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THE PITFALLS AND CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NZIRAMASANGA COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON SECONDARY SCHOOL ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Art and Design Education is hampered by; lack of funding, infrastructure development Zimbabwean education system has gone through a number of reforms since independence in 1980. These changes were prompted by serious economic challenges. Art and Design was not spared , it is hampered by ; lack of funding , infrastructure development and teacher competence . These are an impediment to any worthwhile curriculum implementation. As such the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 Report recommended that practical and technical subjects should be vacationalised. The curriculum for the subjects should be vocational – technical and should be designed by all stakeholders including commerce and industry. The commission also recommended that there should be an introduction of visual and performance art that begins at first grade (Nziramasanga, 1999). The Art curriculum should prepare children for vocational professions or viable occupations in the rich visual art industry. This qualitative study employed questionnaires, interviews and document analysis as means to collect data. The study established that the implementation of the Nziramasanga Commission recommendation on secondary Art and Design Education is impeded by lack of infrastructure, up to date instructional resources and teacher incompetence. The study found out that most Art teachers cannot operate computers and other up to date equipment. There is no close linkage between the education system and industry. The study recommended an encouragement of strong collaborative curriculum development process between education and industry. Teachers should go for in-service training and workshops to enhance their competencies in the use of up to date equipment. The government should involve other stakeholders in the funding of education and development of infrastructure of schools.

KEYWORDS: Pitfalls, Challenges Implementation, Curriculum

Background to the Study

There are a lot of developments that have taken place in education and training in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. At different phases, significant policy measures were taken. These policies reflected both the socio-political and socio-economic ideologies of the period. The colonial era was characterized by policies of racial discrimination in education and society. There was also great inequality in the provision of education and training. At independence education was democratitised . Democratisation policies ushered in expensive and extensive provision. The colonial dual education system was abolished. Great expansion of access and provision of education was the inevitable. There was a great increment in enrolment at both primary and secondary level. (Education Secretary, 1980-1989). The new policy spelt out three aims; namely initiative, self – reliance and innovation. (Zvobgo ,1986). The expansion however, put pressure on human, financial teaching and learning resources. As a result of this great expansion the majority of the pupils who completed Ordinary level (O level) could not be absorbed into either senior high school, polytechnics or the labour market. The main reason for the lack of absorption was that most of the pupils did not have relevant practical training skills since the curriculum was mainly academic and theoretical. The government in bid to redress the situation in 1985 issued a memorandum of the Working Party of the Cabinet (September 1985). The reform proposed six significant reforms among these was modification of form one and form two curriculum into offering general education with a compulsory technical component requiring each learner to do at least two technical subjects related to economic development needs of the nation. The Nziramasanga report (1999) recommended that there be a genuine paradigm shift from education that is ‘examination driven’ to one that emphasizes experiential learning and develop desired traits and competencies in line with national development goals. The Commission found out that the country was still giving an old British type education. Captains of Commerce and industry pointed out that there was a missing link between the school system and the employment sector resulting in a mismatch between employment resources and market needs. The commission recommended that all vocational technical education be offered through curriculum designed by stakeholders that include commerce and industry and relevant professional bodies. The commission also found out that Zimbabwean schools limited their Art curriculum to Fine Art and Music. It excludes the most dynamic visual art which is vital for equipping children with skills for effective and viable engagement and participation in cultural industries. This art education does not recognize the enormous indigenous creative

heritage whose skills are found in the elderly people in the in the community. With the fine Art orientation the current education does no prepare Zimbabwean children for vocations professions or viable occupations in the rich visual art industry.(Nziramasanga,1999).

The Nziramasanga commission's findings indicate that 'the potential of art in developing all our lives is not reorganized and its ability as an income generating profession is minimized. Art appreciation and history are not included in the secondary Art curriculum." (Nziramasanga 1999, 359) However, this issue of art history and art appreciation has been addressed. The new 'O' and 'A' level Art and Design syllabus has the Art history and Art appreciation section.

In general the commission described the Zimbabwean education system as Euro-centric in its cultural content and orientation. There are a number of innovation that have taken place after the Nziramasanga Commission namely, the Christmas pass Hotel Art Syllabus Review (September 2000). Here Art teachers and those involved in visual art met to draw the 'road map' for a new 'O' and 'A' level Art and Design Syllabi. Important component like African Art History, Contemporary African and West Art were included as part of examinable components of the syllabus. Art appreciation was also included in the blueprint. However Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) adopted the blue print. The new 'O' and 'A' level Art and Design syllabuses were disseminated by the examination board in 2000. Since then there is a gap between principle and practice. Nkomo (1995:13) points out that 'The curriculum implementation stage is where the syllabuses are actually used in schools.' This is the stage which the researcher found to be the most difficult in schools as far as the Nziramasanga Commission's recommendations are concerned, the commission recommended "… a new education structure that vocationalises education , familiarize pupils with vocational – technical skills at basic education level and lay foundation for specialization at post-basic level" (Nziramasanga 1999:445). However, syllabuses have been designed by both captains of industries, commerce and scholars, but these are not yet fully implemented in schools. Most secondary schools are still not offering Art and Design. Those schools which offer the subject lack the resources and manpower to fully implement the recommendation and vocationalise. The slow implementation of the Nziramasanga Commission's recommendation on Art and Design Education at secondary level have urged the researcher to carry out this study.

Conceptual Framework

Curriculum "is the composite whole which includes the teacher and teaching methods, the learner, unanticipated and planned experiences … as well as the selection and organization of curricular content" (Nkomo, 1995:8). The interplay of these factors produce what students learn. "Curriculum implementation is when the educational plans intentions are put into actual practice to achieve learning and knowledge or experiences for pupils / students in schools." (Ndawi and Maravanyika , 2011: 9) It is this way therefore that the curriculum is implemented or put into effect. Therefore, implementation refers to the stage of the actual use or application of the curriculum or educational proposal in schools.

The Curriculum is not an independent activity. The implementation is governed and influenced by many factors to which its operation must respond with great sensitivity. (Nkomo, 1995).

Factors Influencing Curriculum Implementation.

Curriculum implementation refers to the use or application of educational proposal. As curriculum is viewed by some as an intention or plan, prescription or an idea about what we would like to happen in schools, we can also view curriculum as the existing state of affairs in our school. Therefore curriculum implementation can be viewed as an attempt to put into operation or the plan embodied in the curriculum proposal.

Stenhouse (1974:4) argues that there is need for adaptation of curriculum to the current situation of each teaching and learning process " .. . a curriculum is rather like a recipe in cooker book ... within limits, a recipe can be modified and varied according to taste, so can curriculum."

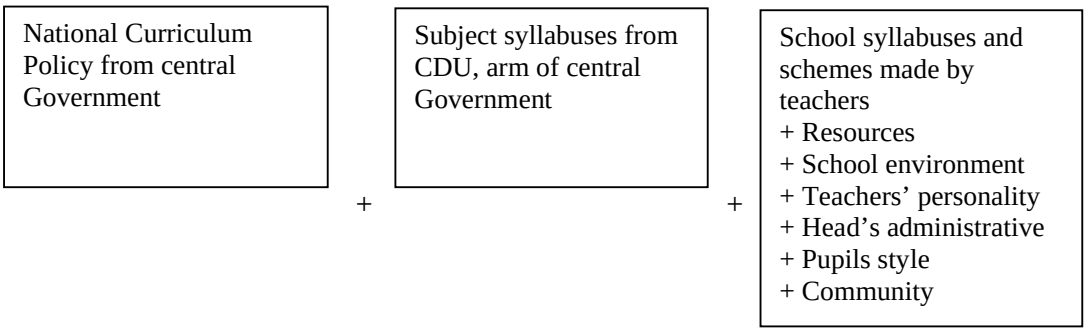
Therefore we can say the manner in which the teacher selects and mixes the various ingredients contained in the curriculum document is in fact the actual implementation of the curriculum. It is important to note that in order for the curriculum to be put in into practice, the teacher uses the "syllabus". In the Zimbabwean central controlled education system. The syllabus is handed done from the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture through the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The syllabus is a school subject plan providing guidance to the teachers on each particular subject in the curriculum. Furthermore, the syllabus can be viewed as the breaking down of a proposal or plan, into manageable units, topics and materials that can be covered over a period of time.

In Zimbabwe as stated before the education system is centralized as most African education systems. The nation curriculum is developed by the CDU. Of late it is the Zimbabwe School Examination Council (ZIMSEC). When the curriculum plans ie the syllabus documents, teaching methodologies, teaching materials and recommended textbooks reach the schools the process of curriculum implementation begins.

Curriculum Process, Implementation and the Teacher

"The classroom teacher is an important player in curriculum implementation", Whitaker et al (1979) cited in Nkomo (1995:26). This curriculum implementation is not an isolated process. It involves National Curriculum Policy by the Central Government (Nkomo, 1995:13).

As shown in Figure 1.



Source Nkomo (1995:11). Process of Curriculum Planning and Implementation.

The curriculum implementation stage is where the syllabuses are actually used in school. Then the evaluation is done to assess the effectiveness of syllabus in meeting the goals.

The teacher is "mediating between learner and his environment in order to facilitate learning … the actual engagement of learners with planned learning opportunities" (Taylor et al 1981:9). Thus the teacher is the chief curriculum implementer. Nkomo (1995:290 argues that "… no matter how detailed the syllabuses and support from CDU are, no one can predetermine the actual interaction." This stresses the need to involve teachers in curriculum planning and development so that the teacher implements and modifies a plan that he has clearly conceived. This bays the problematic issue in curriculum implementation of the discrepancy between what a curriculum proposal means to teachers. Hence the need to consult the teacher who is the chief implementer who makes sure actual learning takes place.

Statement of the Problem

At independence a new socio-political order emphasized a now-racial society, education was declared a human right for all citizens. The new policy saw great expansion which put great pressure on infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, as well as financial resources. As a result most of the post 'O' level students could not be absorbed into industry and commerce because the curriculum was too academic and theoretical. The Zimbabwean government in 1998 set up a commission called The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training popularly known as the Nziramasanga Commission (1999). The commission recommended that general education at primary and secondary level should be modified. There should be dove-tailing of the primary and secondary curriculum. At secondary level the commission recommended that there should be a compulsory technical component requiring each learner to do at least two technical subjects which are in line with economical; development needs of the nation. Most of recommendations which include the vocationalisation of practical and technical subjects have not been implemented, the slow implementation has urged the researcher to carry out this study.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to find out the pitfalls of the implementation of 1999 Nziramasanga Commission Report's recommendation on secondary school Art education. This commission was set up by President Robert Mugabe to find out problems bedeviling Education and Training in Zimbabwe. The study paid attention to the availability of resources and the implementation stages of the curriculum. This is because for any curriculum to be successful its implementation should be supported by all stakeholders.

Research Objectives

The research was led by the following objectives.

- To establish the pitfalls and challenges of the implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations on Secondary Art Education in Zimbabwe.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions;

- The Nziramasanga Report's recommendations on secondary school Art Education have not been fully implemented though it is now fourteen years after the report.

- The Nziramasanga Report's recommendations on Art Education have been well received in both primary and secondary schools since they have government backing.

Research Methodology

Research design is defined as a plan of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions (Cooper, 2003). A qualitative paradigm was preferred. It allows the study of things in their natural setting.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was made up of all secondary school Art and Design teachers, all secondary school administrators and all pupils who do Art and Design at secondary school level in Zimbabwe. Best and Khan (1993:13) describe a population as "… any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher". The population should give the researcher a generalization of the results of the study.

Sample

Babbie (1997) says a sample is a limited subset of the population being studied. The sample for this study comprise twenty teachers per province, ten administrators per province one hundred and fifty pupils per province and five schools per each of the nine provinces. The schools were randomly selected.

Sampling Procedure

Random sampling was used to come up with the following groups;

Schools per province which participated, students who filled in the questionnaires Borg and Gall (1996) argue that randomization reduces the chances of researcher bias. Thus draws were conducted by the researcher in order to come up with schools which would participate in each province and students who would fill in the questionnaires.

Purposive sampling was used to select teachers and administrators to be interviewed and fill in questionnaires. Thus in this study purposive sampling was utilized because the researcher selects particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory. That is "…sampling to ensure that characteristics in your study appear in the total population" (Bogdan and Bicklew 1992:71-72).

Data Collection Instruments

Borg and Gall (1993) say instruments are tools needed for collecting data from human subjects. They are used to obtain standardized information from all subjects in the sample. The instruments used in this study were;

- Questionnaires which were filled in by one hundred and eighty students per province.
- Interviews were used to solicit information from administrators heads of Art Departments in schools and Art teachers.
- Documents were analysed. These included the national and school syllabi, schemes – cum plans for each teacher in the study, progress record books, school timetable, students' artwork and other relevant documents.

Findings

The study found out that the implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations is still at grassroots in most schools in Zimbabwe. The study found out that 70 percent of the secondary schools did not have proper Art studios with running water. Only 30 percent of the secondary schools in all the nine provinces of Zimbabwe have proper Art studios with running water. 65percent of the school heads indicated that the implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations on Art and Design Education in Zimbabwe was difficult at present because of lack of funding, steep shortage of resources, equipment and technical support from the private sector. All the secondary school heads lamented at the lack of commitment of the government, professional boards and the private sector in the funding of education in general. Nearly all the school heads agreed that Art and Design equipment and materials are expensive. Some called it an "expensive subject".

The economic situation and the implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations on Art and Design Education

The study clearly showed that secondary school in all the nine provinces have no capacity to buy up to date expensive equipment, tools and text books required by Art and Design. The incapacitation has been enabled by the Zimbabwean economic slump since the end of the 1990s. Consequently, 90 percent of the heads said that practical fees charged by schools are too low to procure all equipment and tools needed in Art and Design. All the school heads agreed that Art and Design equipment and materials are still relatively expensive given idea that Zimbabwe is now using the United States Dollar as its local currency.

Nearly 80 percent of the teachers were of the opinion that the economic situation is still hard. This hard economic situation forces them to resort to areas of the syllabus which they are familiar with. These are areas which have not changed. These are the areas of the syllabi whose content, methodologies, equipment and tools have not changed after curriculum reviews and innovations. Information from teachers' interviews revealed that most of the school heads in all the provinces are against the use of resource persons in the teaching of new areas in Art and Design. Some of these new areas are computer Graphics, Three Dimensional Design and Multi –media approaches to Art and Design. These are current global trends which are supposed to skill the young students and make them employable in the global market. Teachers argue that resource persons help in teaching both the teacher and students essential skills which are important for employment and the nation's economic growth.

The other information gathered from teachers' interviews show that 70 percent of the teachers are of the opinion that there are serious shortages of resources. These include, infrastructure, equipment, tools and teaching and learning materials. These shortages and the economic situation force teachers to concentrate on areas like basic drawing, craft work etc. The new 'O' and 'A' level syllabi require competence in manipulative skills information technology which more than eighty two percent of the Art and Design teachers revealed that they lack. Nearly all the interviewed teachers are of the opinion that they need in-service training and workshops to keep them abreast with current Art and Design trends.

Shortage of Instructional Resources and Infrastructure are a setback to Art and Design Curriculum Implementation.

In order to effective curriculum implementers, teachers need enough instructional resources. These resources need to be in adequate quantities and should be supplied on time. Again, for effective learning to take place, a conducive environment must be created in the form of basic facilities, these are art studios and store rooms. 60 percent of the teachers indicated that there are still shortages of both instructional resources and infrastructures. This is a major handicap to curriculum implementation. Most teachers are of the opinion that provision of facilities and resources needs the cooperation between the local community, government and the private sector.

Information gathered from pupils' questionnaires showed that though there are syllabi changes in Art and Design, the skills taught are the same. 80 percent of the students revealed that they are taught the same basic manipulative skills with very little variations from one to 'O' level. These skills are, basic drawing in pencil, basic painting and weaving. The Nziramasanga Report recommended that Art and Design should be vocationalised. As such students are required to learn a lot of baseline skills which are geared towards a productive life. 85 percent of the students agreed that their schools lacked up to date equipment and infrastructure which are line with global trends.

Documents were analyzed to get an impression of what was, and what is in view of the implementation of the Nziramasanga (1999). Report's recommendations on Art and Design. The documents include Art syllabi old and new, schemes of work, textbooks, record books, school timetables, and students' art works. This document analysis was also carried out to evaluate changes and innovations made to the 'O' level and 'A' level Art curriculum after the Nziramasanga Report. The research also sought to find out if these changes and innovations have been implemented in schools. An analysis of the syllabi and textbooks was done to give an insight to their responsiveness to the national economic needs and technological advancements. It was found out that 45 percent of the schools in the study are still using old Art syllabi. Fifty five percent of the schools are using the new syllabi. Nearly all the teachers lamented that though the Art syllabi both 'O' and 'A' level have been changed. There is steep shortage of instructional materials, such as relevant textbooks, equipment like computers, light boxes, printers etc are still scarce. These shortages are pitfalls to the implementation of the recommendations. One of the recommendation is that "visual art ……is vital for equipping children with skills for effective and viable engagement and participation in the cultural industries. There should be the introduction of a comprehensive visual and performance arts education that begins at first grade: drawing, painting, sculpture, pottery". (Nziramasanga, 1999:359, 368). Findings from teachers' interview indicate that the teaching of art from the first grade is seldomly done in all the province. This is due to the fact that the current education system is still examination driven. At primary school level as soon pupils are in grade six, most teachers neglect all practical subjects and concentrate on the four examinable subjects namely, Mathematics, English, Shona and Content. This results in mismatches between primary and secondary education content. Teachers also indicated that there are no formal relations between the main school examination board ZIMSEC and the Art Industry and Commerce. This is a serious setback in that there is no linkage and close

communication between the private sector and education. This creates a serious gap between what is taught in school and industry wide skills standards. This implies that the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations are partially implemented.

Discussion

Nziramasanga Report recommendations stipulate that Art education should be vocationalised. This implies that the vocational – technical approach should be adopted in the teaching of Art and Design in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Vocational – technical approach enhances skills that are valued in global and local economies, it is potentially one of he most important tools for developing young people's skills and productive livelihood and economic growth of their countries (Aring, 2011). It has been noted that vocationalisation is not taking place in all the nine provinces of the country. This is due to the slump in the country's economy, lack of funding, steep shortage of resources and infrastructure.

As a result, the implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations on Art and Design are partially implemented country-wide. Nkomo (1995:13) stresses that, "….. the implementation stage is where syllabi are actually used in schools". In this study 55 percent of the schools have the new Art syllabi. The sluggish implementation is due to lack of commitment of stakeholders like the government, the private sector and the society at large in supporting effective curriculum changes. Due to this lack of support from stakeholders schools put up a show when under pressure. This is true when one examines findings from documents. There is a mismatch between what is schemed and students' work. Most skills schemed for are not taught due to steep shortages of equipment, materials and appropriate time allocation on the school time table. The other major reason for lack of implementation was the incompetence of the teachers. 75 percent of the teachers trained during the early 1990s to around 2005. Their training did not cover new areas like computer Graphics, stone and metal sculpture, African Art History and Aesthetics. The new Art and Design is more inclined towards vocational – technical Art Education which emphasizes mastery of skills that are valued in global and local economic growth. That is to say it strikes a balance between theory and practice.

Conclusion

The study has shown that the implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations is an uphill task and is still at grassroots in all the nine provinces. This is due to the Zimbabwean economic down turn. Most of the school heads are resistant to the Nziramasanga Report's recommendations because they call for up to date equipment and more resources which are too expensive for schools. The implementation is hampered by poor funding, lack of resources, infrastructure, equipment and materials. Art and Design content has changed. Fifty five percent of the schools have new 'O' and 'A' level syllabi whilst forty five percent are still using the old syllabi which is not in line with the Nziramasanga Report (1999) recommendations of vocationalisation of Art in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

Recommendations

- The government should involve other stakeholders and give them a chance in developing infrastructure and funding of education programmes.
- There should be close communication and linkages among the private sector, industry and education system in developing industry –wide skills standards.
- A strong collaboration between commerce – industry and education is therefore necessary for the full implementation of the Nziramasanga Report's recommendation since the curriculum should reflect the nation's current and future skills needs which are globally competitive.
- Art and Design should be taught using the hands on approach so that students develop the desired competencies and skills that make them fit for employment and further education.
- Most Art and Design teachers need in service training and workshops in order to upgrade them on how to use up to date equipment and tools. Most teachers need computer training and this can only be done through workshops. This would enable them to appreciate and fully implement the new Art and Design curriculum.

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