

ROLE OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES IN TEACHING –LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract

This paper discussed the roles of prior knowledge of instructional objective in teaching-learning process. It portrays the functions of instructional objectives in teaching learning process. Some of the functions include: directs teacher on major emphasis of his lesson, serves as basis for establishing and justifying an educational programme, guides teacher in selection of appropriate subject-matter, learning experiences, materials and methods of teaching. Other function include; guides; instructional evaluation. This paper also x-rayed the importance of pre-exposing students to instructional objectives before instruction. These include among others: specification of desired behaviour, provision of sense of security to the students, provision of clear goals to be achieved and helps students in independent learning. Some of the recommendations made includes that teachers should plan their lessons with clearly stated instructional objectives and that the learners should be exposed to instructional objectives before the commencement of a lesson.

Introduction

Instructional objectives also known as behavioural objectives specify the actual behaviour expected of the students after going through instruction (Offorma 1994). Instructional objectives have been described as statements that describe what the learner will do or be able to do once instruction has been completed (Dienyel 1995). They describe the learner's behaviour that should result from teaching. They are therefore the learning product which the teacher hopes will result from his lesson. Okorie, (1986), Mkpa, (1989), Olaitan and Ali (1997), all view instructional objectives as learning outcomes stated in precise measurable terms which are expected to be achieved at the end of a given instruction. In the same vein, Akuma (2008) defines instructional objective as statement of educational or learning outcomes stated in precise measurable terms which are expected to be achieved after each lesson delivery. He further explains that instructional objectives identify the information, skills, values, kinds of thinking and feelings that should be incorporated in the unit of lesson being planned. Instructional objectives are decisions of learning outcomes prior to teaching.

Good statement of instructional objectives presents the performance or behaviour the learner should be able to exhibit after each lesson, which indicates that learning has taken place. Instructional objectives are stated using action verbs like list, define, explain, discuss, evaluate, and construct among others (Akuma, 2008). The definition of instructional objectives given by Olaitan and Ali (1997) is a clear indication of the need for students to have prior knowledge of instructional objectives. Olaitan and Ali (1997:384) define instructional objectives as:

“decisions made prior to instruction by teachers, students or teachers and students that identify precisely what kind of thinking, feeling or physical behaviour the students are intended to be able to use, with specified information, skills, or values, if desired learning has taken place”

This definition implies that students should not only have prior knowledge of instructional objectives but should also take part in stating them. This will enable students to be active participants in teaching learning process. Statements of instructional objectives are useful to the extent they specify what a learner should be able to do when demonstrating his or her mastery of the objectives (Nzewi 1990). Therefore, one can determine the extent of the learners' mastery of an instruction by observing his/her behaviour or performance at the end of instruction.

Nigeria is currently in an era where it is generally believed that there is falling or fallen standard of education. This notion is evidenced in general poor performance of students both in secondary and tertiary levels of education. The falling or fallen standard of education in Nigeria, is also shown in high rate of examination malpractice (Onu-Ogbu-2006), poor transfer of knowledge among graduates, and inability to apply supposedly acquired skill in the labour market (Ene 2008). There are therefore, clarion calls from every angle for educators to find solution to this ugly trend. It therefore becomes imperative that teachers should go back to the drawing board to explore and exploit the use of instructional objectives for better teaching and learning. There is need for teachers to pre-expose learners to instructional objectives before commencement of instruction. This will not only help in carrying the learners along but will aid them in meaningful independent study. This paper therefore explores the roles of prior knowledge of instructional objective in teaching learning process.

Functions of Instructional Objectives in Teaching- Learning Process.

Instructional objectives perform certain functions in teaching- learning process. Instructional objectives identify which learnings are more valued by the teacher, the students and the school (Olaitan and Ali 1997). Olaitan and Ali note that not all skills, knowledge, values and behaviours are included in an instruction. Instructional objectives therefore x-ray choices of worthwhile ones made. Some functions of instructional objectives include the following:

1. ***Directs a Teacher on Major Emphasis of a Lesson:*** Aguokogbuo (2000) states that instructional objectives direct the teacher on what to emphasize during teaching-learning process. In other words, instructional objectives identify the direction and scope of a lesson being planned. They identify the information, skills, values and activities to be included in a lesson.
2. ***Serves as a Basis for Establishing and Justifying an Educational programme:*** According to Mkpa (1987), instructional objectives serve as a basis for establishing and justifying a relevant educational programme of measurable quality. Mkpa explains that some tasks as curriculum planning, curriculum revision, and evaluation are best facilitated through effective utilization of instructional objectives. He stresses that in each of these tasks, instructional objectives serve as the pointer that guide and direct the activities of all who are involved in the planning or revision exercise.
3. ***Guides Teacher in Selecting Appropriate Subject Matter, Learning Experiences, Materials and Methods for Teaching:*** Offorma (1994), is of the view that the selection of appropriate subject matter and learning experiences, as well as materials and methods to be used in teaching is guided by instructional objectives. The point here is that knowledge of objectives is the first step towards lesson planning. Instructional objectives help to determine what to teach, how to teach and with what material.

4. ***Guides Instructional Evaluation:*** Olaitan and Ali (1997) posit that instructional objectives form the basis of instructional evaluation. Their main function here is to help test the learners, to ascertain the extent they have learned. Instructional objectives offer the key for the construction of tests that will be used to assess the students at the end of instruction. When properly utilized, instructional objectives show clearly the quality and quantity of learning that has taken place. One advantage of this function of instructional objectives is the provision of feedback to teachers regarding their methods and activities. Thus, instructional objectives help to determine whether or not teaching methods are leading to the right direction.
5. ***Aids Teacher in Self-Evaluation:*** In addition to guiding evaluation of students' performance, instructional objectives aid the teacher in self evaluation. According to Mkpa (1987), many teachers and educators would agree that one indicator of a teacher's effectiveness is the extent to which his or her students perform well or achieve highly in examination. When most students fail to answer correctly the questions based on stated instructional objectives, there may be speculation that the teacher is responsible, other factors remaining constant. In the absence of clearly stated instructional objectives, the evaluation of students' performance, and teacher's effectiveness could be difficult.

Okpara (1994) states that instructional objectives help the teacher to select appropriate teaching materials and methods for his or her lesson. Objectives at the specific level determine what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and with what to teach it.

Domains of Instructional Objectives

According to Ogah, Eze, Mbah, and Emesini (2009) instructional objectives are classified into three domains. These are the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. In the same vein, Akuma (2008) states that instructional objectives should be stated to reflect the three domains of educational objectives, which include the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. He stresses that instructional objectives should be so stated to make sure that the learners' intellectual ability, feelings, values, physical abilities, skills and competences are taken care of.

Instructional objectives in the cognitive domain generally refer to expected learning outcomes which pertain to solving mental or intellectual tasks. They emphasize remembering or reproducing something which has been learned. Instructional objectives in the cognitive domain vary from simple recall of learned material to highly original and creative ways of combining and synthesizing new ideas and materials.

Instructional objectives in the affective domain of educational objectives are those learning outcomes which deal with feelings, interests, attitude, values and appreciations. They reflect internalized states of the mind which are nevertheless made manifest in some observable ways through overt behaviours.

In the psychomotor domain instructional objectives describe expected learning outcomes which relate to physical abilities, skills or competences. They describe manipulative and other types of movements that are demonstrated using parts of the body.

Importance of Prior Knowledge of Instructional Objectives

According to Nzewi (1990), prior knowledge of instructional objectives is pre-exposing students to instructional objectives before commencement of instruction. This offers a lot of benefits in teaching-learning process, some of which include the following:

1. ***Specification of Desired Behaviour:*** Alexander, Murphy, Buehl and Sperl (1998), express the importance of pre-exposing students to instructional objectives before instruction. They state that when students have prior knowledge of instructional objectives, the exact behaviour desired and the condition under which the behaviours are to be exhibited are specified. Students therefore do not have to guess what is expected of them in teaching – learning process. The students then can effectively use their time acquiring the behaviours specified to them by the teacher. Otherwise they will be wasting their time trying to infer what exactly is required of them by the teacher.
2. ***Offers Sense of Security:*** Another importance of students having prior knowledge of instructional objectives according to Alexander et al (1998) is that students have a sense of security when they know specifically the competences expected from them in a lesson and the condition under which they are expected to exhibit the competences.
3. ***Provides Students with Clear Goal to be Achieved:*** Tobias (1994) is of the view that prior knowledge of instructional objectives can aid learning. He states that instructional objectives provide students with clear goal which can be used to organize learning activities, help students to study more effectively and reduce time wasted on irrelevant activities. He also opines that prior knowledge of instructional objectives provides students with the criteria with which to evaluate their own progress objectively.
4. ***Motivates Students to Work Hard and Aid Retention:*** Onwuka (1985) writing in favour of exposing students to instructional objectives prior to instruction, states that when teachers know exactly what they are doing and when students understand what is expected of them, both direct their efforts toward the achievement of the set objectives. Time and energy are thus gainfully spent by the class. Students learn better and retain more when given prior knowledge of instructional objectives (Ogunbayo 1984). Ogunbayo explains that when instructional objectives are clearly stated, and exposed to students, it helps both the teacher and the students to cooperatively work towards attainment of the objectives. He stresses that instructional objectives help students to assess and observe their own progress as they work towards the achievement of the set objectives. The progress students make as they work towards achieving instructional objectives helps them to retain learnt material, serve as reinforcement and motivate them to work harder.
5. ***Helps Students to Learn Independently:*** Lending his support for exposing learners to instructional objectives, prior to instruction, Ndubisi (1981) expresses that instructional objectives are useful not only to the teachers but also to the learners. Ndubisi stresses that self-education can go on better if instructional objectives are clearly and specifically mapped out for the learners. The learners can then choose the materials which will enable them achieve the objectives. According to Mkpa (1987), in the absence of the teacher, the students can carry on with their studies if they are aware of the instructional objectives of the unit or topics they are expected to cover. He stresses that this will yield a better result than when no instructional objective are used to guide private studies.
6. ***Guides Teachers and Students for Effective Instruction and Learning:*** According to Okorie (1986:72), “to start teaching without definite objectives in mind is like traveling to an unknown place without direction”. This means that prior knowledge of instructional objectives serve as a guide to both teachers and the learners in teaching- learning process. Teachers plan their lessons better when armed with clearly stated instructional objectives. Okorie (1986) is of the view that students must have instructional objective clearly in their

minds so that they can see sense in the work they are doing or in what they are learning. Mkpa (1987) explains that the sense of direction which prior knowledge of instructional objectives affords the teachers and learners is intensively motivational and indispensable. Mkpa explains that for the learners, instructional objectives suggest to them what to do, how to do it and what to use. Without instructional objectives in mind teaching- learning process ceases to be a purposeful activity, not only to the teacher but also to the learners.

Conclusion

Instructional objectives are statements of measurable learning outcomes in a lesson. It plays crucial roles in planning, delivering and evaluation of a lesson. All the domains of educational objectives- cognitive, affective and psychomotor need to be covered while stating instructional objectives. There is need to expose learners to instructional objectives prior to instruction to guide them in their learning. It is believed that when teachers appropriately state their instructional objectives and uses it to guide the students it will lead to better learning among the students.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should plan their lessons with clearly stated instructional objectives
2. The teacher should endeavour to cover the three domains of educational objectives.
3. The learners should be exposed to instructional objectives before the commencement of a lesson. This will help them to see meaning in what they are learning and appropriately guide their learning.

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