

Unit 5: Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The school curriculum does not only include the planned academic programme but also co-curricular activities and other events through which people learn from the nature and the ethos of a school. The main task of school inspectors is to assist and monitor the effective delivery of an appropriate curriculum using all the resources - human, material and financial which are readily available. This involves assisting school headteachers to mobilise all possible resources including those from the Ministry of Education, the community and other organisations, and then ensuring their full and effective use.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, the inspector will be able to:

- define the term curriculum
- explain the stages in curriculum development and the implementation process
- explain the management of the curriculum
- explain the concept “hidden curriculum”
- describe curriculum change and innovation
- list ways of evaluating a curriculum.

DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM

The term ‘curriculum’ refers to that set of decisions about what is taught and how it is taught, that determines the general framework within which lessons are planned and learning takes place, according to Farrant J.S. 1991, p.12.

Activity 5a

- (a) Define in your own words the term ‘curriculum’.
- (b) List the elements that constitute a good curriculum.

COMMENT

The term curriculum has been defined “as all experiences to educate the learner.” It also involves helping teachers in their daily tasks by providing the best information on subject matter, taking into account the interests of pupils and contemporary social needs. The curriculum therefore, refers to a course of subjects and co-curricular activities that must be covered by learners. It should also aim at developing pupils mentally, physically and morally, and at embracing the hidden curriculum which includes behaviour patterns, attitudes of the learners, staff and the general tone and ethos of the school.

A curriculum should be dynamic and evolving all the time. It is the responsibility of the inspectors of schools to assist school headteachers to manage this process. Some of the basic principles which should be considered when designing the curriculum are:

- satisfying the philosophy and educational policies of the school and the nation
- developing from grassroots level and including parental and community contributions.

- giving room for the needs of handicapped learners e.g. visually handicapped (impaired)
- considering the culture, customs and traditions of both country and region
- providing practical educational experiences for the pupils.

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

The hidden curriculum refers to that part of the school curriculum which is not formal and which affects learner attitudes, maturity, growth and social behaviour.

Activity 5b

In which ways can the hidden curriculum influence learning and teaching in the school? How can you inspect the hidden curriculum?

COMMENT

Here are some aspects which can be inspected in the hidden curriculum:

- interest of pupils
- ambitions
- gender balance
- gender sensitivity
- environmental influence
- cultural norms and biases
- socio-economic background of the pupils
- informal learning experiences.

NB: It is important that inspectors do understand the underlying social, cultural and traditional norms in which they operate.

STAGES OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum development is a process that incorporates a number of stages. It is therefore important for inspectors to make sure that they are familiar with these stages in order to ensure that proper guidance and assistance is given to schools. The curriculum development process includes the following stages:

- Curriculum Planning
 - conducting a needs analysis
 - determining target groups
 - determining a curriculum design
 - determining a curriculum format
 - writing an action plan
 - determining who to involve
- Curriculum Diagnosis (examination of the design)
 - relating needs to subject areas
 - generating goals and objectives
- Curriculum Development (content and topic selection)
 - determining criteria for selection of subject content and learning experiences (topic)

- selection of content
 - organisation of content
 - relating topics to the educational environment.
- e.g.-
- selecting learning experiences (topics)
 - organising learning experiences (topics)
 - selecting instructional strategies (methods)
 - selecting assessment methods - evaluation

(d) Curriculum Implementation

- pilot testing
- planning evaluation and selection of data
- analysis of data
- final implementation

(e) Curriculum Evaluation

- formative evaluation
- summative evaluation

(f) Curriculum Maintenance

- managing the curriculum system (monitoring)
- examining the support system

Activity 5c

In your area of inspection, at which of the stages do schools need more assistance, and how would you give it?

COMMENT

It is very important for inspectors of schools to be fully informed of the different stages of curriculum development.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

COMMENT

Problem areas that may be encountered are:

- difficulty in finding appropriate personnel
- some topics may overlap
- lack of financial resources for developing the curriculum
- untrained teachers may have a problem in implementing the curriculum
- lack of assessment and evaluation skills by inspectors and teachers
- inadequate manpower to facilitate the monitoring process.

Suggested solutions may include:

- use of consultants
- research on subject areas and topics may have to be conducted
- soliciting funds from donor agencies
- use of qualified teachers and in-servicing of teachers
- provision of training in assessment and evaluation for teachers and inspectors
- sound deployment of manpower to assist in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum.

Activity 5d

Suggest other problems which may be encountered, as well as solutions.

COMMENT

Problems and solutions to curriculum development differ from country to country in the SADC region due to varying situations and circumstances.

Some constraints related to the curriculum development process are that:

- it is not a task with which every inspector is familiar
- it is unlikely that the curriculum can take into account every local tradition
- there are problems in selecting a language of instruction which suits the needs of every learner
- some teachers believe that they have to follow the official curriculum exactly, and these are the teachers that need assistance to adopt and adapt to their immediate environment.

MANAGEMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

Curriculum management refers to aspects of implementation and the monitoring of the curriculum. Good curriculum management requires that resources are used in the most efficient way possible, and that high quality outcomes are maintained. In an area of inspection and at school level, this means that headteachers must be able to exercise efficient management of the resources at their disposal. This will enable them to ensure that learning proceeds efficiently and that desired outputs are maintained. The management of the curriculum should therefore include the following:

- efficient and effective teaching and learning
- provision and delivery of appropriate curriculum activities
- improvement of skills in different aspects of the curriculum e.g. deployment of teachers, class allocation, allocation of material
- provision of textbooks, library, media resources and their control
- demonstration of improved stock keeping and control
- ensuring a well designed and operational time-table
- coverage of subject content
- monitoring

Activity 5e

Define ways by which you as an inspector can assist the headteacher in curriculum management.

COMMENT

The inspector as a manager must be able to spot wherever the curriculum is not working efficiently or is in danger of breaking down. Inspectors must know how to correct whatever is going wrong. With experience, inspectors will learn to anticipate trouble and take appropriate steps to prevent it from breaking down. Curriculum management calls upon a number of skills, some of them are technical, others are related to personal relations. Inspectors need to know how and when to apply them.

CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Curriculum evaluation is generally referred to as the process by which the programme is judged in relation to its stated objectives.

Curriculum evaluation should include:

- judgement of teaching and learning standards
- instruments by which the effects of the curriculum can be tested
- the degree to which its objectives can be achieved
- testing and assessment
- formative evaluation which is done as one goes along and assists the pupils in knowing what they have achieved
- summative evaluation which is made at a certain point - usually at the end of a course, or a unit, or a module and is often used for the purpose of reporting
- diagnostic evaluation which is made primarily to inform the teacher's planning for the next stage of learning. It is usually done at the start of a new course, unit or module but can be beneficial to individual pupils during a course of study.

Activity 5f

- a) Working on the definition of the concept evaluation, state how evaluation influences change in learning and teaching.
- b) Why is it important for you as an inspector to prepare a formative and summative evaluation of the curriculum?

COMMENT

The term curriculum evaluation is sometimes used by educationalists to cover the whole field of educational assessment including the performance of learners, but most apply it only to such ideas as the curriculum and system of teaching and their effect on target groups.

When evaluation is applied in development, it is called formative and when it is applied to a programme that has been fully implemented it is called summative. Effective curriculum evaluation depends on clearly stated objectives and efficient instruments for measuring the extent to which curriculum change has taken place in the context of these objectives.

CURRICULUM CHANGE AND INNOVATION

After curriculum evaluation, it is often necessary to undertake further curriculum change and innovation.

Definition: Curriculum change and innovation refers to efforts made by education authorities to change and adapt their aims and objectives of teaching and learning according to the values, cultures, philosophies as well as the resources at their disposal. This is one way to make education more responsive and relevant to the needs of the community.

Reasons for Curriculum Change and Innovation

(a) More relevant education

- Alternative schools
 - private schools
 - special schools

- Integrated learning
- Life-long education
- Resource based learning
- Differentiated education

(b) Improvement of teaching and learning

- Competence based education
- Continuous assessment
- Learner centred education
- Remedial teaching
- Peer teaching
- Programmed learning
- Resource centres
- Study centres
- Teacher centres
- Team teaching
- Project approach
- Language experience approach

(c) Community demands for value for money in education

- Accountability/responsibility
- Competence
- Correspondence education
- Educational broadcasting
- Extended school day and year
- Shift system

Problems of Curriculum Change and Innovation

- Participation by all involved
- Official support
- Adequate objectives
- Obstacles to innovation
 - e.g.- negative attitudes towards change
 - lack of resources i.e. human, material, financial
 - fear of the unknown

Activity 5g

- In your own words, define the concept “curriculum change and innovation”.
- Give reasons for curriculum change and innovation.
- What problems have you encountered in curriculum change and innovation?

COMMENT

Inspectors should be aware that change can be very threatening and people may be afraid of being unable to cope. There may be, therefore, a strong feeling of rejection and resistance to it.

SUMMARY

This unit has outlined the stages through which the curriculum can be developed. It also showed the problems and solutions in curriculum development and implementation. It considered the hidden curriculum, curriculum change and innovation as well as curriculum evaluation. Inspectors have the educational task of ensuring the full implementation of a balanced curriculum in their schools.

REFLECTION

Having covered this unit, would you be able to describe and explain principles of curriculum development, management and evaluation?

REFERENCES

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