CONCERNS OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS REGARDING THE METHODOLOGY OF THE THEMATIC INTEGRATED CURRICULUM AT THE STANDARD ONE LEVEL AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of teachers and administrators regarding their concerns about the methodology of the new thematic integrated primary curriculum. The researcher was employed as a writer for the new curriculum and also a trainer at various workshops. Understanding the concerns of teachers and administrators is of paramount importance. An interpretive case study design was employed to investigate the concerns of teachers and administrators utilizing three methods of data collection: a semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis. This case study explored the concerns of three Standard One teachers and three administrators in a government primary school in Trinidad and Tobago. It was found that teachers and administrators shared the same concerns of time, resources, structure of the school, confidence in content areas, collaboration, and training and support.

Keywords: Teachers' Concerns, Administrators' Concerns, Thematic, Integrated Curriculum

Chapter 1: Introduction

Curriculum has been defined as 'to run the course' from the Latin word '*currere*' which taken literally, means '*to run*' (Yadav, 2007). In the academic year 2013 - 2014, the new primary curriculum was introduced to the lower levels of the primary school. This new integrated and thematic curriculum was implemented at the Infant One, Infant Two and Standard One levels in primary schools across Trinidad and Tobago using a power coercive approach (Bennis, Benne & Chin, 1976). Schools were mandated to implement the new primary curriculum. As such, teachers throughout Trinidad were introduced to the drastic changes that were made to the curriculum with which they were familiar. The dimensions of change were changes to content, methodology, assessment and resources (Fullan, 1997).

There were also changes to the planning and recording documents that facilitated the implementation of the new primary curriculum. The preparatory documents for teaching and learning, such as learning units and learning plans, were provided in an 'Instructional Toolkit' book. However, schemes of work for each of the three terms consisting of weekly planning as well as daily planning documents were required to be prepared by teachers.

In the month of June, 2013, teachers were called out for one week of orientation to sensitize them about the new curriculum at various venues around Trinidad. On the first day of orientation, teachers were given an overview of the new approach. Thereafter, teachers were exposed to five essential areas in the thematic approach: Assessment for Learning, Differentiated Instruction, Numeracy, Literacy and ICT infusion. After the one week of orientation to the new primary curriculum, teachers were expected to implement the new thematic, integrated curriculum in their classrooms, in September of the same year. The ideal scenario was that, at least in theory, after a five day orientation workshop, teachers would be able to pilot the new

curriculum. The focus of the workshop therefore, was to allow teachers at the Infant One, Infant Two and Standard One levels to become familiar with not only the new curriculum guides and toolkits, but also the method of delivery. This meant that teachers needed to be able to manoeuvre the new content that was placed under the umbrella term 'Themes'.

The new primary school curriculum was finally implemented in September of 2013. However, teachers involved in this new implementation were not in receipt of the hard copies of all expected documents, such as the curriculum guides, teachers' guides and toolkits. They had to rely on the soft copies that were available online, and the documents were received in schools in October of the first term.

The fact that teachers had to source information about the new curriculum online was a cause for concern for those who were technologically challenged. In addition, the new primary curriculum contains innovative features. In order for teachers to implement the new curriculum, they needed to become familiar and adept at using these innovative features and understand their impact on teaching and learning. These innovative features include changes to the methodology of teaching, resources, content, evaluative strategies (Fullan, 1997) as well as changes to the format of the required planning and recording documents.

The preferred methodology of the new primary curriculum is that of constructivism, social learning, project based learning and activity based learning, with the infusion of numeracy, literacy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) (Ministry of Education, 2013). This new teaching strategy also includes Gardner's Multiple Intelligences by incorporating the various multiple intelligences in every given topic. In this way, the Ministry's philosophy of "every child has the ability to learn" is being actively pursued (Ministry of Education, 2005 p. 12).

However, many issues arose regarding accessibility to the new curriculum from the Ministry of Education's website. Some teachers chose to read the information from the online site and some decided to print copies of the documents. This posed problematic for those with eyesight problems, and the cost of stationery materials including ink for the printers was alarming to a lot of teachers. Principals as well, either accommodated the printing of materials or instructed teachers to 'be resourceful'. There were also issues regarding the new thematic approach to teaching, which appeared to be in conflict with the comfort zone of many teachers.

Background

The thematic integrated approach has been touted as a strategy to make learning more meaningful and representative of real life scenarios (Min, Rashid, & Nazri, 2012). Clark, (2011) noted that children were more involved in the thematic approach to teaching. "We started to enjoy the class, kids began to participate, discipline improved immensely" (Clark, 2011, p. 36). Therefore, in order to improve the teaching and learning this approach seemed to be the one to adopt.

A component of the thematic integrated approach is the use of the constructivist theory (Loepp, 2015). "Constructivism make learning fun, interesting and tie things together" (Cook, 2009, p.403). Correiro, Griffin & Hart (2008), state that "students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own learning" and that they "gain understanding by participating in activities" (p. 457). "Learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge and instruction is a process of supporting that construction rather than communicating knowledge" (Cunningham & Duffy, 1996, p. 2). For social constructivists learning should involve interaction with other people or environments (Huang, 2002).

Cooperative learning or small group learning is also built into the thematic integrated approach. Sharan (1980) found that children had a positive change in attitude towards themselves, their school, peers and work. Pupils also preferred the cooperative style rather than the competitive style. It was also noted that the pupils, if given enough time together, about eight to ten weeks, were able to build positive relationships and communicate more openly and effectively with one another.

"Cooperative learning is one of the most commonly used form of active pedagogy" (Tsay & Brady, 2010, p. 78). Tsay and Brady (2010) go on to state that cooperative learning is group work where individuals develop through interaction among their peers. Cooperative learning promotes higher achievement than competition or individualistic work (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000).

The idea of using multiple means to carry across the message is fundamental to the thematic approach. Multiple intelligences was first suggested by Howard Gardner. Goodnough (2001) found that when other means of understanding a concept was given, children were able to perform better by using their particular gifts and talents in that area. Using a Multiple Intelligence approach can tap into students' differing strengths and interests (Simmons, 2001).

Project based Learning (PBL) is a concept of teaching students to learn how to learn (Leung, 2008). "Project Based Learning is a student driven, teacher facilitated approach to learning" (Bell, 2010, p. 39). Bell, (2010) goes on to state that children who are taught through the project based approach retain more knowledge and are better able to understand the topics of their inquiry as they collaborate and become involved in critical thinking.

Bell (2010) observed that students who used the project based approach scored much higher in national tests especially in areas of applied and conceptual problems than students taught in the traditional manner. Using the project based approach allowed the students to delve deeper into the problem and use higher order thinking skills.

The project based approach is fundamental to the thematic based instruction (Leung, 2008). This is so because the project would reflect a real life scenario and therefore not be subject specific but rather cut across the curriculum. However, as Leung pointed out, it was

noted that teachers must be aware of the students' abilities and interests and these needs must be catered to.

Internationally, there were concerns when a curriculum was revised and a thematic curriculum was implemented. When Uganda implemented a thematic curriculum it was found that there were concerns with the appropriateness of the initiative, structural adequacy and the implementation process of the initiative (Altinyelken, 2010). In Hong Kong, the concerns ranged from professional development, parental support, resource materials and cross curricular approaches (Leung, 2008). The Australian curriculum also underwent reform and as a result there were concerns in implementing a multicultural curriculum with a postcolonial philosophy (Hickling-Hudson, 2003). The major concern in the Australian context was that of time to understand the innovation and implement the new practices (Peers, Diezmann & Watters, 2003).

There were also curriculum reforms regionally. In Jamaica, at the lower education levels from grades 1 to 3, there is a thematic approach with a completely integrated curriculum (Ferguson, 2008). Ferguson also went on to state that what is in the curriculum guides may not be what is actually done in the classrooms. It must also be noted that this study was based on content analysis. One of the gaps identified to be researched was that of the thematic approach.

Additionally, there was a change to the Pre-school 4 to 5 year old programme to a thematic integrated curriculum (Maye-Hemmings & Wint, 2010). This approach was brought about to deal with the challenge of linking and making connections across traditional subject disciplines.

Locally there were curriculum reforms at the secondary level and presently at both the upper and lower levels of the primary school, with the Primary Curriculum Rewrite (PCR) at the lower level and Continuous Assessment Component (CAC) at the upper level.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there have been major changes to curriculum in the form of subject based curriculum change at the primary and secondary school. However, within the recent past there has been a move from the subject based approach to a thematic based approach. This approach was first implemented at the secondary school level with advent of the Technology Education Component in 2001. This Technology Education Component replaced three basic subject areas: Agricultural Science, Industrial Arts and Home Economics (Ministry of Education, 2008 p.21). The Primary Curriculum Rewrite (PCR) has moved this innovation into the primary schools at the lower levels. The difference at the primary level is that all subject areas are integrated into a thematic approach.

Fifty one curriculum writers, comprising teachers from both primary and secondary schools across the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, were actively involved in the writing of the new primary curriculum during the period of December 2012 to December 2013. During this time three main documents were formalized; the curriculum guide, the teachers' guide and the instructional toolkit.

The curriculum guide was organized in two formats, firstly according to levels and secondly according to subject areas. Seven documents were created according to levels; they were: the Infant One, Infant Two, Standard One, Standard Two, Standard Three, Standard Four and Standard Five curriculum guides. Based on subject areas, (Agricultural Science, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Spanish, Physical Education, Visual and

Performing Arts (VAPA) and Values and Character Citizenship Education (VCCE)) nine documents were printed, bringing the tally to sixteen curriculum guides.

The instructional toolkit was also organized according to levels. Six documents were printed: Infant One, Infant Two, Standard One, Standard Two, Standard Three and one toolkit book for Standards Four and Five. In addition to the curriculum guides and toolkits, a teachers' guide was printed, that offered explanations of key terms per subject area, as well as strategies that could be used by teachers. In total, twenty three curriculum documents were printed and distributed to all primary schools.

Statement of the problem

Some teachers and administrators appeared to be uncomfortable with the implementation of the new primary school curriculum in terms of the new thematic, integrated approach. Some teachers have been commenting to other teachers at the various levels in the school about the difficulty which they were experiencing in implementing the new curriculum. There were instances where some even expressed a desire to leave the teaching fraternity as soon as was financially possible.

The researcher also received negative feedback from the administration of the school. The principals were exposed to a two day orientation programme in May 2013. However, vice principals, senior teachers and heads of departments were not as fortunate. As a result, teachers who were having difficulty with the new methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum could not approach their immediate supervisors for assistance. The vice principals, senior teachers and heads of department were also at a disadvantage, since they were guided by the teachers who went on the training, and readily accepted what those teachers told them.

Teachers and administrators are crucial stakeholders in the teaching and learning process at the primary school level as they are the clinical agents directly involved in education and doing the field work. They possess important insights and experiences (Stake, 2010). With the significant changes in the primary school curriculum, some of which were met with resistance, teacher buy in is very important. Teachers and administrators are the front line soldiers in the implementation of any innovation. There is a need therefore to tap this important stakeholder resource as to their concerns both nationally (not the scope of this work) but also at the district level, since every school has its own peculiarities that need to be taken into account.

The heart of the matter is that most teachers seem to be comfortable with the subject based approach to teaching and therefore give the impression that they are uncomfortable with the thematic, integrated approach. This study involves exploring the reasons for such discomfort in an effort to understand why these major stakeholders in education have these concerns.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the concerns of teachers and administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level. This was done in order to achieve a mapping and assessment of these concerns which would enable technocrats to gain insights into the issues that affect the implementation of curriculum in the local context. With a dearth of research in curriculum implementation at the primary school level, this study would provide the foundation for much needed research into local curriculum implementation at this level.

Research Questions

Over-Arching Question

What are the concerns of teachers and administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic, integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?

Sub-Questions

1. What are the concerns of teachers regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?
2. What are the concerns of administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?

Significance of the Study

This study provides insights into the implementation of curriculum and the concerns of teachers at the Standard One level. Since this new thematic, integrated primary curriculum is the first of its kind at the primary level in Trinidad and Tobago, this study is breaking new ground in exploring the concerns of primary school teachers and administrators while implementing this new curriculum over the period of at least one year.

The data collected from this research would be useful in addressing the concerns of teachers and administrators during the continued implementation process at the other levels of the primary school. This study will also add to the data that already exists, building a wider

database of innovation implementation in the Caribbean Region. The exploration of this innovation would provide useful data for future research in implementing innovations at the primary school level both regionally and locally.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

Case study – bounded by a single unit (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010; Creswell, 2007)

Constructed codes – codes that are derived from the researcher

Curriculum – a course of study

Implementation – the decision to put into practice an idea or activity

In vivo codes – codes created using the actual words and phrases of the participants

Innovation – an idea that is perceived to be new even if it is in existence for some time (Rogers, 1995)

Instructional Toolkit – a compilation of learning units and learning plans comprising of content, skills and dispositions, which includes - outcomes, activities, resources and assessment options

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the implementation of curriculum innovations and the concerns that stakeholders have concerning the innovations. The second section focuses on the international, regional and local implementation of thematic integrated curriculum and the concerns that arise. In the third section the focus is on the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum. The final section explores the methodology of the case study approach and its relevance to this research.

Stakeholders' Concerns during Innovation Implementation

An innovation can be defined as "an idea, practice or object that is perceived new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 1995 p. 11). Curriculum change, therefore, can be considered an innovation since some aspects may be perceived as new. Fullan (1997) describes the dimensions of curriculum change:

> "Innovation is multidimensional. There are at least three components or dimensions at stake in implementing any new program or policy: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials or technologies), (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e., new teaching strategies or activities), and (3) the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs)." (Fullan, 1997 p. 30).

According to Fullan, (1997) all these dimensions to change are required for the successful change initiative because only when all three dimensions of change have been realized would the goals of the innovation be achieved. In other words, if only one or two dimensions of change have been realized then the goals of the innovation cannot be met.

Implementation is the use of the innovation in daily activities. Fullan (1997) points out that:

> "Implementation consists of the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change" (Fullan, 1997 p.84).

There are several factors that influence the implementation of an innovation. These factors can positively or negatively affect the implementation of an innovation. Factors that positively influence implementation are called facilitating factors and those that negatively influence implementation are called factors that hinder or are barriers to the implementation. Some factors which influence the implementation of an innovation are staff development, teachers' attitude, teachers' confidence in content, availability of resources, time, practicality, and relative advantage.

Staff development is one factor that influences the implementation of innovations as it addresses lack of awareness and understanding of content (Calvert & Clemitshaw, 2003; Carless, 1997; Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallaher, 2007). Resistance to change due to misinformation can be avoided (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009) through alleviation of concerns (Waugh & Godfrey, 1993).

Another factor is teachers' attitude towards the innovation (Carless, 1997; Lee, 2000). Through personal cost appraisal they seek out benefits of the programme (Lee, 2000). If there is a perceived cost benefit then there is a likelihood of adoption (Waugh & Godfrey, 1993).

Teachers' confidence in the content area is also instrumental in innovation implementation (Rennie, 2001). This can be enhanced by collaboration (Rennie, 2001) via change facilitators in the form of principal, vice principal, resource teachers, teacher specialist

and curriculum coordinators (Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Hord & Huling-Austin, 1986). Perceived support from senior staff also boosts confidence and facilitates implementation (Waugh & Godfrey, 1993). Lee (2000) also cites age, sex and experience as factors that influence the implementation of an innovation.

The availability of resources can influence the implementation of an innovation (Barrow & Delisle, 2010; Carless, 1997; Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Penuel, et al, 2007; Rennie, 2001). This can be further affected by administrative bureaucracy (Barrow & Delisle, 2010). In 2001 the technology education component was introduced into the secondary school system. However, as Joseph points out in McCarthy, et al. (2010), although 120 teachers were trained to implement this innovation, only eight schools were outfitted with the required resources.

Time is required for the innovation to be fully understood and implemented (Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Penuel et al, 2007). Hord and Huling-Austin (1986) posit that in the implementation process the price that is paid is time. Badugela, (2012) posits that with the curriculum implementation in South Africa, there were financial constraints, time constraints and a lack of resources and crowded classrooms therefore, implementation could not be done successfully.

Practicality and relative advantage are considered before adoption of an innovation (Carless, 1997; Waugh & Godfrey, 1993). Teacher participation in decision making (Waugh & Godfrey, 1993) helps to develop a sense of ownership (Carless, 1997).

Implementation of thematic integrated curriculum

In looking at the thematic approach in Malaysia Min, Rashid, & Nazri, (2012) found that the thematic approach makes teachers' teaching more planned, systematic, active and interesting. However, they found that support is required from stakeholders.

Leung (2008) posits that there are benefits as well as challenges to the project based approach to teaching in the Hong Kong context. Support for teachers is critical. Wang (2013) also referring to the Hong Kong context found that there were facilitating factors as well as inhibiting factors which influenced the implementation of a new curriculum. The facilitating factors included advanced school facilities, qualified teachers, good students and leader support. Inhibiting factors included lack of training, lack of communication between trainers and teachers, and unsupportive parents.

Cook (2009) stated that "the staff found that thematic integrated curriculum helped students make connections with their learning." The thematic integrated approach brings the learning within a context using real life experiences therefore, making learning authentic. Connections across disciplines also allows for more meaningful learning.

Hickling-Hudson (2003) looked at the postcolonial curriculum in Australia which restructured curriculum in four interdisciplinary areas of "Life Pathways And Social Futures; Multi-Literacies, Numeracies And Communications Media; Active Citizenship; And Environments And Technologies" (p. 8) and surmised that although the focus was on Australia, the results could also be applied to countries with culturally diverse populations as is the case with our local, multicultural, post-colonial context.

In Jamaica, the thematic integrated curriculum was introduced to make connections across subject disciplines in order to make learning experiences real (Maye-Hemmings & Wint, 2010). However, as was pointed out by Ferguson (2008), what are in the curriculum guides may not be what is actually taught in schools. In fact, as Ferguson states, it is in teaching that curriculum is enacted and therefore, teachers and schools are responsible for what is delivered and how it is delivered. Ferguson continues that there is scope for further study using methods such as observation, which would provide data on how the curriculum is actually enacted.

In the Trinidad and Tobago context, Barrow and Delisle (2010) looked at the implementation of the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) lower secondary Science curriculum and found that teachers were generally uncomfortable teaching topics with which they were unfamiliar. In addition, Harry (2008) looked at the concerns of teachers implementing the CAPE Communications Studies at the Secondary School Level. In this study it was found that teachers mostly had Task concerns although one teacher had concerns at the Collaboration stage of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM).

Thematic Integrated Curriculum

"Integrated curriculum is an educational approach that prepares children for lifelong learning" (Lake, 1994 p.2). Integrated curriculum has been described by researchers in various terms such as cross-curricular, inter-curricular, trans-curricular, fused curricular and even multidisciplinary curriculum. A curriculum can be fully integrated on one side of the continuum and multidisciplinary on the other. Integrated curriculum is student centred while multidisciplinary curriculum is subject centred (Dowden, 2007). Wiggins (2001) explored five levels of integration from teaching tool connections to process connections.

It was observed that cross-curricular/inter-curricular students generally perform better (Dowden, 2007). According to Dowden when two or more subject areas overlap and are absorbed into one subject area, that is called Fused Curricula. An example of this in our local context is that of Technology Education, as it absorbed the subjects of Agricultural Science, Home Economics and Industrial Arts.

Loepp (2015) has outlined nine implications in the implementation of a thematic integrated curriculum that affect the delivery of the curriculum. The first one is that teachers must shift their belief system from didactic to constructivism. Secondly, teachers need extensive professional development in the constructivist approach. Thirdly, teachers must collaborate and become a learning community. The next point is that teachers need to become skilled in social learning and small group learning. Fifthly, teachers must provide hands on learning. The sixth implication is that teachers need to employ a repertoire of assessment strategies. In addition to this, teachers need resources and ongoing support. Then, parents and the community need to be informed of the implementation of innovations. Finally, teachers need to be prepared, certified and assessed in the thematic curriculum. The thematic curriculum must also be reflected in national student assessment.

Loepp (2015), looked at three models of integration: The Interdisciplinary Model, The Problem Based Model and the Theme Based Model. Loepp states that the Interdisciplinary approach to curriculum integration has both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages are that teachers are given time to collaborate, they have limited number of students and this model supports traditional multidisciplinary or subject based curriculum. A disadvantage is that teachers can easily slip back into a multidisciplinary design or subject based teaching.

Loepp (2015) goes on to point out that in the Problem Based Model, the curriculum is taught using a problem. The pupils draw on all the relevant disciplines to solve the problem. According to Loepp, the third model is the Theme Based approach. There are many advantages in that there are connections to specific disciplines, and national standards can still be adhered to.

The teachers' guide, published by the Ministry of Education (2013), alludes to the incorporation of the constructivist theory, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences and project based learning into the thematic integrated curriculum.

Constructivist theory

The main concern of the constructivist theory is that of training and support. The initial training is only the beginning of the developmental stage; support throughout the initiative is important (Crawford, Chamblee, & Rowlett, 1998). Crawford et al. further goes on to state that in many cases after the initial training, teachers are left to implement the innovation on their own without support.

Many teachers use the words constructivist theory without understanding the meaning or implication of this approach (Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002). As a result teachers may say that they are using the approach but in reality may not be doing so at all.

Cooperative learning

One concern identified is that of "hitchhiking"; this is a term given to students who shirk their responsibilities towards their team (Kaufman, Felder, & Fuller, 2000). These students are normally rewarded for not participating in group activities by being given the same grade as those who worked (Garfield, 1993; Roger & Johnson, 1994). This can serve as a demotivating factor which can adversely affect cooperative learning.

Other concerns that were discovered were the physical size of the classrooms, the methodology of the teacher and large class size (Gillies, 2007). Classrooms must have the necessary space to accommodate group interaction. The teaching strategies employed by the teacher is also important, as the teacher can use a competitive approach rather than a cooperative approach. Additionally, large classes pose the same problems as per physical space. Finally, management of large classes during cooperative learning sessions can be difficult for both the teacher and the pupils.

Multiple intelligences

One concern was that of time in catering to the various intelligences. Another concern was that parents were not familiar with the theory. One positive note is that parents of children with non-traditional academic strengths were happy with the activities (Mettetal, Jordan, & Harper, 1997).

Eisner, (2004) posits that if standardization in curriculum and assessment is the outcome of learning, then the theory of multiple intelligences will not be able to bear fruit. This is a grave concern since learning is usually assessed through standardized tests which are usually paper and pencil tests.

Due to the nature of multiple intelligences one may not be adequately assessed by the traditional paper and pencil tests (Gardner, 1995). As a result there is a concern where employing alternative forms of assessment become an issue especially in terms of time and resources.

Project based instruction

Edelson, Gordin & Pea, (1999) identified five challenges to project based instruction. These challenges are: motivation, accessibility of investigation techniques, background knowledge, management of extended activities and the practical constraints of the learning context.

Concerns of project based instruction can be student oriented, such as individual and development differences, metacognition, and cognitive strategies, as well as teacher oriented in teacher efficacy, professional development and time and support for teacher reflections (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991).

Methodology of the study

The methodology for this study is based on Merriam's (1998) Case Study design. Merriam (1998) posits that a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. It is an intensive description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system.

This qualitative case study design is bounded by time and location. The thematic integrated curriculum has been in existence for a little less than two years. Since teachers are still familiarizing themselves with the new curriculum and its methodology, getting willing participants was challenging, so only one class level consisting of three Standard One classes from one primary school was studied.

Merriam (1998) posits that to triangulate, one can use observations, interviews and document analysis (p. 96). This study utilized all three methods. The classroom was observed

and notes were taken. Semi structured interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed. Finally, documents were observed, examined and analysed.

Data analysis

According to Merriam (1998), Stake (2010), and Yin (2010) a generic qualitative data analysis was done. Data was collected from interviews, observations and document analysis. The data from interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded. The codes that were used were in vivo codes for the interviews. The codes were then grouped into categories and finally placed into themes.

Data that were collected from observations were documented in field notes (Dawson, 2002). These notes were then coded and classified. Similarly, for document analysis, notes were taken from the examination of the documents. These notes were later coded and then placed into categories and finally into themes (Yin, 2010).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used for this research was adopted from the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall & Hord, 2011). This model is made up of three distinct frames: the Stages of Concern, the Levels of Use and Innovation Configuration. However, only one frame of this model was used. The Stages of Concern (SoC) was used to explore the participants' perceptions concerning the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum. Other frameworks that were relevant to the implementation of the innovation were Fullan's (1997) Characteristics of Change and Rogers' (1995) Diffusion of Innovation.

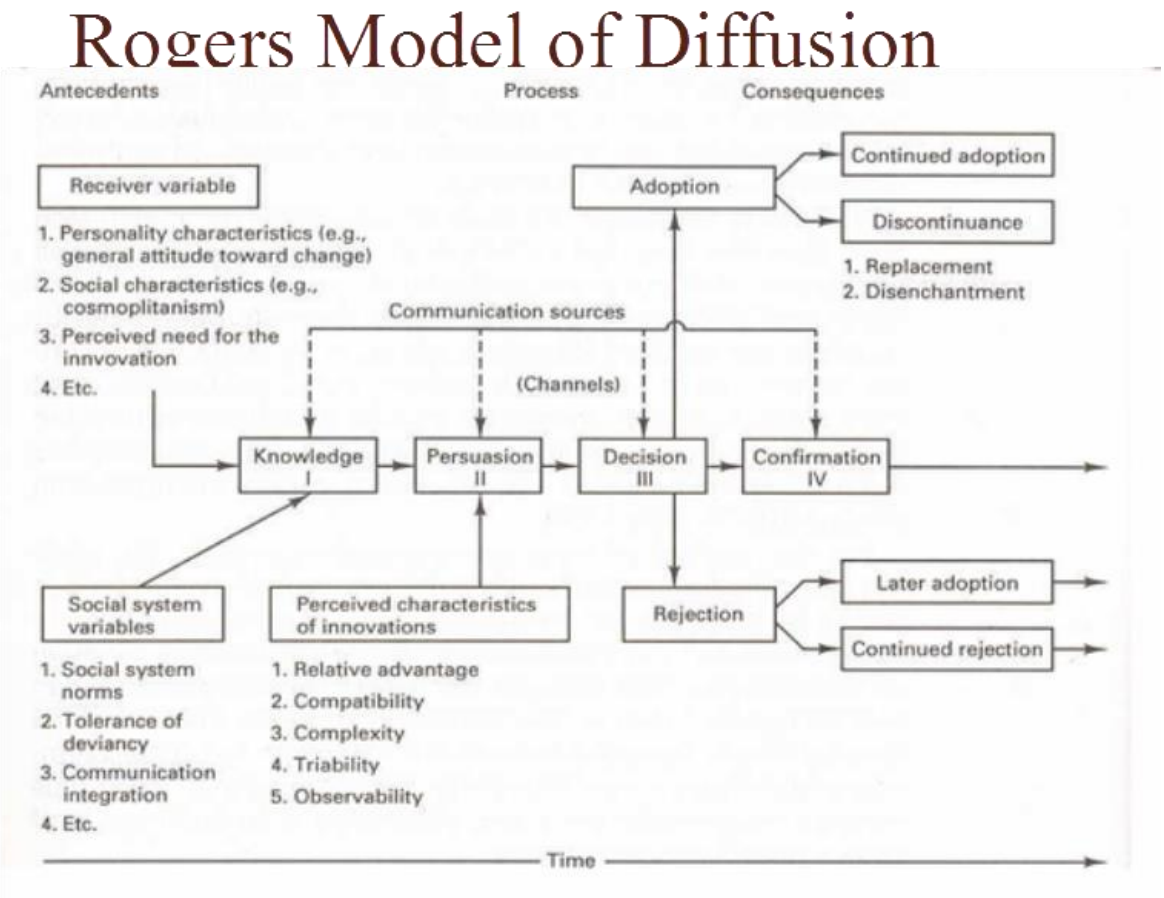
Fullan's (1997) Change Process involves three phases: Initiation, Implementation and Institutionalization. The Characteristics of Change according to Fullan (1997) are Need, Clarity,

Complexity and Quality. If an innovation is perceived to be needed, it is clear, simple and of a high quality, then it may be adopted. However, if it is perceived to be not needed, unclear, complex, and of an inferior quality, then it may be rejected.

Rogers' (1995) Diffusion of Innovation, involve several stages: Initiation, Development, Diffusion, and Adoption or Rejection. According to Rogers (1995), the characteristics of change are: Relative Advantage, Compatibility, Complexity, Trialability, and Observability. Rogers, (1995) further adds that Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system, where "An innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 1995 p. 12).

There are five stages outlined by Rogers regarding innovation. These stages are as follows: Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation and Confirmation.

Diffusion of Innovations Model (Rogers, 1995)



The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is ideal for seeking out the concerns of participants while they are involved in the implementation of an innovation (Hall & Hord, 2011). The three dimensions from which to collect information are the Stages of Concern, Levels of Use and Innovation Configuration (Hall & Hord, 2011).

Stages of Concern (SoC) is used to address the personal side of change. It focuses on how feelings and perceptions evolve as the change process unfolds.

Levels of Use (LoU) focuses on the behaviours of an individual as he or she gradually learns about and becomes a competent user of an innovation.

Innovation Configurations (IC) involves a series of word-picture descriptions of what the innovation can look like (ideal; acceptable; unacceptable). It describes the innovation in action.

A concern is "the composite representation of feelings, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular issue or task" (Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1979, p. 5).

There are seven distinct Stages of Concern:

0- "Awareness, - little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated

1- Information, - a general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail about it is indicated. The person seems to be unworried about himself/herself in relation to the innovation. She/He is interested in substantive aspects of the innovation in a selfless manner, such as general characteristics, effects and requirements for use.

2- Personal, - individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role with the innovation. This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the reward structure of the organization, decision making, and consideration of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment. Financial or status implications of the program for self and colleagues may also be reflected.

3- Management, - attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands are utmost.

4- Consequence, - attention focuses on impact of the innovation on clients in his or her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on relevance of the innovation for clients, evaluation of outcome including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase client outcomes.

5- Collaboration, - the focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding the use of the innovation.

6- Refocusing, - the focus is on the exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative. Individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the innovation" (Hall & Hord, 2011, p.140).

Techniques for addressing Stages of Concern include one legged interviews, open ended concern statements and Stages of Concern questionnaire. For the purpose of this study, the open ended concern statements were used.

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) uses an open ended concern statement – "When you think about [the innovation] what concerns do you have? Please be frank and answer in complete sentences" (Hall & Hord, 2011 p. 146). This question was modified in order to be used in the instrument to, "When you think about the new methodology of the primary thematic integrated curriculum, what concerns do you have? Please be frank and answer in complete sentences." This question was posed to the participants and their responses were transcribed, read, coded, categorized, and then placed into themes.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Type of Study, Design and Justification

In order to explore the concerns of teachers and administrators about the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum, the researcher used a qualitative study design. This design was appropriate because the information that was sought were the perceptions and experiences of both the teachers and the administrators. There was a need for a "complex and detailed understanding of the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 40) that therefore, "empowers individuals to share their stories and hear their voices". The choice of the qualitative design was powered by the underlying philosophical assumptions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Creswell, 2007).

The ontology assumes that there are multiple realities based on the experiences of the various participants. To each participant what he or she experiences is a reality for that person, which may be different from that of another person. In this study, the realities of the participants may be very different and as such, multiple realities may exist.

The epistemological assumption is how the researcher knows what he or she knows. In this case the researcher conducted the research in the field, getting first-hand knowledge of the experiences of the participants. The participants were observed and interviewed in their place of work, within their context. The participants gained their knowledge via their experiences in the field.

The axiological assumption of the study is that it is value laden. The values of the researcher is inherent due the interpretation of the researcher. It must also be noted that the

researcher as instrument is built into the research. As a result the framework for this study is classified as interpretivist (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010).

There are many types of qualitative research designs, such as, narrative research, phenomenology, ethnology, grounded theory and case study (Creswell, 2007). The approach that was chosen for this research was the case study approach (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010). Case studies are exploratory, explanatory and descriptive (Stake, 2010). The researcher adopted the single instrumental case study design (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010), where the "researcher focuses on a concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

Case studies are bounded systems (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010). This research explored a single case bounded by time, one level, one school, and one characteristic of an innovation. A case study involves "detailed in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2007 p.73). It also examined the lived experiences of the participants within their context and environment.

Sampling Procedure, Participants and Justification

There are basically two types of sampling procedures- probability and non-probability sampling (Merriam, 1998). The most common type of probability sampling is random sampling. This is mostly used to generalize the results of a study. As Merriam points out, "Since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research probabilistic sampling is not necessary" (p. 61). "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain an insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

It is for that reason that the sampling procedure used was that of purposeful or purposive sampling (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010). Therefore, only teachers who are presently implementing the new primary curriculum were involved in the study. Another criterion for selection was that the teachers implemented the new curriculum for at least one year. Also, participants were selected from only the Standard One level. The sample size was six (6) participants; three (3) teachers from the Standard One classes together with the three (3) administrators, who were the principal, vice principal and the head of department for that specific level.

For the purpose of anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were used. The three teachers selected were Ms. April, Ms. May and Ms. June and the three administrators were Ms. Principal, Ms. Vp and Ms. Hod.

Ms. April has been a teacher for the past seventeen years. During this time she was placed at the Standard One level. She is the holder of a Bachelor of Education Degree from the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Ms. April attended the orientation workshop intended for Standard One teachers at one of the venues in Central Trinidad in the month of June 2013. She has been implementing the thematic integrated curriculum since September of 2013.

Ms. May has been a teacher at the Standard One level for the past seven years. She attended Corinth Teachers College and is the holder of a Teachers' Diploma. She attended the orientation workshop in June of 2013, and has been implementing the thematic integrated curriculum since September of 2013.

Ms. June has been a teacher for the past twenty two years. She attended Corinth Teachers College and is the holder of a Teachers' Diploma. She attended the orientation

workshop in June of 2013, and has been implementing the thematic integrated curriculum since September of 2013.

Ms. Principal was a teacher at the said school and recently became the principal of the institution. She has been in that post for the past three years. She attended the two day orientation session for principals and school supervisors in May of 2013.

Ms. Vp was also a teacher at the school and was promoted to the post of Vice Principal (acting) on 14th February 2014. She has been teaching for the past thirty-seven years. She is the holder of a Teachers' Diploma from Valsayn Teachers' College and a Bachelor of Education degree in Literacy from the University of the West Indies. Miss Vp attended the orientation session for the implementation of the thematic integrated curriculum in June 2013, as she was at that time a teacher of an infant class.

Ms. Hod was also a teacher at the school and was recently promoted to the post of Head of Department responsible for the junior department. She holds a Bachelor of Education Degree in Educational Administration from the University of the West Indies. She did not attend the orientation session for the implementation of the thematic integrated curriculum.

The school that was used for the study was the New Age Primary School (pseudonym), a suburban primary school located in the Caroni Education District. The school has a teaching staff of thirty five (35) including the administration, an ancillary staff of five (5), two (2) security guards and eight hundred and fifty (850) pupils.

Data Collection, Instruments, Ethical Issues and Justification

Three sources of information are document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observations (Creswell, 2007; Meriam, 1998; stake, 2010; Yin, 2010). For the sake of

triangulation, these three sources of information were explored. The main source of information was the semi-structured interviews. There were two distinct interview protocol; one was used for acquiring information from teachers and the other from administrators (See appendix D and appendix E for more information). These interviews provided answers to the questions of concerns about the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the researcher the ability to follow an interview protocol as a guide while neither being too restricted nor unstructured. The interview protocol that was created followed guidelines from the CBAM. The questions were open ended and exploratory, thus allowing the participants to freely express themselves. An interview summary form was completed to assist in analysis (Dawson, 2002).

The other sources of information provided support for the interviews. Document analysis was done to gather information concerning what was in the thematic approach from the standpoint of the curriculum guide as well as from what was actually done in the classroom. The researcher perused the curriculum guide and compared what was there with what was recorded in the teachers' record and evaluation, schemes of work and daily plans at the end of the week. Notes were taken which were coded and placed into themes. These themes were then written in a narrative format.

Through the observation the researcher had a first-hand view of the source of the problem. Field notes were taken to assist in analysis later (Dawson, 2002). The observation was a precursor to the interviews so that issues that were observed could be clarified during the interview. The researcher used an observation template (Stake, 2010) which was a sheet of paper divided lengthwise with broad headings. Observations made, as well as the researcher's

own reflections (which were bracketed), were recorded. These notes were then used to describe the activities and a narrative was written.

The ethical procedures employed were firstly, requesting permission for the study to be conducted (See appendix A). After approval was given (See appendix B), the teachers and administrators were contacted via letter which informed of the reason for the study and again permission was sought for the interviews, document analysis and observations (See appendix C).

In the letter, participants were informed of their right to anonymity as well as the safeguards to keep all information confidential. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were asked to be as honest as possible. The name of the school was withheld and a pseudonym was given. The participants were also given pseudonyms.

Validity

Validity was ensured through the process of triangulation and peer review. Triangulation was achieved through the use of three data collection strategies namely, document analysis, semi structured interviews and observations (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2010).

Experience in Conducting the Study

The study was conceptualized in early September of 2014. However, the direction of the study kept changing and only became focused in January of 2015. After much reading and haggling, the researcher then decided what he actually wanted to research - the concerns of administrators and teachers about the methodology of the new thematic integrated curriculum. The researcher had researched conceptual frameworks of diffusion and educational change, but

then decided to employ the theoretical framework of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM).

In March of 2015, the observations were conducted. The observations were approximately twenty minutes each. Photographs of the classrooms were taken to assist in their analysis. However, due to end of term exams and other school activities such as field trips and "fun" days, the interviews had to wait until school reopened in the month of April.

The documents were also photographed and uploaded to the computer for further observation and analysis. Comparisons were made among the various documents that were presented. The documents that were examined were the curriculum guide, the scheme of work, the daily plans and the record and evaluation, together with children's books.

Interviews were conducted in the month of April and analysis began at the same time. The researcher wanted to get an idea of the concerns of administrators before hearing those of the teachers, so administrators' interviews were held first. These interviews were approximately thirty minutes each and were conducted during the lunch period. Teachers' interviews followed and these were also held during the lunch period in the quiet and comfortable computer lab.

The teachers' interviews were also digitally recorded and uploaded to a computer. The digital recordings were transcribed, read, coded using in vivo codes, placed into categories and then themes were created. It was a daunting task! Each interview took about three hours to transcribe, and then the work of analysing began.

Data Analysis

With regard to research question one, "What are the concerns of teachers regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New

Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?" the classroom observation provided much needed background references for the interviews. The document analysis also provided a context for the interviews. However, the interviews provided the bulk of the concerns of the teachers regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated approach.

A semi-structured interview protocol was established and conducted. The interview was digitally recorded and uploaded to a computer, which was then transcribed, read, coded using in vivo codes, placed into categories and then themes were derived. In vivo codes are codes were used in an effort to reduce researcher bias during the analysis phase of the study.

Data analysis for question two, "What are the concerns of administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?" was almost the same, with the only difference being the interview protocol used. Firstly the interviews were transcribed whilst they were listened to. Next, the transcripts were read while each recording was replayed and any errors were corrected. Then, the transcripts were read and coded on the margins of the page. These codes were then compared and placed into categories. Finally, the categories were placed into overarching themes.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to the methodology of teaching; content, assessment and resources will not be investigated due to limited time and opportunity costs.

Participants are delimited to those who have been involved in the implementation of the new primary curriculum for at least one year at the Standard One level.

Limitations

The study is limited by gender since there are no male teachers in the departments where the new primary curriculum was implemented. Therefore only female teachers were used in the study. Additionally, there are no male personnel in the administration which comprise of a principal, vice principal and heads of department.

This study cannot be generalized since it is based on samples and data collected from a specific class level in only one school in the country of Trinidad and Tobago. Another limitation is due to the culture, context and milieu of the said school under study. This school culture is unique to the New Age Primary School in terms of setting, situation and student intake.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The data that were collected emanated from three sources: document analysis, observation and semi-structured interviews. The document analysis served as a precursor to the observation and both the document analysis and observation informed the interviews. Document analysis and observations were done in the classrooms.

Document Analysis

The documents that were analysed were the curriculum guides, the instructional toolkit, the teachers' records and the pupils' books. The curriculum guides are written according to subjects areas. The topics are written according to content, skills, dispositions, outcomes and elaborations for each of the nine subject areas. However, the instructional toolkit is organized according to themes and topics; the subjects are interwoven or integrated.

Observation of the teachers' documentation showed that the scheme of work was prepared following the curriculum guides and as such it was subject based, not thematic. However, the teachers' records (record and evaluation) indicated the use of the thematic approach. This seemed rather confusing.

The pupils' books were then observed. It was found that the pupils had books for every subject area. They were being taught according to the various subjects. There was evidence of differentiated instruction through scaffolding of the content being taught. Literacy was taught across the curriculum being evident in the pupils' books. There was no evidence of project based instruction. This approach seemed to be used at the end of instruction. There was no evidence to indicate the use of multiple intelligences during instruction (See appendix I).

Observation

The classrooms are equipped with a white board, a cupboard and a classroom library. They each have the dimension of approximately thirty six square metres, and are separated by blackboards in an open floor plan layout. The seating accommodation comprised of varying numbers of individual desks and chairs all neatly lined up facing the front of the classroom. There was no setting or layout for group work activities (See appendix H).

During initial observation of the three classrooms, it was observed that in Classroom 1 the desks were lined up in neat rows all facing the front of the classroom. However, there was evidence of students' work displayed on every available space in the classroom. A large welcome chart and student motivation chart enticed one to enter the classroom. There were pupil - created charts displayed on the walls, craft items hanging from the ceiling, pupil- created machines displayed in the science corner, and creative writing pieces and art works displayed on the outer walls of the classroom. At a glance the classroom was well decorated with pupil - created artefacts. The environment was warm and inviting.

The teacher taught a lesson on the weather, from the teacher's toolkit (p. 53) entitled,' I Love the Rain'. The teacher followed the instructional toolkit to the letter. For the group work activities, the desks remained in place but the pupils turned their seats around and made groups of six pupils. There was one group of seven. The pupils viewed a video, discussed the events, worked in groups and presented to the whole group.

Pupils were then paired to create a weather chart, which was an art and craft activity. The pupils were not told how to make their chart, they were given the materials and told to create their charts however they wished.

Classroom 2 was a bit different. In this classroom, there was no visible welcome chart nor pupils' artefacts around the classroom. There were a few charts decorating the walls of the classroom. However, the seating arrangement was the same. All the desks were neatly lined up facing the front of the classroom. The lessons were taught in the same manner following the instructional toolkit.

In Classroom 3 there was a marked difference, in that there were no charts displayed. This classroom appeared to be a traditional type of classroom setting. The seating arrangement was the same, with all of the pupils' desks were facing the front of the classroom. There was no evidence of group work. However, during the classroom teaching observation, the teacher followed the instructional toolkit as the previous two teachers, and pupils turned their chairs to work in groups of two or three.

The researcher found that the teachers were teaching the same thing in the department using the same resources and strategies. It was found that they were using the instructional toolkit to the letter without modifications.

Concerns that arose as noted by the researcher: noise, classroom space, materials and resources, disruption of other classes with the video and audio.

Interviews

Themes that came out of the interviews were: use of resources, time, group work, overcrowding, specialist teachers, classroom too small, open classroom, noise, child centred fun, multiple intelligences, no integration, lack of support, teachers not properly trained for thematic integrated approach and no support for teachers after "training" (See appendix F).

The overarching question that guided the study was "What are the concerns of teachers and administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic, integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?" There were two sub questions which focused the research.

Research Question 1

In relation to the first sub-question, "What are the concerns of teachers regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?" it was found that teachers were concerned with time, adequate resources, physical structure of the structure of the school building and challenges with specific content areas.

Time

All three teachers found that time was of concern to the implementation of the thematic integrated curriculum. Two teachers looked at time that was used in the classroom, while one teacher looked at preparation time for teaching. Ms. April said that, "Doing group work takes time". She went on to state that, "Projects takes up lots of valuable classroom time." Ms. June commented that, "Project based learning, if it is a classroom project, requires lots of time, since children need step by step monitoring. At this level pupils need reassurance and direction." Ms. May confessed that "Planning for me takes a lot of time, but now that we working together it is a bit easier."

Resources

Ms April stated that there was a "lack of hands on resources". Ms. June stated that, "The constructivist approach requires enough resources for each child but only a few resources are available." Ms. May said that "although there are some resources, these are not enough for an entire class to use".

School Structure

Teachers also found that class sizes were too large for the available space. Ms. April pointed out that "classroom space was too small for group activities as well as to display children's work". She saw a need for individualized classrooms to control "noise" when doing group work and viewing videos. Another teacher also pointed out that, "the physical structure of the school building does not allow for proper delivery, with the excessive interference of noise level."

Content Material

Content for integrated subject areas was a concern to teachers. Ms. April found discomfort in the use of the multiple intelligences and was uncomfortable with certain subjects. These were the areas where she was challenged and found great difficulty in teaching. She thought that she was not doing justice to these subject areas. She said that "specialist teachers are required to teach areas such PE, Visual Arts and Music".

Collaboration

One teacher found that collaboration was needed to get the job done. She said, "…now that we working together it is a bit easier." Another teacher lamented that, "Due to the number of classes at this level it is difficult to get full cooperation and consistency in preparing for delivery of the curriculum."

Research Question 2

In relation to the second sub-question "What are the concerns of administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?" the concerns of administration were that of resources, time, not completing the programme of work, classroom space and insufficient training.

Resources

One theme that ran throughout was that of resources for the methodology. The vice principal reflected that the "resources that were sent were not being fully utilized". The head of department reasoned that "adequate resources are not provided for all topics and activities". The principal said that, "Adequate resources are not available, technology, access to the internet even computers; we have fifteen computers and classes have thirty children."

Time

While speaking about resources, the principal said, “It is time consuming to access the resources; teachers have to leave their classes to come downstairs to collect resources.” One administrator pointed out that “the methodology of yesteryear is still being used” and that “there is no visible use of the multiple intelligences”. The principal reasoned that, “some teachers operate in their comfort zone and they need time to understand the strategies, they need time to change.” Another administrator noted that this approach “seems to be time consuming” and that there was “a risk of other topics not being covered”.

School Structure

The Head of Department commented on the new curriculum stating that “this approach encourages group activity, however, the classrooms are not always suitable for this due to overcrowding”. The principal said, “The nature of the classrooms do not facilitate the group activities as the noise disrupts other classes.”

Training

When the principal was asked about her concerns regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum she said, “Teachers do not understand the thematic approach, they think that if you put everything in one book that is thematic.” When asked about Project Based Learning again she said, “Teachers do not understand that the purpose of this approach is to develop skills.”

The HOD lamented, “Teachers are not properly trained to deliver the curriculum using this thematic integrated approach. There is also very little support for teachers after being trained for such a short period of time to ensure that proper implementation takes place.”

Collaboration

The principal cited the need for collaboration, saying that there is a need for “a locally based website where teachers can have access to anything that they want. Many teachers don’t like to come and say we don’t know, so they don’t have to go to another teacher and ask or come to me and ask, they could go straight to the internet and get it on their own.”

There were many similarities between the teachers and administrators as seen in Table 1, in that they were both concerned with the additional time that was required to teach this new thematic integrated approach. They were also concerned with the resources; although the teachers saw a need for adequate resources, the administration saw insufficient use of the resources. Available classroom space was another concern regarding using the methodology of group work. Both administrators and teachers were concerned with the size of the classrooms and the number of children in each classroom. Another concern was the open concept in the structure of the building; this led to noise and other disturbances to other classes. Both the administration and teachers thought that there was need for continued support from the Ministry of Education in the form of support personnel and both saw a need for increased collaboration among teachers. Only the administration thought that the teachers needed more training. Teachers were concerned with content area with which they were uncomfortable teaching.

Table 1 shows the themes that were derived from the interviews of the teachers and the administrators

Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago	**Question 2: What are the concerns of administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum at the Standard One level at the New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago**
Time	School structure
Resources not enough	Noise/ disruptions
Hands on resources	Risk of subject/content area not covered
Structure of the school	Time consuming
ICT	Adequate resources
Collaboration	Classroom suitability
Classroom space	Overcrowding
Noise during group work/videos	Lack of training for teachers
Specialist teachers	Support for teachers
Projects time consuming	Collaboration

According to the CBAM the teachers had concerns that were in the Management stage of concerns. Teachers were concerned with managing time, resources, and content material. However, one teacher had Collaboration concerns.

Administrators had concerns in the area of Management as well. Based on the CBAM, they were concerned with the management of time, resources, and classroom control. However it was also found that there were other concerns, as one administrator had a concern in the Collaboration stage, citing the need for a collaborative effort in planning and implementing. Another administrator had concern for Consequence, as she looked at the consequence for not completing the programme of work.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendation

The concerns regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum from both the teachers and administrators were: time, resources, space, physical size of classroom, number of children, the structure of the school building, teachers' confidence in content, training and support.

Time

Both teachers and administrators were concerned with time. Time is required for the innovation, in this case the thematic integrated curriculum, to be fully understood and implemented (Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Penuel, et al, 2007). The teachers had difficulty managing the time for group work and project based learning. One administrator pointed out that teachers needed assistance with time management.

Since the approach to teaching was new to many teachers, those who were resistant to change needed the extra time to prepare for the lessons of the next day. Hord and Huling-Austin (1986) posit that in the implementation process the price that is paid is time. Until teachers are familiar with the new approach they will require time. Badugela, (2012) posits that with the curriculum implementation in South Africa, there were time constraints and therefore, implementation could not be done successfully.

In fact, curriculum implementation in Trinidad and Tobago is a phased implementation over a five year period. The first phase of the implementation was in the Infant levels and Standard One in 2013, phase two saw the Standard Two joining the programme in the academic year 2014 to 2015. Standards Three, Four and Five will implement the new curriculum over the

next three years. The time that is of consequence, is that of granting teachers the time to become acquainted with the new approach.

The concerns that administrators had regarding time was along the lines of 'time on task' and 'time management' within the classroom. Administrators were concerned with the curriculum not being completed due to the amount of time that was used to teach the thematic integrated curriculum. As Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) point out, teachers need time to try out new aspects of change which they can increase incrementally. Additionally, teachers and administrators thought that the new approach required time, whether it was for planning, implementing the thematic integrated approach, or simply learning how to master navigating all of the given documents.

Resources

According to the literature, the availability of resources can influence the implementation of an innovation (Barrow & Delisle, 2010; Carless, 1997; Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Penuel, et al, 2007; Rennie, 2001). Teachers have expressed that although there were resources, these were inadequate for the number of children in the various classes. Since the new approach is heavily dependent on resources, the availability of such resources were crucial to the implementation of the innovation.

Additionally, access to the resources pose complications of administrative bureaucracy (Barrow & Delisle, 2010). In this particular school because there was a lack of storage space within close proximity to the classrooms, resources were stored downstairs in the stock room. Teachers who needed resources had to leave the classrooms and go to the stockroom to access

the materials, which also resulted in a loss of teaching time, due to the signing out and signing in of the materials taken.

The administration had two viewpoints on resources. On one hand they saw that the resources were underutilized, while on the other hand they saw that the resources were inadequate. Fortunately, they all agreed that at least there were some resources, unlike the South African context where the lack of resources was a contributing factor that posed a challenge to the implementation of the innovation (Badugela, 2012).

In utilizing the constructivist approach in the school, teachers were required to provide the pupils with materials to construct their own knowledge. As the resources were not adequate, teachers were challenged in using the constructivist approach to teaching. Although group work meant that each group would share resources, resources were still inadequate due to the number of groups that were created. Some resources that were designed for a specific subject area and referred to in the instructional toolkit, were not provided to the teachers, such as CDs. It also meant that teachers had to do extra research in sourcing materials to teach concepts from subject areas in which they were not specialized, such as VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts), Music and Physical Education.

School Structure

The structure of the school was identified as a concern by both teachers and administrators, to the implementation of the thematic integrated curriculum. At this school, the building has an open floor plan, where there are walls around the perimeter of the building but "classrooms have no walls and are marked off by movable room dividers" (Gillies, 2007 p. 210).

This type of structure allowed "noise" to travel through the entire department thus causing "disruptions" to other classes. Teachers were concerned that their classrooms were making too much noise when engaged in group activities. These group activities were then kept at a minimum.

Another concern that was shared by the teachers was that of the classroom size and class size. In other words, teachers were concerned about the density of the classrooms. These classrooms measured approximately thirty-six square metres and had an average student population of twenty-five pupils. This space posed a challenge to teachers when considering group work. Badugela, (2012) stated that in South Africa, there were crowded classrooms which was one factor that contributed to the hindrance of the implementation process. According to Gillies (2007), adequate space is required for instruction as well as pedagogical knowledge.

Confidence in content

Rennie, (2001) posits that teachers' confidence in the content area is also instrumental in innovation implementation. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, Barrow and Delisle, (2010) looked at the implementation of the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) lower secondary Science curriculum and found that teachers were generally uncomfortable teaching topics with which they were unfamiliar. One of the findings of this research was that of teacher's lack of confidence in teaching areas of music, dance, drama, and visual arts. One teacher proposed that specialist teachers be employed to teach those subjects with which she was uncomfortable teaching.

However, it was noted by Rennie (2001) that teachers can develop confidence in content area through collaboration. Teachers can therefore collaborate via change facilitators in the form of principal, vice principal, resource teachers, teacher specialist and curriculum coordinators to gain experience with content areas (Fernandez, Ritchie & Barker, 2008; Hord & Huling-Austin, 1986).

Training and support

"To facilitate implementation, curriculum designers need to provide the necessary support for their recommended curricular innovations or modifications" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004 p. 252). Teachers expressed the concern that the curriculum was neither supported nor monitored. Of greater concern was training for senior staff. Perceived support from senior staff also boosts confidence and facilitates implementation (Waugh & Godfrey, 1993).

Additionally, stakeholders must also support the initiative. In looking at the Malaysian context, Min, Rashid, & Nazri, (2012) found that the thematic approach makes teachers' teaching more planned, systematic, active and interesting; however, they found that support is required from stakeholders. Leung (2008) posits that there are benefits as well as challenges to the project based approach to teaching. As in the Hong Kong context, again, support for teachers is critical. Within the context of this research it was found that teachers were struggling to keep abreast of the teaching strategy. One administrator cited the need to give notes because that is what parents want, demonstrating and admitting to giving in to stakeholder's needs.

The main concern of the constructivist theory is that of training and support. The initial training is only the beginning of the developmental stage; there should be some sort of training

and support throughout the initiative (Crawford, et al., 1998). Crawford et al. continue that in many cases after the initial training, teachers are left to implement the innovation on their own without support. This was also a finding from this research. One administrator commented that after the initial sensitization session, there weren't any follow up support for teachers. Teachers were left on their own to implement the innovation.

Recommendations

In addressing the concerns of time, resources, confidence in content, school structure, and training and support, recommendations can be made according to three categories: teacher recommendations, school recommendations and Ministry recommendations.

Teacher recommendations:

In considering the concern of time, collaboration can be a facilitating factor. Teachers can work together thereby reducing the workload of the individual teacher, which in turn would reduce the time that is required to plan and implement the curriculum.

Confidence in content can only be achieved through training and support. However, teachers play an important role in that they must make themselves available for the training. In this light, teachers can engage in professional development sessions where they can access information and practical demonstrations of the pedagogical knowledge that is required for the successful implementation of the thematic integrated curriculum. These professional development sessions must be sanctioned by the administration of the school, who should also be in attendance to demonstrate leading by example.

School recommendations:

Outfitting schools with adequate resources is of paramount importance, therefore schools must be proactive in dealing with the Ministry of Education to be outfitted with an adequate number of resources that are required for the size of the school. Where overcrowding is an issue, school must reduce its intake of students which would then allow for smaller class sizes and comfortable classes to conduct group work.

In relation to the structure of the school, the Ministry of Education needs to construct walls within the existing structure to create individual classrooms. This will enable the classes to operate without disturbing other classes through their social learning activities.

Ministry recommendations:

Training and support must also be provided by the Ministry of Education, which as the literature states, throughout the implementation process. Providing support would facilitate teachers in their day to day activities thereby allowing them to become comfortable with the new approach. Surprisingly, the Ministry of Education had suggested, through the Curriculum Division, the formation of a monitoring and support structure called the Curriculum Implementation Support Team (CIST), which was to assist teachers and administrators during the implementation process. However, this support team never materialized.

Conclusion

As regards the research question, ‘What are the concerns of teachers and administrators regarding the methodology of the thematic integrated approach at the Standard One level at the

New Age Primary School in Trinidad and Tobago?' it was found that teachers and administrators shared the same concerns of time, resources, structure of the school, confidence in content areas, collaboration and training and support. These findings are also supported in the literature, where various schools internationally, regionally and even locally had similar concerns during the implementation of an innovation. Should these concerns be dealt with then the implementation of the thematic integrated curriculum would be more successful.

Further research is needed to find out the effectiveness of the new curriculum in terms of pupils' performance, which would be a quantitative study. In this way pupils' results can be compared to those who are not using the thematic integrated curriculum. Additionally, an extended research can be conducted to evaluate the curriculum implementation process, which would assist technocrats in the implementation of innovations in the future.

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Appendix A: Letter requesting permission to conduct study

Shazaad Mohammed

New Age Primary School,

School Street,

Caroni.

9th February, 2015.

The Principal,

New Age Primary School,

School Street,

Caroni.

Dear Madam,

I am presently pursuing the Masters in Education concentration in curriculum at the University of the West Indies. As a requirement for the fulfilment of the degree, a research study is to be conducted and presented.

I have chosen a qualitative case study researching the concerns of teachers and administrators about the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum at the standard one level. I am therefore seeking permission to conduct the study at the institution and be allowed to interact with members of staff who are participants in the research.

Thanking you for your kind consideration and cooperation in this matter,

I am,

Yours respectfully,

_____

Shazaad Mohammed

Appendix B: Letter granting permission to conduct study

The Principal,

New Age Primary School,

School Street,

Caroni.

9th February, 2015.

Dear Mr. Mohammed,

In reference to your letter requesting permission to conduct a qualitative case study researching the concerns of teachers and administrators about the methodology of the thematic integrated primary curriculum, permission is hereby granted.

Yours respectfully,

_____

Principal

New Age Primary School

Appendix C: Letter to participants

Shazaad Mohammed

New Age Primary School

School Street,

Caroni.

9th February, 2015.

Dear Ms. Principal/VP/HOD/April/May/June,

I am presently pursuing the Masters in Education concentration in curriculum at the University of the West Indies. As a requirement for the fulfilment of the degree, a research study is to be conducted and presented.

I have chosen a qualitative case study researching the concerns of teachers and administrators about the methodology of the thematic integrated curriculum at the standard one level. As a result I am requesting that you be participants in the research. The research would entail interviews, observations and document analysis.

Please be advised that all precautions will be taken to guarantee anonymity of the institution and participants and that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thanking you for your kind consideration and cooperation in this matter,

I am,

Yours respectfully,

_____

Shazaad Mohammed

Appendix D: Semi structured interview protocol

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Before the new primary curriculum was implemented, what would you say, were the strengths of the old curriculum?
3. How have you implemented the new Primary curriculum?
4. What strategies have you used?
    a. Group work
    b. Constructivist approach
    c. Thematic approach
    d. Project based learning
    e. Multiple intelligences
    f. Infusion of ICT
    g. Infusion of literacy
    h. Infusion of numeracy
5. How have you used these strategies?
    a. Group work
    b. Constructivist approach
    c. Thematic approach
    d. Project based learning
    e. Multiple intelligences
    f. Infusion of ICT
    g. Infusion of literacy
    h. Infusion of numeracy
6. What are your concerns for the new approach to teaching?
    a. Group work
    b. Constructivist approach
    c. Thematic approach
    d. Project based learning
    e. Multiple intelligences
7. What are the strengths of the new curriculum?
8. What recommendations do you have for the implementation of this new approach?

Appendix E: Semi structured interview protocol for administrators

1. What is your position at this institution?
2. How long have you been in administration?
3. What do you understand by the term thematic integrated curriculum?
4. How do you think it is different from the previous curriculum?
5. What strategies are the standard one teachers using in their classrooms?
6. What are your concerns regarding the methodology of the new curriculum?
    a. Group work
    b. Constructivist approach
    c. Thematic approach
    d. Project based learning
    e. Multiple intelligences
7. What are the strengths of the new curriculum
8. What are the limitations of the new curriculum
9. What are your recommendations regarding the methodology of the new primary curriculum?

Appendix F: Interview Themes that emerged

Themes that emerged Ms. May – 14/4/2015

Group work – used from time to time, challenge – disruptive behaviour, smaller groups, noise, physical structure

Constructivist approach – teacher preparedness

Thematic Approach – not using book, challenge – no. of classes, collaboration, old curriculum, separate books/subjects,

PBL – theory to project, time, preparation,

MI – experiences to inform learning, traditional

ICT – not ICT savvy,

Literacy – working

Numeracy –

Strengths of Thematic Approach– better prepared for secondary school, history, community, changes

Recommend – layout change back to subject centred, challenges – time, breakdown, ICT challenge, cooperative, thematic approach

VP Interview – Themes that emerged

V.P. knows the strategies for the thematic integrated approach,

Strategies are over simplified

Group work concern is noise

Teacher preparation, same teaching methods as before, drill and practice, rote learning, chalk and talk

No exposure to songs and singing, not familiar with music/drama terms, no access to CD for referenced material given in toolkit.

Constructivist approach not applied, comfort zone,

Project based learning – not visible, projects go home for parental input

Concern – parents want notes

Teachers see MI as after school events

MOE does not provide support for school based programs/ wants after school programs

Schools not built for the approach, noise levels, disruptive.

April Interview – Themes that emerged

Noise from group work, planning and preparation – not all lessons are in the toolkit, classroom space, resources, purchase, locate materials, time, internet, getting the information, unsure of which document to use – curriculum guide or toolkit,

Constructivist approach – used in B.Ed cooperative learning is used as much as possible – the principal always says too much noise.

Thematic approach – not much repetition, linkages are made,

Project based learning – time, materials, noise, projects are done in class

Strengths- group work, hands on activities, reduced content, not much repetition, writing – creative writing, journals express themselves,

Recommendations- individualized classrooms, adequate resources, ICT- laptops and projectors, PE and Music – specialized teachers – uncomfortable demonstrating PE and Music.

June Interview – Themes that emerged

Limited availability of resources

Physical structure of school building does not allow for proper delivery (with the excessive interference from the noise levels)

Collaboration for planning and best practices

ICT is not a strong point – difficulty in researching materials – laptop and MMP not always available when needed

Not subject based

Group work is limited by the lack of space

Rearrangement of furniture is time consuming

PBL – classroom project requires lots of time – sending home projects presents a different challenge.

HOD Interview – Themes that emerged

Time consuming

Risk that other topics not taught

Adequate resources not provided for all activities

Classroom not suited for group activity

Overcrowding

Lack of training

Very little support for teachers

Principal Interview – Themes that emerged

Too much chalk and talk, content, time, nature of classroom, noise, resources, technology, access to internet, adequate computers,

GW – seating, classroom space

CA – time consuming,

TA – lack of understanding,

PBL – purpose of PBL

MI – training

Time management, classroom space, smaller class size 15 – 18, collaboration, reduction in content material.

Appendix G: Open Ended Question

1. How long have you been teaching? _____
2. What are your qualifications? _____
3. Where did you obtain your qualifications? _____
4. Did you attend the orientation workshop for the implementation of the new curriculum?
5. When you think about the new methodology of the primary thematic integrated curriculum what concerns do you have? Please be frank and answer in complete sentences

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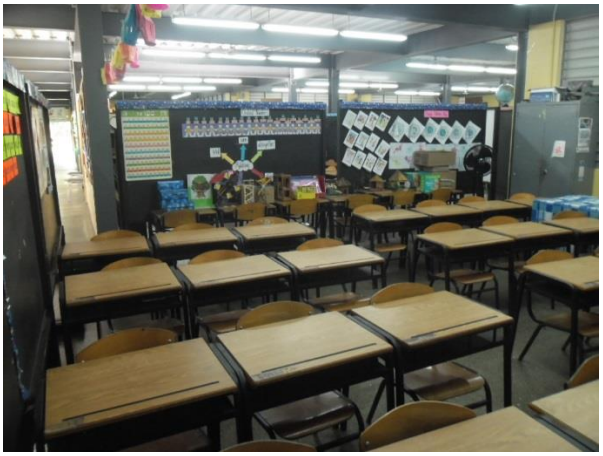
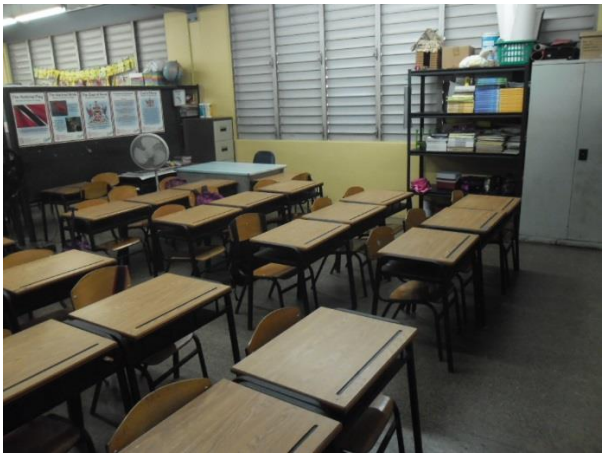
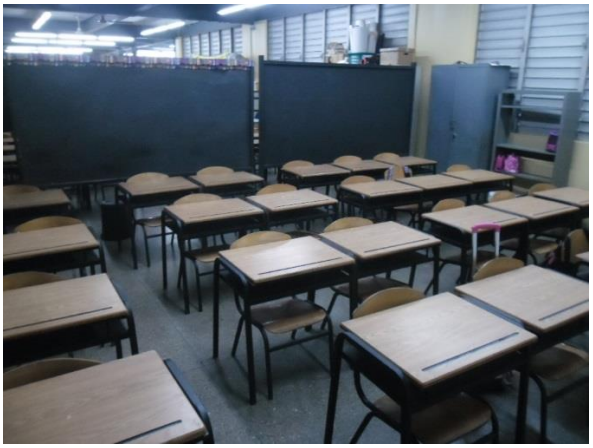
Appendix H: Observation



Classroom 1



Classroom 2



Classroom 3

Appendix I: Document Observation Notes

The curriculum guides are written according to subjects areas. However the instructional toolkit is organized according to themes and topics; the subjects are interwoven or integrated. Observation of the teachers' documentation shows:

Subject based scheme of work - concern

Subject based teaching - concern

Students possess books for each subject area - concern

Teachers record indicate thematic approach

Evidence of differentiated instruction through scaffolding of content

Literacy is evident across the curriculum

Project based learning not visible - concerns

Multiple intelligences not visible - concerns