

# CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: RESOLVING THE LESSON PLAN/NOTE CONTROVERSY IN LESSON PREPARATION

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## ABSTRACT

*The aphorism that "the secret to success in any endeavour is planning" cannot be disputed in teaching. Teachers should therefore, endeavour to address a huge range of issues as they go out to prepare their lessons. This is because planning for presentation is a sine qua non for good teaching. In response to these ideals, the paper gave conceptual clarifications of the terms curriculum and curriculum implementation. It also aimed at resolving the purported confusion and controversy over the unfortunate problem of the "how" of planning by clarifying the differences between the lesson plan and lesson note and justified why both terms should be used synonymously. The study revealed that lesson plan is derived from a teaching unit or scheme of work that extends over one single lesson. The lesson note, in specific terms, is a plan for teaching a single class period. It also disclosed that the essential features of a good lesson plan/note are the same. Therefore, workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers, especially newly recruited teachers, to sensitize them on the daily teaching plan in their planning endeavours.*

*Keywords: Curriculum implementation, lesson plan, lesson note, lesson preparation*

## INTRODUCTION

Most often, beginning teachers, and even some experienced ones, are confused when they are confronted with the issue of preparation of the lesson. In recent times, many arguments have ensued with regard to the problem about the lesson plan and the lesson note. The "how" of the planning, and the lesson plan and lesson note dichotomy have generated a lot of confusion and controversy among inexperienced and some experienced teachers respectively in recent times. What seems to be a major problem in this debate according to Delaney (1962) as cited by Short and Marconnit (1970) is how the "how of planning" is viewed and understood by stakeholders in education. Often times, some inexperienced teachers, or better still, student teachers, tend to use the lesson plan as the lesson note and vice versa. Still, teachers (experienced teachers) and administrators of schools view the lesson plan in somewhat different ways.

Some regard the lesson plan to be the periodic plan for a day's lesson, while others think it is a weekly plan that runs through three or more periods of teaching time. From the teachers view point, lesson plans are a course upon which he can steer his classroom activities, his unit goals, and his instructional methods to daily fulfillment (Delaney 1962) cited in Short and Marconnit, 1970). According to

Okwuedei (2006), the importance of lesson note in the present, is used interchangeably as the lesson plan. This type emphasizes how the teacher is going to teach his periodic or daily lesson when he enters the class. Administrators on their own part, see the lesson plan as an overall plan of what the teachers are supposed to do in a given period, usually lasting for one or two weeks. This view point, according to Delaney (1962) as cited by Short and Marconnit (1970), is a means of evaluating teacher's professional performance and as a guide for substitute teachers in emergencies.

Seemingly, this is the reason why most administrators (principals and headmasters) in Nigeria demand that advance lesson plans be presented by teachers in their institutions (Okwuedei, 2006). When student -teachers are sent out for teaching practice, for example, some school heads tend to restrict them to their "own pattern" of lesson planning. In some of these schools, the principals or headmasters, as the case may be, recommends the use of the unit plan, which invariably is a form of the lesson plan that runs through the whole of the week and covers two or more days of class work, depicting a weekly plan of their lessons. Others may recommend in their schools, the daily lesson plan which is synonymous with the lesson note, as emphasized by the teachers' view point.

Confronted with the above confusion on how to plan for their lessons, which may be against what their institutions had taught them, student teachers tend to present as their lesson notes what the co-operating school heads mandated them to do through their master teachers. In such situations, when their supervisors come, they are faced with the problem of not doing "the right thing", and at the same time, the supervisors tend to apportion blame on whoever has given them orientation on the how of planning before embarking on their teaching practice or actual teaching. In order to resolve the identified confusion and controversy about the unfortunate problem of the how of planning this paper intends to clarify the differences between the lesson plan and the lesson note by justifying that both terms should be used interchangeably so as to eliminate unnecessary duplication of function in usage. In what follows, in order to have a thorough understanding of this discourse, the paper will give conceptual clarifications of the terms curriculum and curriculum implementation.

## **CURRICULUM AND CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION**

Defining curriculum is some what a difficult task because of its many definitions. Nevertheless, it is considered here as a process that embraces the total experiences by means which the school educates both the young, inexperienced and adult members of a given society. This is why Garba (1999) define it as the sum of desirable values, skills and knowledge that a child acquires from school which will enable him to be a productive and contributing citizen of his society. Others have also seen curriculum from the perspective of a teaching plan. For example, Taba (1962) regards the curriculum as a plan for learning. She asserts that the special function of the school is to arrange the experiences of children and youths so that

desirable learning can take place. Curriculum beings a plan for learning therefore its contents and learning experiences need to be organised such that they serve the educational objectives. The plan for learning, therefore, should be visualized as what teachers do when they attempt to prepare their daily lessons. Saylor, Alexander and Lewis (1981) on their part also see curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated. Curriculum implementation on the other hand, is an important task in any educational programme. It has to do with the execution of the planners' decisions. In actuality, it is the ultimate test of the planned curriculum. Curriculum implementation can be seen as largely the classroom efforts of the staff and students of a school in putting into operation the curriculum document. It is also regarded as the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined efforts of school authorities, teachers and students.

Offorma (2004) sees it as the translation of the planned curriculum into functions, which involves putting into action the planned curriculum. Thus, it can be viewed as what teachers do in the classrooms with students to bring about pre-specified educational objectives the efforts of teachers and students in bringing about pre-specified educational objectives calls for good planning. One of the purposes behind planning to teach is to bring about changes in students' understanding of subject matter in the positive sense. Effective teaching demands that teachers should be guided by the knowledge of how to plan for teaching. This is because teacher's planning is a major determinant of what is taught in schools and how it is taught (Clark and Lampert, 1986). Making decisions about what content to include in a presentation and how to organize content to be logical and meaningful to students take extensive preparation by the teacher (Arends, 2000). So, concerted efforts should be made by teachers in this direction. In response to this demand, the paper intends to resolve the lesson plan/lesson note controversy in lesson preparation.

### **RESOLVING THE LESSON PLAN AND LESSON NOTE CONTROVERSY IN LESSON PREPARATION**

Planning for presentation are those planning decisions that are crucial for developing effective lessons because they give structure to lesson planning (Borich, 2004). In resolving the confusion and controversy over the issue of lesson plan and lesson note it will be pertinent to give a conceptual clarification of the terms, vis-à-vis justifying why both should be used interchangeably. In the present, the lesson plan is being used interchangeably as the lesson note. However, it is important to state here, that both serve the same purpose, but the lesson plan is derived from a teaching unit or scheme of work that extends over one single lesson. The lesson note, in specific terms, is a plan for teaching a single class period. It is referred to as the daily or periodic plan. Daily teaching plans refer to those modifications which are made for a day on the strength of the events of the previous day (Johnson and Michael, 1958). Such teacher's daily plan is the one that receives much attention, and is often necessary in all organisations of teaching today. Hence, attention should focus on this, be it a plan or a note.

Well prepared lesson notes are basic to good teaching. A lesson note is a systematic organisation of a content of the unit of the course or subject in such a manner that it will guide the teacher to attain effective teaching. Normally, daily plans or lesson note, outline what content is to be taught, motivational techniques to be used, specific steps and activities for students and teachers, needed materials, and evaluation procedures. The amount of detail can vary depending on the type of teaching method used and the concept to be taught. If prepared with great precision, lesson notes helps a class teacher to cover adequately in both scope and depth specific aspects of a scheme of work or a teaching unit. Lesson note is just an expansion of the lesson plan by giving actual subject matter information.

In some circles, the lesson plan serves as a guide to the teacher's daily presentation with less detail. It just serves as a road map for teaching the lesson which extends, in some schools, over a single lesson or during the week. The lesson plan indicates what is to be done, whereas, the lesson note in addition to indicating what is to be done, also indicates details of how it is to be done by the teachers and students, and also gives direction to the new lesson. The main features of both are the same. The difference is just the details found in the lesson note. Hence, in implementing the curriculum Nigerian teachers should focus attention on such teacher's daily plans that are necessary in all organisations of teaching, the nomenclature - lesson plan or lesson note notwithstanding.

Beginning teachers, most especially, should toe the line of experienced teachers to focus their thinking on the following four most important planning tasks as Arends (2000) suggests:

- (i) Choosing objectives and content for the presentation
- (ii) determining students' prior knowledge
- (iii) Selecting appropriate and powerful advance organizers; and
- (iv) Planning for use of time and space.

These four important planning tasks are what teachers should do when they attempt to prepare their lesson for presentation. The following set of criteria for a good lesson plan as proposed by Johnson and Michael (1958) should also be borne in mind when planning for presentation.

- (a) The plan should show a clear relationship between what has gone before and what is to follow.
- (b) The plan should indicate clearly what the pupils are supposed to learn.
- (c) The plan should indicate clearly what the pupils will do to bring about the learning desired.
- (d) The plan should show means by which differences among pupils rate of learning and ability to comprehend will be catered for,
- (e) The plan should reveal the teacher's thinking about evaluation of the learning which has been undertaken.

## **ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF A GOOD LESSON NOTE/PLAN**

The teacher's lesson note, used interchangeably as the lesson plan, drawing from Johnson and Michael's (1958) criteria for a good lesson plan should possess the following essential features:

### ***Preamble***

- (i) Name of school
- (ii) Name of teacher
- (iii) Subject
- (iv) The topic (content)
- (v) Date
- (vi) Duration of the lesson
- (vii) Class
- (viii) Sex
- (ix) Average age of students
- (x) Behavioural objectives
- (xi) Previous knowledge (Entry behaviour)
- (xii) Instructional materials

### ***Main body of the plan/note***

- (xiii) Set induction
  - (a) review of previous knowledge
  - (b) introduction of the new lesson
- (xiv) Development of the lesson in sequence with teacher and student's activities embedded
- (xv) Evaluation with summary of students' responses on the chalkboard
- (xvi) Assignment

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Planning is very important and necessary in lesson presentation. This will enable teachers to bring about changes in students' understanding of subject matter in a positive manner. Therefore, in making decisions about what content to include in a presentation and how to organize content to be logical and meaningful to students, concerted efforts should be made for extensive preparation by the teacher. This is why the teacher should engage in preparing a good lesson note, which is basic to good teaching, so as to guide him in attaining effective teaching. For the successful implementation of the curriculum with regard to lesson planning, it is recommended that:

- (a) Workshops and seminars should be organised for teachers, most especially beginning teachers, to sensitize them on the major difference between the lesson note and lesson plan, and the need to emphasize on the daily teaching plan, which receives much attention and is often necessary in all organisations of teaching today, in their planning.

- (b) Beginning teachers, most especially student teachers, should be given adequate orientations in their institution, on how to plan for their lessons before embarking on teaching practice exercise.
- (c) Principals and headmasters should desist from viewing the lesson note as an overall plan of what teacher's do that lasts for one to two weeks.
- (d) School administrators should stop mandating teachers under them to reflect their planning as they (administrators) view it, but should rather focus on mandating their teachers to prepare the daily lesson plans in their planning endeavours.
- (e) Teachers should focus their thinking on the four most important planning tasks as suggested by Arends (2000) in this paper.
- (f) Teachers should also bear in mind the set of criteria proposed by Johnson and Michael (1958), highlighted in this paper, when planning for presentation.

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