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Use of Panic Approach in the Development of Curriculum: Perceptions of Bachelor of Education Students in an 'Issues in Curriculum' Class

Effie S. M. Sithole

Departamento de Línguas; Faculdade: Área de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Adventista de Angola, Huambo, Angola.
[Department of Languages; Faculty: Area of Social and Human Sciences, Adventist University of Angola, Huambo, Angola]

Abstract: ***This study is based on the perceptions of thirty-five (15 females, 20 males) Bachelor of Education students doingthe course 'Issues in Curriculum' at Solusi Universityin January 2017, over the use of the panic approach in the development of curricula. These were qualified and practicing primary and secondary school teachers. The researcher sought to establish if instances of the panic approach to curricular development could be identified in current educational practices, how the approach was being experienced by the participants, and what they recommended for addressing challenges with programmes designed through the panic approach. A survey design which was qualitative in nature was preferred for this study, since the findings would be based on the participants' understanding of their reality. The participants presented a number of current curricular programmes or subjects most of which fell within the New Education Curriculumof Zimbabwe, whose development processthey perceived as coinciding with the characteristics of the panic approach.This article reports on the participants' views concerning some of the subjects in the New Education Curriculum.The theoretical framework that was engaged to interrogate data generated in this study was drawn from educational change literature. Findings showed that several steps consistent with systematic curriculum development were omitted in the development of the New Education Curriculum. The findings of this study contribute towards research on educational change.***

Keywords: curriculum; curriculum development; systematic and panic approaches to curriculum development

1. Introduction

The intention of this study was to find out what the views of practicing primary and secondary school teachers were on the use of the panic approach (see section 2.2 for a definition of a panic approach) in the development or change of curricula in education. The participants in the study were thirty-five (15 females and 20 males) Bachelor of Education students doing the course 'Issues in Curriculum' at Solusi University. The focus of this study was on the participants' views and experiences with curricular programmes developed through an approach whose characteristics coincided with those of the panic approach.The participants identified a number of current and past programmes in education they perceived as having been developed through such an approach, and showed which characteristics of the panic approach were evident in the way those curricular programmes had been developed. Out of several programmes presented by the participants as examples, this article reports on the 'New Education Curriculum' (NEC)introduced in Zimbabwe recently. NEC contains a number ofdisciplines/subjects quoted by the participants as examples. According to Machivenyika (2015), NEC was developed as a response to the recommendations made sixteen years earlier by thePresidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training, commonly referred to as the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999.

According to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2015), NEC was driven by factors such as wanting the students to value their heritage and to participate in voluntary service, to prepare them for the world of work, and for them to demonstrate desirable literacy and numeracy skills and practical competences. Pindula (2016) indicates that in NEC, there are seven compulsory subjects offered at Ordinary Level, and those are: Agriculture; Physical Education and Sport and Mass Display; General Science; Mathematics; Indigenous Languages; English Language; and Heritage Studies. In addition, secondary students are to doat least three moresubjects chosen from those listed as electives, or a maximum of five electives for those students who desire to do more than ten subjects. In the primary school curriculum, NEC included new subjects such as Visual and Performing Arts, Agriculture, Science and Technology, and Languages. Although it is not specified which languages are being referred to under the label 'Languages',Marume (2016:n.pa.)quotesthe Director of Curriculum Development as having indicated that foreign languages such as Chinese, Portuguese and Kiswahili would enable graduates to source business opportunities outside Zimbabwe.

According to Marume (2016), NEC was to be implemented in seven phases between 2016 and 2022, and the first phase would be in 2016. Thefirst phase would focus on syllabus development and printing, development of textbooks and other learning materials, induction of all teachers into NEC (Marume, 2016), and syllabus interpretation, an exercise that would be included in all the seven phases of NEC implementation.The reality, however, is that the NEC draft was only presented to Parliament in September of 2016, and syllabuses had not yetbeen produced by that time, neither had the draft been tried out in the schools (Pindula, 2016). Full implementation of NEC was set for January 2017, yet by September 2016, teachers had not yet been staff developed to teach especially those NEC subjects that they were not familiar with. On this issue, Marume (2016:n.pa.) raises some thought-provoking questions pertinent to this study such as:

> ... come 2017 will the ministry have the numbers of qualified teachers to take new learning areas such as music, art, film and the new foreign languages for all the 5,863 primary schools and 2,424 secondary schools in Zimbabwe? There have been reports already that some schools in rural areas still have not received comprehensive information about the new curriculum and they seem to be lagging behind; is the ministry following a center periphery model where development begins in the cities and then spreads out to the rural areas ...?

This study makes a contribution to knowledge by reporting the views of the very people who are experiencing, first-hand,and are affected by, the phenomenon under study. Their personal experiences with the phenomenon could be useful in informing concerned personnel or decision makers, and others who may be intending to embark on a similar process, about the views and recommendations of teachers who arekey implementers of curricula.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Curriculum Change

One of the challenges faced by curriculum developers is that of keeping abreast with knowledge explosion in order for curricula to remain relevant. This necessitates constant vigilance on the part of curriculum developers, and thorough knowledge of what it is that would bring about curricular change that would result in improved performance of the education system. As Yasmin, Rafiq, and Ashraf (2013) point out, although change is a constant law of nature, not all change leads to improvement, but all improvement requires change. Since curricular reform necessitates changes in the existing curriculum, it is necessary to include, in this study, a discussion of curriculum change.

Curriculum can be viewed as the lifeblood of quality education, which means that ". . . its ineffectiveness can have devastating repercussions to quality education" (Kamugisha and Mateng'e, 2014:378). That could be one of the reasons pressure for curricular change has become a constant issue (Gruba, Moffat, Sondergaard, and Zobel, 2004). Duffy (1996) writes about two types of change: revolutionary and developmental change. He points out that developmental change is more preferable if long-lasting change is to be achieved, and describes it as: "... kinder and gentler because it involves people in the change process, targets needed changes, produces changes over a period of time, gives people a chance to adapt to changes, and gives the organization a chance to regain its equilibrium" (Duffy, 1996:193). Revolutionary change, on the other hand, is such that it "... often leaves a lot of damage in its wake ... because it takes people by surprise ... and it tends to eliminate old ways of doing things in a rather drastic manner" (Duffy, 1996:193). Developmental and revolutionary changes seem to have a lot in common with systematic and panic approaches to curriculum change and development, concepts that are discussed in the next section.

2.2 Systematic and Panic Approaches to Curriculum Development and Change

According to UNESCO-International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE) (1999:7), a systematic way of renewing a curriculum involves "... needs assessment, planning and design, teacher training, materials preparation and piloting, subsequent revision and modification, full implementation, monitoring, feedback and evaluation." UNESCO-IBE also advises that curriculum developers need to first examine what is already present in the curriculum that is of relevance, and to work out how new issues could be effectively incorporated into what is existing. There are other sources that propose a systematic way of developing or renewing curricula. For example, Tyler (in Weber, 2007) offers a systematic way of developing curricula and instruction. He uses four questions that seek to determine objectives, work out learning experiences, select and organize learning experiences so as to attain specified outcomes, and, provide a programme to evaluate outcomes. Brodsky and Newman (2011), writing about medical school curricula, proposed the following five steps to a systematic approach to curriculum development: needs assessment; definition of goals and learning objectives; identification of resources; development of educational strategies; implementation of the curriculum; and, evaluation and modification of the curriculum. The systematic way, therefore, approaches curriculum development, change, or renewal as a process, not an event.

The panic approach, according to UNESCO-IBE (1999:14), is caused by a situation where ". . . local or international . . . pressures cause rapid decisions to be made to change the curriculum without prior careful and structured planning ...". Panda (2001:n.pa.) uses similar words: "The curriculum process is often influenced by a 'panic approach' in which the local, national or international developments with some socio-economic and political bearing influence the decisions concerning the curriculum without prior, careful and structured planning."From the above descriptions of the panic approach, it seems that the approach is reactive rather than proactive; that it is preferred where curriculum decision makers are under pressure to provide instant solutions to educational problems or situations; that unlike the systematic approach, it minimises, or totally eliminates tasks like wide consultation, situational analysis, and thorough preparation for implementation.UNESCO-IBE (1999) observes that the panic approach is characterised by top-down or centre-periphery decisions, and that the instant solutions it provides do not necessarily lead to permanent solutions.Top-down models of curriculum development are described by UNESCO-IBE (1999:11) in words that fit the description of the panic approach to curriculum development:

> Top-down patterns of decision-making often do not provide situational analysis and research in curriculum design. Once decisions are made, reforms are often hurried through, with too little time devoted to careful implementation and follow-up in relation to vital areas such as teacher preparation, piloting of reforms, analysis of feedback, subsequent revision and re-testing, regular supervision and evaluation.

In addition, UNESCO-IBE (1999:14) observes that: "Not only is the 'panic' approach not likely to be successful, it may lead to an overloading of the curriculum, increasing the difficulty of teachers' tasks". In other words, the panic approach has the potential of creating more problems than it solves. Since thecentre-periphery or top-down model of curriculum development and dissemination is commonly used with the panic approach,the next section discusses the centre-periphery model of curriculum development and dissemination.

2.3The Centre-periphery Model of Curriculum Development and Dissemination

The centre-periphery (C-P) model is a top-down, one-way curriculum dissemination process designed by Schon (Kelly, 2004:127), where the design of innovations is done at the centre or the top, before being disseminated to the users. Wright and Johnson (2000:39) explain that: "A centralised curriculum designing pattern is one in which the content is decided upon by a central national office", and Zimbabwe follows thiscentralised pattern of curriculum designing. In this type of centralised curriculum developmentprocess, the innovation is planned and prepared in detail at the top, prior to its dissemination, and the process of that dissemination is one-way, from the centre to the consumers on the periphery (Stenhouse, 1975). Wright and Johnson (2000) suggest some advantages of the C-P approach to curriculum development and dissemination, and these include the following: ease in achieving national goals, ease with which students can transfer from one school to another without being disadvantaged, and mass-production of materials, thereby making the materials less expensive for both the producers and the consumers. To this list one could add that standardization and monitoring of the country's curriculum through national standards such as examinations becomes possible with the C-P model in place.

Various scholars, however, have criticized the C-P approach to curriculum development and dissemination. Morgan (1977; 2006), for example, claims that the C-P stands accused by manyfor causing innovation failure. Kelly (2004) also accuses the C-P approach for employing power-coercive strategies, for attempting to develop teacher-proof schemes by bringing about change from outside the school, and for viewing teachers as technicians rather than professionals, as operatives rather than decision-makers, andas mere implementers of other people's decisions, and never their own.Yasmin et al. (2013) observe that power-coercive strategies of curriculum change are often used in education when change is expected to meet the expectations of those in higher power. Kelly (2004) further points out that the C-P tends to leave a wide gap between the theory of the project by the project planners, and the realities of its implementation, where the implementers may lack clarity about the need for the project, and where they may also lack skills and motivation to carry out the innovation.

Morgan (1977; 2006) argues that implementers tend to see such projects as impositions, and their own role as that of mere passive recipients. Wright and Johnson (2000) further accuse the C-P model of insensitivity to the needs of some groups within the country, leading to little or no commitment by those groups at implementation stage. They also argue that C-P stifles teacher creativity and participation, and that it encourages a scramble for certificates, rather than the development and demonstration of productive skills. Such information is vital for this study as the researcher tries to find out from the participants what, in their view, would cause programmes to thrive or fail. A discussion of theC-P model leads to a discussion of resistance to curriculum change and innovation.

2.4 Resistance to Curriculum Change and Innovation

It would seem that education systems, especially in developing countries, are experiencing turbulence which necessitates major changes in their curricula (Amino, Bosire, and Role, 2014:14). It has also been observed that "…the phenomenon of change is inevitable as the society is a dynamic one and hence, keeps changing" (Nnenna, Mary, and Eze, 2013:41). This implies the importance of the curriculum change process employed. According to Hameyer (2003), the quality of a curriculum can only be as good as the quality of the curriculum development process.

Necessary though it may be, curriculum change can face resistance from different quarters. Hoyle (1970) and Holliday (1992) have referred to resistance to curriculum change as tissue rejection. Holliday (1992) describes tissue rejection as a culture conflict which occurs when the ideas of the planners at the top, who are by definition outsiders, clash with those of the recipients and supposed consumers of the plans, especially where the planners at the top neither share nor take into consideration the concerns of those who have to implement the plans. Schein, (in Kent and Kay, 2010:4), suggests varied reasons why change is sometimes resisted. Among the reasons Schein gives are that resistance occurs when:

> people believe it is unnecessary or will make a situation worse; people fear it will mean personal loss; people had no input into it; people are not confident it will succeed; people believe that they will not be up for it; people like the status quo; people believe that prior initiatives were badly implemented; people lack faith in their leaders.

Kotter, (in Kent and Kay, 2010), addresses his observations to leaders about why change initiatives are sometimes unsuccessful. He highlights failure to build a substantial coalition with the implementers, failure to communicate the vision, and underestimation of the need for a vision. He argues that without a clear vision of the destination, change efforts could easily turn into "a list of confusing, incompatible, and time-consuming projects going nowhere" Kotter, (in Kent and Kay, 2010:21). He also suggests some conditions that could promote a climate where change could be supported, and these include the following: that people support change when,

> "...[they] expect it to result in personal gain; ...[they] can relate to the vision behind it; ...[they] believe it makes sense; ...[they] can input into the change; ...[they] respect and believe in those who are championing it; ...[and they] believe it is the right time" Kotter, (in Kent and Kay,

2010:21).

All this goes to show what a complex process curriculum change is. The role of the teacher in the process of curriculum development cannot be overestimated. The suggestions made in this section are in no way exhaustive. In the words of Spillane (1999:144): "Teachers are the key agents when it comes to changing classroom practice; they are the final policy brokers. Local enactment depends in great part on the capacity and will of teachers."

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

The study adopted a survey design which was qualitative in nature. This was seen as the most appropriate design since the study sought to obtain the participants' perceptions, opinions, and beliefs on the phenomenon under study, and the qualitative approach would allow the researcher to access those lived experiences of the participants (Hashemnezhad, 2015). AsLittle (2013) puts it, seeking to understand a social phenomenon from the point of view of participants leads to an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences and the 'what is' or 'what was' of the phenomenon being studied.

3.2 Sample

The study sample consisted of thirty-five participants (15 females, 20 males) purposively sampled Bachelor of Education students at Solusi University. As Cohen,Manion, and Morrison (2007) observe, purposive sampling is where participants are selected because they possess particular characteristics of the knowledge being sought.In the case of this study, the participants were selected because they were knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied as they were experiencing itfirst-hand in the schools. In addition, all the participants had been exposed to curriculum development approaches in their Issues in Curriculum class, which was viewed by the researcher as a necessary background for identifying challenges to a curricular programme that this study called for.

3.3 Procedure

The thirty-five participants were divided into four groups by counting up to four so that there were nine ones, nine twos, nine threes, and eight fours. All those with the same number formed a group. This was done in an effort to mix not only the genders but also ideas and views from people who might not be from the same areas or districts. Each group was charged with identifying a curricular programme that they perceived as having been developed through what could be described as the panic approach, to identify characteristics of the panic approach in the selected programmes, to state what challenges the schools were facing in their attempt to implement the programmes, and to propose strategies that could be employed in an effort to ensure programme development and implementation success in spite of the challenges. The group reports were presented orally and in writing.

3.4Research Questions

The following three questions gave direction to the group discussions: 1. What characteristics of the panic approach to curricular development can be identified in the selected curricular programme? 2. What challenges are the schools facing in trying to implement programmes developed through the panic approach? 3. How can the identified challenges be addressed in order for effective operations of the programmes to be achieved?

3.5 Data Analysis

Data generated were content analysed in order for recurrent instances to be grouped together.Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as a data classification process that uses coding and identification of themes or patterns in order to come up with a subjective interpretation of text data. Information in the group reports was coded and then classified into patterns that were found to be recurring.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

From the various curricular programmesperceived by participants as having been developed through the panic approach, it was noted that the majority seemed to fall within NEC, hence this report focuses on findings that relate to those subjects that are part of NEC.

Question 1: What characteristics of the panic approach to curricular development can be identified in the selected curricular programme?

Table 1 shows the categories that emerged in response to the first research question.

Table 1: Characteristics of the panic approach identified in some NEC programmes

- Lack of thorough, prior planning: New subjects in NEC arenot introduced to the teachers through teacher education institutions, hence teachers are not given any professional preparation for NEC;
- It is a rushed approach to curriculum implementation, where a number of new subjects are introduced all at once, rather than one at a time;
- There is lack of relevant resources such as syllabuses, textbooks, and other implements for the new subjects;
- The rush is also evident in the lack of adequate preparation for a smooth transition from the old subjects to the new ones. Overnight, subjects taught bysubject specialists were relegated to electives, to be replaced by brand new compulsory subjects without specialists or necessary resources;
- NEC was introduced with little if any consultation with stakeholders; it is characterised by a top-down/centre-periphery model of curricular development and dissemination, where programmes are planned in detail at the top before dissemination to the schools for implementation; teachers were not involved in the planning and development stages of the programme;
- The teacher-proof programmes created in NEC are

characterised by lack of understanding, lack of feelings of ownership and appreciation by the teachers;
- New subjects were compressed into overloaded timetables, hence there was inadequate time allocation for subjects like Agriculture which have theoretical and practical components.

Question 2: What challenges are the schools facing in trying to implement programmes developed through the panic approach?
Table 2 shows participants' responses to the second research question.

Table 2: Challenges faced by teachers in trying to implement some NEC programmes

- Introducing subjects into the curriculum without prior professional preparation of teachers has led to an impossible situation in the schools, where the affected teachers do not know if what they are doing is what is expected of the subjects; Teachers have been deskilled and then thrown into the deep end without any tools for survival;
- Resource books and syllabuses for the new subjects are not yet available, yet the new subjects are being introduced in the schools. In some cases this has led to over-reliance on the internet, and subsequent lack of uniformity from teacher to teacher;
- Relegating certain subjects to electives has deskilledspecialists in those subjects and robbed them of their confidence and a sense of achievement in a job well done; Introducing brand new subjects never before heard of, and failure to provide teachers with relevant knowledge and skills for the new subjects, has led to a lot of frustration in the schools as teachers are being assigned subjects they are not familiar with; To further compound this problem is the complication of the existing freeze in teacher appointment, and abnormally big classes in the compulsory subjects;
- In some cases, schools lack prerequisites such as land and water for a subject like Agriculture, and electricity (especially in remote areas) for a subject like Computers;
- Teachers are learning with the students and the experience is scary and frustrating;
- Subject groupings for Advanced Level studies have been negatively affected by NEC, since the compulsory subjects cannot be grouped together for Advanced Level specialisation.
- Schools where there is hot-seating have very few hours forclasswork because of the shared facilities. New subjects with a practical component require much more time than such schools can afford.

Question 3: How can the identified challenges be addressed in order for effective operations of the programmes to be achieved?
Responses to this question have been presented as recommendations in section 6.

4.2 Discussion

It would seem that the concerns and observations raised by the participants in this study over the curricular developmentapproach used inNEChave also been echoed by other stake holders in education. Reference is made to a few of such sources where people other than the participants in the study have raised concerns over issues surrounding NEC.Moyo (2017) refers to a survey carried out by 'The Patriot' on the impact of NEC. The survey revealed several challenges in the implementation of NEC in the schools, and among them were the following: Some classes in the compulsory subjects such as Agriculture had ballooned from 50 to 800 students, making it necessary to employ additional teachers for such subjects. With the current freeze in teacher deployment, however, engagement of new teachers was not possible unless the government lifted the freeze on teaching posts. The survey also found that teaching manuals were not available in the schools and some teachers wererelying on the internet. These findings by The Patriot are consistent with the concerns raised by the participants in the study.

Pindula (2017) reports that the education Minister received criticism for the following: Inadequate consultation, limited time to implement the new curriculum, that NEC required resources which some schools could not afford, that teachers and headmasters had not yet seen the final syllabuses yet the new curriculum was in progress, and that schoolshad not yet received textbooks and learning materials for the new curriculum. These criticisms recorded inPindula (2017) coincide with the concerns raised by the participants in the study. Inadequate or absence of professional preparation of teachers for the new subjects is bound to lead to a lot of confusion in the schools. In Pindula (2017), a former education Minister, while acknowledging the need for curriculum reform in Zimbabwe, criticised the way Zimbabwe was doing it. Among the criticisms he raised were that there was insufficient consultation and consensus building with parents, teachers, school leaders, and teachers' unions, and that the History and Heritage Studies content seemed to have left out certain key aspects of history which, when left out, presented an incomplete and distorted picture of Zimbabwe's history.He, therefore, proposed that the history of Zimbabwe be researched and written by independent scholars who would focus on correctness of facts rather than propaganda. Although this point did not emerge in the concerns raised by the participants, it is still relevant for this discussion, for it goes to show how the Panic Approach to curricular development cuts corners and skips certain vital steps.

Another confirmation that the implementation of NEC is facing big challengescomes from the current education Minister himself. According to Pindula (2017), the education Minister expressed concern that at the five provinces he had visited at the time, there were teachers who said they had not yet seen any of the NEC documents. This confirms the concern raised by the participants about the unavailability of the NEC documents in the schools, and lack of professional preparation of teachers for the implementation of the NEC programme.

5. Conclusions

The fact that participants could identify a number of programmes in education that they viewed as having been

developed through the panic approach seems to indicate that the panic approach isa commonly used strategy for developing or reforming curricula in education. It is surprising, therefore, to realise that literature on this approach is very scanty, almost non-existent. In the implementation of NEC, it is clear that certain vital steps were omitted, such as the preparation of resources - human, material, and financial. The overhaul of the education system through NEC has introduced several subjects all at once, and this has resulted in serious confusions amongst the supposed implementers of the programmes. It would seem that decision makers in education preferred revolutionary rather than developmental change (Duffy, 1996) in the development and implementation of NEC, although developmental change is said to be kinder, gentler, and with a higher rate of success. Some of the new subjects being introduced in the schools under NEC are not on offer in teacher education institutions, which seems to imply that teachers are being called upon to dig up contentby themselves, and to teach itto the students. Teacher shortages are hitting the schools, and teachers are overloaded with massive classes to teach. The current freeze in teaching appointments is not helping the situation. The new compulsory subjects need to be combined with subjects in the 'electives'in order to form subject groupings for A-Level specialisation such as sciences, arts, and commercials.

6. Recommendations

Gruba et al. (2004) point out that even though curriculum change initiatives come from a small cohort, a sense of ownership amongst implementers can be achieved if the proposed changes are thoroughly discussed with them and other stakeholders.Such a move is recommended for Zimbabwe. Next, there is need for the government to unfreeze teaching posts in order to deploy more teachers to the schools to ease the problem of huge classes. Concerning brand new subjects in the curriculum, it is imperative that they be first introduced to student teachers during their initial pre-servicepreparation for teaching;it is also recommended that the education sector involves teacher educators in capacitating teachers already in the fieldthrough meaningful in-service staff development programmes. On resources and infrastructure required for NEC, it is recommended that in the national budget, morefinances be channeled towards education.Such finances should make it possible to construct more buildings in the schools to enable all learners to be accommodated in the mornings, thereby doing away with hot-seating and increasing the amount of time for teaching and learning.

To ensure ownership of the programme by implementers, it is recommended that principles of the systematic approach to curriculum development be followed. These include the following:allowing the processof implementation to move slowly but steadily towards a desired end, that is, allowing teachers to change incrementally, through small steps; providing teachers with adequate professional learning;and, allowing teachers to try outprogrammes and to suggest modifications where necessary. Divergent points-of-view are to be embraced as ways of enriching the subjects in question with differing perspectives.

To minimise teacher frustration, the following strategies from Ferlazzo (2015) are recommended: The vision and mission of the new curriculum should be clearly communicated to the implementers; They should also be involved in discussing anticipated challenges and in suggesting interventions to counter them; It is also necessary to show, by example, how the programme has worked in other places;Implementers need to be allowed to have input in the new initiatives from the initial stages of programme development, all the way to implementation and evaluation stages; and,Schools should be provided with the necessary resources / materials. When teachers know what is to be done and how, and the resources are readily available, their fear of the unknown is minimised, saysFerlazzo (2015).

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