in order to obtain the relevant skills from the body of knowledge learnt for a better future of the child in the larger society.

Therefore, curriculum contents implementation makes a lesson taught to student by a teacher to be relevant. This is because; the value of what is taught to children becomes meaningful when it enables them to influence their environment positively. For instance, a lesson on family size and composition mix will provide the student the knowledge of the selection of an ideal and desired family size. It will enable the child to be able to demonstrate the tact needed to guide against unwarranted family size, with its attended consequences. Also, the child could be influenced in a lesson to make a sound judgment about the type of family and size to have when he/she is grown-up. This shows extend the curricular would be implemented by a given teacher.

However, the knowledge base of a teacher to be able to write instructional goals and objectives also determine the extent his intents can be achieved for his students. Writing instructional objectives is a skill in teacher education. Teachers are specially trained to write lesson notes and lesson plans for their subjects' areas. Included in these schemes is the setting of instructional objectives for each topic of a lesson to be taught according to time-table periods schedule of about forty-five minutes at the secondary school level.

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The importance of this is that, instructional objectives enable the teacher to understand the amount of work to be done at a given time with a topic or subject-matter. Hence, curriculum content implementation entails works to be covered in a given period. The knowledge of what is to be covered each time a class holds is an important teacher characteristic (Inomiesa and Osakwe, 1998).

Winegarden (2012) noted that writing instructional objectives for many teachers seems to be a source of worry in the teaching-learning situation. He agreed that an objective is a description of a performance the teacher wants learners to exhibit before he considers them competent. An objective describes an intended result of instruction rather than the process of instruction itself. Thus, writing an instructional objective, Winegarden (2012) suggested that the teacher should begin with the end in mind. This implies that learning outcome and course relevance should constitute consideration by the teacher who implements the curriculum contents in classroom situation. This also presupposes why written objectives are important in content implementation. First, they provide some basis and guidance for the selection of instructional content and procedures. Secondly, they help in evaluating the success of the instruction. Thirdly, they help the student organize his/her efforts to accomplish the intent of the instruction.

Writing a Good Objective

Most teachers often ask: How does one write a good objective? There are standard protocol for writing curriculum content instructional objectives. Based on this fact, it seems probable that objectives are not difficult to write. There are guidelines to follow in the art. Instructional objectives are written for the student and they state what the student is expected to do following instruction. They are specific, observable and measurable learning outcomes. They are written for individual units of study. The benefits are that incorporating objectives within our coursework, we are able to emphasize major points and reduce irrelevant materials. In addition, objectives simplify note taking and use the student to emphasize major points. It helps student in organizing and studying content material. They guide the student to what is expected from them and help them to study important information. It helps students in studying more efficiently. Finally, when examination items are centered on objectives, students can use the objectives to anticipate good responses.

Components of a Written Objective

There are four components of an objective;

1. The action verb
2. Conditions
3. Standard
4. The intended audience- the students.

The action verb is the most important element of an objective and can never be omitted. The action verb states precisely what the student will do following instruction. Verbs are categorized by domains of learning and various hierarchies. Teachers should master the utilization of verbal phrase in the process of stating instructional objectives.

Demonstrating Knowledge of Subject Matter Content and Student Development Teaching Standards implies understanding and organizing subject matter content and student development. As teachers develop, they need to identify and understand the key concept and underlying themes and relationships in the subject areas to be taught. They should ensure that their knowledge of the subject matter incorporates different perspectives. Teachers ought to continue to keep their subject matter knowledge current and ensure that their subject matter knowledge is sufficient to support students learning and be able to build their students' cognitive and linguistic development. Building understanding of the students' social, emotional and physical development is a function of effective curriculum content implementation.

Effective Content Implementation

Content effectiveness could be achieved by a teacher when he employs key concepts by using variety of materials and resources aligned with content standards and representing diverse points of view. Maintaining one deep understands of subject matter is by remaining current with researches and trends through attending conferences, participating in study groups, reading professional journals and so on

This is also by building an understanding of the physical, emotional, social, cognitive and linguistic needs of one's students in order to plan activities that are developmentally appropriate. Effective content implementation is often met with some problems by teachers. This is because most teachers present contents without an understanding of how the subject is interrelated with other disciplines. And also failing to determine the most important understanding, skipping important contents or by placing heavy emphasis on less important contents. They also teach from only one perspective when multiple perspectives exist. Teacher experiencing difficulty and expectation of meeting the needs of learners or other students with special needs and not knowing where or how to provide support and learning needs. Also, by failing to update course contents with new information or development within the discipline. For instance, new scientific theories and evolving philosophies. These difficulties can be addressed with a well thought out planning before initiating instruction.

Planning Instruction, Designing Learning Experiences for Content Implementation

The presentation in class today is concerned with the topic of hidden curriculum in particular and the implementation of contents as oppose to process. Process refers to the learning that takes place from the act of being at school. This would include rules, procedures, policies and values that school instill in students. On the other hand, content refers to those unintentional messages that are shown through content materials used in the classroom. A teacher could achieve this through wide reading and planning.

Hidden curriculum shows everywhere even when we try not to be aware of it. We cannot control the textbook we are given but we can teach our students to recognize biases and encourage them to create opinions based on the information we give them. This seems to be an entirely different form of hidden curriculum that is taken care of by adequate planning and preparation on the part of the teacher before handling any lesson in the classroom situation. A well planned instruction will include a designed learning experience that will encourage class activities and students participation. That is why content implementation is seriously needed in Social Studies classes at the secondary school level.

Conclusion

Emphasis in instructional model is shifting to the concept of content implementation. It is at the implementation of content of a subject matter that relevance of the curricula will find meaning. Because the child for whom the curriculum is fashioned is a product of societal change. Therefore, the extent to which the child is equipped will determine the influence he brings in society that is ever changing.

The goal of teacher education around the world is to better citizens for the advancement of society. The building blocks of any society is the human capital. The school has the responsibility to use curricula content to adequately produce these individuals who come to the society with various innovative skills to meaningfully contribute to the good of society technologically, spiritually, socially, economically, politically, educationally and so on.

Recommendations

Arising from the conclusion reached, the paper posits the following recommendations:

1. That teachers of Social Studies at the secondary school should update their skill in curriculum implementation. This is with emphasis on content implementation in classroom interaction.

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2. Head of school subjects, particularly, Social Studies should insist on evaluating teachers lesson notes. This is to ensure compliance with emphasis on contents' implementation through the strategy of instructional objectives.
3. Students should be encouraged to learn relevant aspects of school curriculum that addresses their needs. This is because acquired knowledge will in turn be put back to develop the society.
4. Teachers should be trained and retrained in Social Studies content implementation. This will enable them become vast in knowledge acquisition in the subject area.
5. Teacher should periodically attend seminars, workshops and conferences to enable them update their knowledge in content implementation in Social Studies. These is capable of increasing their expertise, effectiveness and efficiency in classroom interactions between students and subject matter.

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