

Thematic Analysis of Selected Published Researches in Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract

Researches in curriculum and instruction vary in scope and themes. This paper looks into selected published researches on curriculum and instruction in order to determine common themes and identify implications on curriculum development and implementation. Thematic analysis is used in identifying the patterns of such researches as they were coded based on key words. Findings show varied contexts in curriculum implementation and reflect limited classroom application due to institutional policies and research priorities. It was then concluded that although the results provided a glimpse of the existing researches on curriculum and instruction; there are no evidences of a specific criteria in curriculum implementation. Thus, there is a need to do a critical review on the existing research works to validate the usability of the findings in the application and implementation of the curriculum guide in accordance to the expected learning standards of the Enhanced Basic Education Program in the Philippines.

Keywords: *curriculum and instruction, published researches, thematic analysis*

Introduction

Curriculum and instruction is an important component in teaching and learning for it provides a roadmap to the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. As such, it requires careful planning to ensure the realization of desired outcomes (Bago, 2001). Tyler (2013) in his book basic principles of curriculum and instruction articulated that education is a process of changing the behavior patterns of people. This is using behavior in the broad sense to include thinking and feeling as well as overt action. This when applied to the conduct of research implies the congruity of the research topic to the researcher's field of specialization or the relevance of one's topic to one's curricular program when pursuing graduate studies.

For the past years, research undertakings in curriculum and instruction are generally geared toward the improvement of students' performance such that findings have become the bases for teaching and learning adaptations. Steiner (2017) purported that curriculum is a critical factor in student academic success. He pointed out that a comprehensive and content-rich curriculum is a common feature of academically high performing countries. Considerably, a number of researches in the area of curriculum and instruction link teaching and learning, technology utilization, policy, and assessment. Considerably, on-going researches in education focus on exploring various approaches in improving teaching and learning especially in the modern times. This supported by Ulla, et al (2017) who stressed that teacher researchers are active participants and are change agents towards the improvement of the teaching and learning process. Henceforth, it becomes of paramount importance then to examine how much of these researches in curriculum and instruction are relevant one's field, and how these contribute to the growing body of knowledge in curriculum development and/or implementation. As such, Ramakrishnan (2013) believed that a curriculum has to be continuously reviewed since it provides the basis for curriculum policy decisions, for

feedbacks on continuous curriculum enhancement for successful curriculum implementation. Likewise, Rotberg (2007) affirmed the notion that curriculum implementation is a very important aspect of the curriculum process as it is the bedrock of any school's success or failure. Thus, certain initiatives must be in place to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The purpose of this study is to look into the topics of selected published researches in Curriculum and Instruction from 2015 to present in order to determine common themes and find out how they relate to curriculum development and planning, curricular assessment and/or curriculum implementation.

Methodology

This paper employed the descriptive qualitative research method which looked into the scope and themes of selected published researches in curriculum and instruction. Using Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase framework in doing thematic analysis 30 selected published researches in curriculum and instruction, which were accessed from refereed and indexed education journals, were analyzed, coded and clustered based on constructs and themes. Semantic and latent themes, guided by the research question, were considered in the interpretation and analysis of titles of each published article. In the semantic level themes are derived from the surface meanings of the data while the latent level of analysis is based on the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualization.

Results and Discussion

The instructional landscape in Philippine education has changed dramatically with the implementation of the Enhanced Basic Education program. In service teachers are observed to have used variety of instructional materials from a wide array of source, aligning content standards to the required exit competencies. Whitehurst (2009) in Steiner (2017) highlighted that some types of curriculum, defined as everything the teacher teaches, is necessary to provide instruction to students. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, three themes emerged from the 30 published researches in curriculum and instruction. These are the dynamics of curriculum development, the plight of curriculum actualization, and the landscape of curricular assessments and reforms.

The Dynamics of Curriculum Development

Over the years, the focus of several studies is that of quality education, innovation in education, on learning goals, differentiation, curricular change and curricular designing characterized by innovative pedagogical approaches like design thinking, infographics, informatics and media-driven instruction.

Albeit topics present diversity of purpose, it can be pointed out that there one single unifying theme that binds researches in curriculum designing following the ebb and flow of times. From researches on student-centered teaching and learning like that of Humaidi (2015) and Whipps, et al. (2016) and Lake (2015), to the exploration of MTB-MLE best practices (Metila, 2017) and studies on innovations in teaching and learning- i.e. design thinking, infographics, interdisciplinarity, and curricular reforms and challenges. In the context of higher education researches, recurring topics are on outcomes-based education (OBE), alignment (Morales, 2017). As defined by Davis (2003) in Morales (2017) an *outcome* is a culminating demonstration of learning or what the student should be able to do at the end of the course. Outcome-based education is an approach to education in which decisions about the curriculum are driven by the exit learning outcomes that the student

should display at the end of the course. It is a result-oriented thinking where the product defines the process (Butler, 2004 in Morales 2017).

The Plight of Curriculum Actualization

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have paved the way for innovation, changes and improvement of curriculum instructions. However, along the way are different linguistics approaches to deliver the best practices in developing a curriculum with the right medium of instruction that is relevant in today's societies. The role of research served as a basis for influencing different perspectives in developing programs that consummates instructions by centralizing its key component that is acceptable to different cultures, nationality and belief system between the school, the teacher and the learner.

The task is too ambiguous to uphold by any academic institution, considering equality, reputation and other critical issues that involves politics, decentralization among the stakeholders and implementers. School leadership is central to curriculum implementation, as such higher level thinking approach can be obtained if a structured curriculum is used. Diverse issues need to be addressed and interventions do not come easy. It has physical and budgetary and requirements. On the other hand, the process of a long standing dilemma necessitates deliberation and modification and the use of acceleration and advance materials and the complexity of focus on multiple higher level skills and concepts.

The Landscape of Curricular Assessments and Reforms

The 21st century curricular landscape explicitly signals an idea that all reforms attuned to curriculum and instruction are geared towards its internationalization. This is so as the recent developments on market or economic integration necessitates uniformity and harmonization of all member-nations for its graduates to be work ready to be responsive to the needs and demands of the international market, thus, the essence of understanding ASEAN integration.

Upskilling is of paramount importance if one wants to globally competitive. Topics on regionalization, global market, technological advancements in education and even the inclusion of culture-sensitivity are among the common focus of researches for the past three years here and abroad. The curricular landscape for example for the teacher education (TE) program is currently engineered to ensure that TE graduates of all ASEAN member-states will possess the exit competencies necessary in the holistic appreciation and understanding of their work as curriculum implementers. Teaching is not only confined in the discipline but has expanded to included aspects of geography, history, culture and demography.

Customarily, benchmarks and parameters are set to gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum and that curricular responsiveness is appraised by instituting reforms such as the introduction of new assessment schemes and innovative ideas on performance evaluation.

Conclusion

The result provided a glimpse of the existing researches in curriculum and instruction. With the emerging themes it can be concluded that certain dynamisms in curriculum development dictates the nature of the modifications of practices, that there are perceived difficulties in the actualization of the curriculum and that stakeholders constantly experience the ever changing educational landscape of the country and of the world. This is partly attributed to the lack of specific criteria in curriculum implementation. Thus, there is a need to do a critical review on the existing research works to validate the usability of the findings in the application and

implementation of the curriculum guide in accordance to the expected learning standards of the Enhanced Basic Education Program as well as that of the new Teacher Education curriculum.

Recommendation

Thus it is recommended that there should be a regular monitoring of the curriculum implementation across levels and in different learning areas. This implies a clear curriculum implementation monitoring scheme to regularly update and upgrade the teaching-learning activities and assessment tasks that are responsive and relevant to the current needs and interests of the 21st century learners. Similarly, a periodic curriculum revisit may be in place to assess the feasibility of the program and recommend necessary initiatives to ensure a transformative delivery of instruction.

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