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# **NEEDS FOR INNOVATIONS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM CONTENTS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KOGI STATE**

**ADEMU-AWUJA, S.**

## **ABSTRACT**

This Study examines the need for innovations specifically in physical education curriculum contents and instructional strategies in our fast-developing educational system that cannot remain static due to continuous research findings. It also highlights the merits of physical education to include intellectual, psychological, physiological, sociological and kinesiological developments in students even though, there is a decline in students' enrolment and academic performances. This paper also treats the concept of innovation, instructional strategy, curriculum content innovations, types, needs, sources and process of innovation among other things. Innovation is described as positive creative change introduced to bring about improvement leading to scientific discoveries within the spectrum of curriculum contents and instructional strategies. Consequently, it is concluded that workshops/conferences should be organized on the need for innovations in content and instructional strategies as it is a vital key to positive dynamic novel educational changes. Its implementation should be closely monitored and effectively supervised by government agencies to attain desirable objectives set to improve the state of students' enrolment and academic performances in secondary schools.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is public outcry concerning Physical Education students' low performance in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination according to WAEC Chief Examiner's report in 2006 and 2007 respectively. This report is in agreement with the observation that there is a decline in students' enrolment as well as their performances in SSCE. (Ademu-Awuja, 2008). Considering the unique roles physical education plays as a subject in terms of physical, social, moral and mental development of students in our school system, teachers and physical educators feel that this situation is completely unacceptable by them because they are charged with the responsibilities of generating new innovative ideas that can bring about positive changes in social, moral, intellectual and physical lives of students in the school via teaching-learning encounter in the classroom.

Despite these numerous advantages of physical education as a subject, the problems of low enrolment and academic performance still rear their ugly head. The growing child cannot afford to forfeit physical exercise refers to as "motor learning" and old ones in primary and secondary schools have been discovered to enjoy one form of sporting activity or the other during leisure hours in the school (Onuigbo, 2004). Musa (2005) associates low enrolment in physical education with students' lack of interest, inadequate instructional materials, irrelevant curriculum content and poor application of instructional strategies employed by untrained physical educators. A careful assessment of the current physical education curriculum content reveals its urgent need for innovation to make it more relevant to societal needs/aspirations. A curriculum is described as a total sum of planned experiences offered to learners under the guidance of the school. Learning experiences refer to activities or interactions between the careful learner and his environment (Gbamanja, 2002). Developing thinking skills through learning experiences involves inductive, deductive and logical thinking.



Hence, physical educators now express their desires to innovate curriculum content and instructional strategies that are already in a bad state thereby stimulating students' interest in the subject. This would increase enrolment and performance too. Therefore, the paper treats the concept of innovation, instructional strategy, needs for innovation/strategy, types of innovation, sources, the process of innovation and conclusion.

Innovation is a necessary instrument for educational development, improvement and survival. No educational system remains static. Nations of the world over link up their socio-economic growths, educational advancement, military strengths, science and technological discovery to certain innovations. Innovation is described as a force behind educational and social changes, particularly in curriculum contents and instructional strategies (Ademu Awuja, 2005). For instance, the current Computer Assisted Instruction installation (CAI) experiment innovative programme consists of individual learning booths or wet carrels each with a console and a television screen for displaying information. Such information could take the form of videotape recordings, motion picture sequences, slides, film strips or other visual displays generated by the computer. This explains new ways, techniques or strategies of instruction. Curriculum content innovation tends to express ideas or learning experiences occasioned by change (Iyamu, 2005). Specifically, innovation deals with the injection or infusion of new ideas/approaches.

No subject matter without curriculum contents and as long as research keeps on the discovery, new ideas or information or topics may be added to the field of knowledge resulting in innovations. Such innovation is normally geared towards making some relevant positive changes, particularly in the content, organization of learning experiences, instructional methods and evaluation strategies according to Ademu-Awuja, (2008). The ultimate aim of innovation in curriculum content is an educational improvement because some ways are better than others. Ignorantly, certain persons mistake curriculum content innovation for curriculum change. Innovation is the characteristic of the phenomenon that presents curriculum or instructional strategy as having changed (Iyamu, 2005), The National Policy on Education for example in 2004 injects many innovations including the national language policy structure and mother-tongue as a medium of instruction at the lower level of primary schools in Nigeria.

Instructional strategy refers to an approach in which instruction can be simplified by the teacher using an illustrative diagrams, verbal or material to enable the learner to understand the lesson better to improve his/her performance. Ausubel (1960) advocates the use of an "advance organizer" as a way of attaining meaningful information before the actual lesson itself begins and is also presented at a higher level of abstraction to link up what is already known to unknown during the actual teaching-learning encounter to facilitate instruction. Consequently, the advance organizer has become an instructional strategy to enhance pupils' active participation during the lesson. A teacher can use an advance organizer as a strategy with lecture or demonstration methods to make the lesson explicit and simple (Palantine, 1999). Appropriate use of demonstration method with advance organizers as a strategy helps pupils to relate prior knowledge, skills, observation and ability to new material, information, ideas, tasks and abilities that facilitate the cognitive organization of such material in the pupils' existing cognitive structure. The interaction between the demonstration method and the application of advance organizers as instructional strategies enables the learners to anchor new knowledge on what is already known. Hence, the utilization of the demonstration method with advance organizers as an instructional strategy allows the teacher to get stimuli that he or she expects (Gbamanja, 2002 and Eva, 2008).

Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian (1978) encourage teachers to:

1. Commence a given lesson with advance organizers to include general principles or questions that will help pupils learn to integrate the general material systematically.
2. Present new material in small steps organized logically and sequentially.
3. Alert the learners about the key concepts and help them briefly describe learning objectives.
4. Elicit learners' responses regularly to engage them actively and ensure that each step is mastered before moving on to the next one.
5. Conclude the lesson with interactive reviews of the main points.

Innovation must be tied to the end product and improvement of the educational system because the essence of introducing innovation in the curriculum is to effect some changes expected to improve on the present educational practices judged to be deficient and incapable of meeting dynamic societal aspirations (Okoye, 2007).

### **Concept of Innovation**

Innovation is described as bringing in new ideas and methods or making a change in a given situation (Nwankpa, 1997). Educators constantly trying to introduce innovations into the educational system as new discovery emerges about human learning or societal change or as new development occurs in science and technology appear. This is quite natural and it is called innovation. Educational innovations are often due to the initiative of one person or a very few individuals. Educational innovation refers to any conscious and purposive effort to change the educational system directly towards improving the current system either by partial modification or entire change according to Okoye (2007). Such a change can either be in areas of planning, financing, budgeting or bringing both formal and non-formal educational systems together. It may be in areas of administration, pedagogy, psychology, security, discipline or pattern of admission but such changes cannot be classified as curriculum contents or instructional strategies though, the changes are directed towards improving the system.

Agun (1984) defines innovation in curriculum contents as all well-conceived and properly directed ideas in educational structures introduced to enhance and make it more relevant to the varying needs and aspirations of the society. In other words, it is the improvement of the organization of learning experiences put in place to make instructional strategies more meaningful, functional, relevant and attainable by the school community. What motivates innovation is the need to improve the existing situation by adding something new to the curriculum to make it more relevant to the varying needs of the learners and ever-changing needs of the society (Ughamadu, 2006).

Urevbu (1991) asserts that there are good reasons for seeking to innovate in education. Curriculum innovation can take the form of substitutions, replacement or reform. Substitution means that the existing curriculum content or instructional model of educational practice is dropped and an entirely new one is introduced to replace it or it could be to enhance the existing ways of doing things by replacing parts of the methods according to Iyamu (2005). Accordingly, the following factors bring about curriculum innovation:

1. Rapid industrialization and urbanization in different societies.
2. The continuing knowledge explosion that makes the school curriculum content obsolete.
3. The breakdown of interdisciplinary boundaries especially in the sciences and social sciences.

4. The emergence of new fringe disciplines and fields of knowledge like ICT as a new instructional strategy in the Nigerian educational system.
5. Growing emphasis on rural development and the need to make youth have the capacity for rural living through the study of practical agriculture, computer games, computer assisted instruction and related subjects.
6. The dwindling economies of less developed countries arising from indebtedness to the advanced countries and emphasize self-reliance in the curriculum content.

Egbo, (2005) suggests that globalization presents negotiable and non-negotiable multiple-innovation in curriculum content. The major challenge within Nigerian context are how to plan uniform curriculum content innovations in both Junior and Senior Secondary Schools which retain nationwide relevant standards. Negotiable knowledge in curriculum innovation is content-driven while non-negotiable knowledge is necessary for survival in the globalized world. It is pertinent to state here that physical education is correspondently designed for all ages that required innovations in its curriculum contents and strategies to introduce relevant goals of education in Nigeria. This is because certain kinds of knowledge are mandatory to facilitate immersion into and participation within diverse socio-economic backgrounds of students at this level.

### **Curriculum Content Innovation**

Recognizing the teacher as a parent-surrogate, Okoye (2007) recommends the teacher who implements curriculum contents to make inputs in innovation. Sometimes, genuine innovations are handled by untrained personnel who cannot successfully implement the desired changes in the curriculum contents and instructional strategies. A lot of innovative ideas cannot be implemented effectively due to teachers' lack of knowledge, understanding and inabilities to adopt such innovations. Onwuka (1996) reports that most teachers fail to effect changes in curriculum contents and teaching strategies because of their conservative attitudes towards the innovations. The teachers are suspicious of any new techniques and inappropriate channels of communication for the necessary dissemination of innovation.

Igborgbor (2002) states that research findings bring about innovation in the educational system. Making research an integral part of education facilitates curriculum content reconstruction and improvement. It goes a long way to make research become the engine that drives educational development in any society.

### **Instructional Strategy**

Much of a teacher's success in the classroom is hinged solely on his/her adaptation of instructional strategies. Instructional strategy deals with the teacher's approach to teaching or how he/she implements instruction or style of classroom communication or how he/she delivers information (Barry and King, 1997). Several strategies inter-link and can be adapted collaboratively within a given lesson to improve students' cognitive achievement. Ademu-Awuja (2008) states that an adaptive strategy like an "advance organizer" is an essential instructional device aimed at providing.

- (a) Background knowledge or experience when it is lacking.
- (b) Link between what is already known and what is unknown to link up to previous knowledge with the new information.
- (c) Ensure students' increased performance.
- (d) Reduce the possibility of failure among students.
- (e) Relate, integrate and interrelate old material with the new ones. As a matter of fact, the application of appropriate instructional strategies facilitates, enriches and improves students' academic performance in physical education.

## Needs for Curriculum Innovation

Good innovations are changes in a positive direction as well as signals of advancement. Changes are the spice of life and innovation in curriculum content is aimed at updating it to enable it to meet the demands of dynamic societal needs and aspirations which put pressure on the curriculum to suggest changes (Alebiosu, 2005). This need is inherent in all developing nations including Nigeria. The need for innovation in curriculum contents and teaching strategies cannot be over-emphasized because the school curriculum is geared towards transmitting to individuals social beliefs, values, aspirations and ideals of any given societal change with time and that curriculum are also dynamic and not static. As a result, physical education curriculum contents and teaching approaches need to change to reflect such changes in societal values, needs, aspirations or ideals if it must be effective. One of the marks of effective curriculum innovation is that it has to reflect the changes in society (Ughamadu, 2006).

The need for innovation arises from any major dissatisfaction with an aspect or entire curriculum contents, instructional methods, curriculum materials, facilities, evaluation or package. For example, one-shot summative evaluation of students' achievement in the Nigerian school system was criticized that is now replaced with the current "continuous assessment" (C.A). This innovative measure is reflected in the instructional strategy as well as national policy on education. Furthermore, an increase in some facilities, hardware, software, information and communication technology that facilitate better instructional strategies have emerged from curriculum innovations (Ademu-Awuja, 2001). Better learning experiences involving self-motivated students' practical experience have been evolved through curriculum content innovations and instructional strategies. Innovation leads to discovery in sciences and other disciplines.

Nwankpa (1997) advances the following reasons for curriculum content innovation viz.

- (a) To improve the content quality and curriculum design.
- (b) To produce basic enrichment facilities/materials equipment.
- (c) To make teaching-learning activities more meaningful and less tedious.
- (d) To enhance the utilization of facilities designed to support and promote the achievement of curriculum aims and objectives.

According to Okoye (2007), any educational change which has to do with what is to be taught in the school, how it is to be taught and what is employed to teach it to make learning much less painful may be seen as an innovation in curriculum contents and instructional strategies. Consequently, the school curricula should be reviewed periodically to meet the developmental needs of children in terms of assisting and guiding them to acquire and develop desirable values and a general way of life. This will help students grow to become productive members of society. What we teach must be relevant to the kind of knowledge and skills required by the students for effective participation in society.

Public criticism of the type of education schools and teachers provide to learners is becoming increasingly popular. To make education worthwhile, curriculum innovations must make changes in the school curriculum contents and teaching devices in physical education to remove observed flaws in the curriculum (Iyamu, 2005). The basic needs for innovations specifically in curriculum contents and instructional strategies are aimed at promoting the growth of the learners and achievement of teachers' objectives in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Curriculum innovation has to be responsive to the needs of society to be meaningful. For any educational system anywhere in the world to perform its statutory function

successfully, the school curriculum needs to be constantly reviewed to be able to cope with the demands of our rapidly changing society.

### **Types of Innovation**

Alibiosu (2005) identifies two important types of innovation in the curriculum for education. These include concept and strategy innovations. Concept innovation embraces innovation in subject content and concept which is determined by several factors. The introduction of a new concept in the physical education curriculum content or revision of the existing one is capable of provoking pressure on the curriculum to be changed.

On the flipside, reflective assessment of the use of innovation of instructional strategies and skills may lead teachers to broaden and deepen their repertoire of instructional approaches. Decision-making regarding the innovation of instructional strategies requires teachers to focus on curriculum, students' previous knowledge, interest, learning styles and developmental level. Strategy innovation calls for teacher professionalism, dynamism, interest and capacity (Alibiosu, 2005). In PE, direct instructional strategies are highly teacher-directed which include lecture, didactic, questioning, explicit teaching, practice, drill and demonstrations. Some other instructional strategies include problem-solving, programmed instruction, computer-assisted instruction, co-operative learning, concept mapping and demonstration method with advanced organizers.

Nwankpa (1997) states that intrinsic innovation arises from within the educational systems like originating new instructional strategies such as concept mapping or improving upon existing practices in the curriculum by building novel ideas into contents and methods. While extrinsic innovation occurs from outside the educational system and can be borrowed externally. For instance, the Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (P.P.B.S) is a procedure used in building programme design and technology of instructional development. This concept was borrowed and it is now used in cost-effectiveness measures in education. Many extrinsic innovations in the curriculum include HIV/AIDS education, nomadic education, education of special groups, and information and communications technology (audio-visual, tape recorders, film strips, videotape, e-mails). Instructional media supports both learning experiences and the innovation of instructional strategies to help the child learn better.

### **Sources of Innovation**

Sources of innovation in recent times especially in curriculum contents and instructional strategies include teachers (educators), curriculum planners, educational administrators, educational evaluators, school supervisors, inspectors, policymakers and even learners themselves. An individual may wonder how innovations come about. Some innovative ideas result from self-discovery or re-discovery of one's hidden potential through research findings, and incidental/ insightful learning. It is realized that any attempt to implement suggestions put forward to solve pressing educational problems is seen as curriculum content innovations (Nwankpa, 1997). For example, the post JAMB Entrance Examinations into Universities in Nigeria, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics are now innovations in admission procedures into tertiary institutions. Also, application via online scratch cards to assess WAEC and NECO results can be termed as innovation when compared with the publication of such results on the pages of our national dailies in the recent past. The 2004 edition of the national policy on education (NPE) approves the French Language in section 5 sub-section 24 (a) under group "A" as a core subject and HIV/AIDS education to be taught in both Junior and Senior Secondary Schools respectively.

## **Process of Innovation**

In as much as innovation is desired, care must be taken in introducing it so that the entire exercise would not be a threat to some quarters and be wasteful to the change agents (Iyamu, 2005). Granted that curriculum innovation can be considered as an ongoing process which results from constant evaluation of any existing curriculum, the best changes are those perceived as pleasant and relevant to the needs of the target population. To achieve this, there is a need to support it with the powerful communication system. A particular innovation determines the process to be employed. This means that a change may be gradual or rapid (Ughamadu, 2007, Alibiosu, 2005 and Iyamu, 2005).

Agun (1984) considers the following as the processes of generating innovation.

- (a) Identification and analysis of problems.
- (b) Goal formulation.
- (c) Developing the innovation.
- (d) Implementation strategies.
- (f) Evaluation of the steps taken to assess its overall performance.

Innovation cannot just take place without the identification of an area that requires improvement in the first instance. Identification of the direction of change would help innovators to think out new objectives which invariably introduce one or more new practices capable of meeting up identified needs.

Also, adequate and realistic innovative programmes require proper preparation through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and production of innovative instructional materials, strategies, equipment and facilities to facilitate their survival via implementation. Precise goals/objectives should be fashioned out to help in the evaluation of the achievement of the goals after implementation. There is a need to train teachers and other personnel on the innovative practices using the organization of workshops and conferences.

It is pertinent to state that the success or failure of any novel programme depends solely on effective planning and workable implementation after field testing of innovative ideas with a pilot group similar to the group that will eventually use the new package. Strategies for its implementation include publication of innovations through media and persuading the school systems to accept the innovations via conferences. Finally, the new practices can be disseminated to schools to be adopted and carefully monitored through an effective feedback mechanism using evaluation of the novel ideas at every stage.

## **Conclusion**

The felt need for innovation specifically in physical education curriculum contents and instructional approaches in a dynamic society like ours cannot be over-emphasized because of its significant role played to improve the content qualities of the secondary school curriculum. It has to be expressed that innovations in physical education curriculum contents are mostly confronted with human resistance to change and this has to be surmounted by initiators of innovations. Innovators must be ready to face challenges at various stages if success is to be achieved. There should be agreement among all inter-related variables ranging from the teachers, learners, subject specialists, school authority, the society, policymakers, ministry of education officials, researchers, parents, publishers and examination bodies. Proper coordination of these variables mentioned above can promote the achievement of well-articulated objectives of the innovations in curriculum content and instructional strategies. Innovations are generally products of research findings and their implementations require proper monitoring to achieve desirable goals/objectives in the society. Hence, when innovations are properly implemented, development becomes the end product.



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