

The Role of Teacher In Curriculum Development

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Abstract

One of the most important elements in education is teacher. Teachers have an important role in formulating, developing, and implementing the curriculum. When the teacher makes mistake in formulating a curriculum, student learning will not be effective. In addition, teachers also have a huge task in the process of learning both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Thus the knowledge of a teacher will determine the quality of the learning. It enable teacher to implement creative and innovative process of education. To do so, teacher needs to have capability in developing the design of curriculum, in order to enhance the quality of instruction and education process.

Keywords : Paradigm, Curriculum Development, Curriculum Leader, Design Curriculum.

A. Introduction

We are now exposed almost daily to far -reaching socio-economic changes with governments increasingly concerned to produce citizens who will be able to respond positively to a new environment, who can adapt and change and learn new skills at different points in their lives and who will contribute to the society which they wish to develop in the future. Most governments invest heavily in education as a proportion of their total budget since they tend to see the educational process as a primary means of producing the sort of intelligent and skilled workforce required to operate in this changing environment at all levels of the economy. We are therefore experiencing a period of expansion and change in many public educational systems

throughout the world, as governments try to implement the sort of educational programs they think will achieve their aims but within the resources available to them. The change is represented by increased access to education at all levels, and a consequent re-thinking of the aims, objectives, and manner of delivery of the curriculum.

Changes to the curriculum are occurring at all levels (from elementary to university) and across subjects. And it is important to remember that the motivation behind educational change (and also curriculum development inside) is socio-political atmosphere.¹ As with most activities in education, curriculum development is not carried out in isolation from other activities, but is part of planning, development, implementation and review cycle. It should be noted that the term can be used to describe development at different levels: large-scale curricular reform (eg. the introduction of “competency-based curriculum”/KBK on 2004, and national review of KBK into KTSP curriculum on 2006), modification of existing programs or making simple changes to one’s own lessons. However, the same principles applied in a range of contexts and to both large and small-scale activities. Some forms of educational development include curriculum development, although usually, educational development refers to any kind of development activity in an educational context.

In a study conducted by Ramparsad (1995), teachers were hopeful that the new educational system would redress the lack of teacher involvement in curriculum development.² Teachers have to adopt new values & spirits of curriculum and implement them in their teaching, since it is the teachers who are responsible for passing on the changes through their teaching to their students. Hence, there is absolute role of teachers in curriculum development.

This paper will discuss how is the development of teachers’ role in educational system, what is the role of teacher in curriculum development, and what are the strategies for teacher involvement in curriculum development.

¹ Chris Kennedy, *Teacher Roles in Curriculum Reform*, (ELTED: autumn, 1996), p. 77.

² Ramparsad, *Attitudes of secondary school science teachers in a former Indian Department of Education towards science curriculum development, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand* (Unpublished M.Ed research report), 1995, p. 29.

B. Discussion

1. Curriculum Development – an Introduction

The word curriculum derives from the Latin *currere* meaning 'to run'. This implies that one of the functions of a curriculum is to provide a template or design which enables learning to take place. Curricula usually define the learning that is expected to take place during a course or programs of study in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, they should specify the main teaching, learning and assessment methods and provide an indication of the learning resources required to support the effective delivery of the course. A curriculum is more than a syllabus. A syllabus describes the content of a program and can be seen as one part of a curriculum. Curriculum is wider than that, it is a product concerning matters, subjects and the methods used as guidelines in instruction process to reach certain educational aims.³

Different concepts of curriculum have emerged from both theoretical and practical perspective in the literature.⁴ A common feature, though, is that curriculum is central to the education process and includes the sum of the teaching and learning activities provided by schools. How we see curriculum and curriculum development directly shapes and influences our practices, so we regularly need to think about what underlies our ideas. Our reasoning and practice are never value-free or neutral.⁵ And an element related to this matter is teacher.

Teachers should accept a research and development role in respect to the curriculum by modifying, adapting, and developing it to suit the needs of individual pupils and particular environment. It is thus a significant feature of this sort of approach that individual

³ Undang-Undang No.20 TH. 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional. Also see, Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 19 Tahun 2005 tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan.

⁴ Abdullah Idi said that instructional process in a school is manifestation of ideal curriculum and actual curriculum. The success of educational process depends on discrepancy between ideal curriculum and actual curriculum. See, Dr. Abdullah Idi, M.Ed, *Pengembangan Kurikulum: Teori dan Praktik*, (Jogjakarta: Arruz Media, 2009), p. 282.

⁵ Andre Rowan, *Teachers as Curriculum Developers: a Case Study of Natural Sciences Teachers in a School District*, Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, (Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education Stellenbosch University, 2008), p. 26.

practitioners should be involved in a voluntary process of curriculum development, which brings one to the issue of centralized or decentralized decision making in terms of curriculum.

Moreover, Carl (1995) defines curriculum development as "... an umbrella and continuous process in which structure and systematic planning methods figure strongly from design to evaluation."⁶ According to Nana Syaodih (2007), there are five principles in curriculum development; relevancy, flexibility, continuity, practice, and effectiveness.⁷ For the purposes of this study, this definition is accepted as it includes all aspects from design, dissemination, implementation, to evaluation. And we can declare that teacher has important role in all of those aspects.

2. Teacher: Critical Element in Curriculum Development Process

Remillard (2000) revisits the role of the teacher, and maintains that a requirement for learning is essential, as the ideas central to the changing focus may be foreign to educators when changes in the field of teaching is occurring. When teachers are thus required to teach in ways that are unfamiliar to them, or that they did not experience as students, they may have difficulty in altering their methodology.⁸

Remillard also emphasizes that the interpretive function of the teacher is critical to the curriculum development process, and that the task of the teacher, rather than text, is critical to the process of curriculum development since teachers usually decide what is taught. She further maintains that the materials most likely to foster teacher learning would be materials that engage teachers in learning opportunities.⁹ It is therefore concluded that curriculum materials are essential requirements, in conjunction with teacher development.¹⁰

Good curriculum materials should educate and emancipate teachers, as some teachers may need more guidance than others who

⁶ Carl AE, *Teacher empowerment through Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice*, (Kenwyn: Juta, 1995), p. 40.

⁷ Prof. Dr. Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Pengembangan Kurikulum: Teori dan Praktik*, (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2007), p. 150-151.

⁸ J. Remillard, Can curriculum materials support teacher learning? Two fourth grade teachers use of a new mathematics text, *the Elementary School Journal*, 100(4), 2000, p. 332.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 333.

¹⁰ Andre Rowan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7

are able to cope with more complex material.¹¹ Developing materials and curricula were roles hitherto not expected to teachers. This potentially problematic situation became even more complex when it became evident that many teachers currently in service learned to teach by means of a model of teaching and learning that focuses heavily on memorizing facts without the additional emphasis on deeper understanding of the subject.¹²

Meanwhile, the new approach to education, namely Outcomes-Based Education, offers innovative alternatives to absolute practices such as rote learning and examination-driven learning.¹³ In addition to the current climate of educational reform, there are also multiple reform agendas that include teaching towards outcomes, multiple assessments and equity of learning opportunities, all within reconfigured school organization. It is also in this context that the notion of professional development has been receiving increased attention as educators at all levels are realizing the importance of teachers in the process of school reform and improvement.

Finally, it is important to recognize and address arguments that teacher knowledge reflects a complex and lengthy acquisition process that is not completed within academic settings. As such, professional development in the area of curriculum theory and critical pedagogy for in-service educators needs greater attention and should be supported to the fullest. To this end, professional development activities of sustained duration which allow focused, rigorous, and reflective study of curricular issues, theories, and critical pedagogy should be offered to all working professional teachers. Hence, a teacher is critical aspect of curriculum development process.

3. Teacher as Curriculum Leader

The role of teacher and that of curriculum leader are not naturally equivalent. Teachers must have comprehensive understanding of their content areas and methods for communicating knowledge to students. A curriculum leader is a person who has not only a comprehensive understanding of the pragmatics of curricular

¹¹ E. W. Eisner, *Creative Curriculum Development and Practice*, *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 6 (1): 62-74, 1990), p. 65.

¹² Darling-Hammond & Mc Laughlin, *Politics that support professional development in an era of reform*, *Phi Delta Kappa*, 76(8), 597-604, 1995.

¹³ Pretorius & Lammer, 1998, p. 2.

design and instructional practice, but also a global understanding of education as a societal enterprise. While the role of teacher and that of curriculum leader are complementary, the roles and associated competencies are not the same.

On the practical side, perhaps the side that is most frequently recognized by elementary and secondary school educators, curriculum is characterized as what is to be taught, in what order, in what way, and by whom.¹⁴ Teachers are generally professionally prepared to engage in discussions of curriculum in this frame. Textbook content, their own instructional experiences, and state-level content standards further support teachers' ability to engage in curricular decisions within this conceptual frame. Such ordering of content, planning activities and assessments, or matching content to state standards is better conceptualized as lesson decision-making versus curriculum decision-making.

On the pragmatic end of the spectrum of requirements, curricular leaders must demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between assessment data and instructional design, particularly in light of the current dominance of progress monitoring and "Response to Intervention" paradigms. To meet the diverse needs represented in each classroom, curriculum leadership requires an ability to recognize the need for the best design and implementation techniques of a broad range of instructional variations. Curriculum leadership requires more than a general understanding of psychology, as curriculum leaders must consider developmental, cognitive, emotional, and communicative factors as they relate to the reception and expression of content learning. Curriculum leaders must be well versed and articulate in classic and contemporary educational research, theory, and practical expectations across all subcategories including learning and instructional methodologies. They must have strong theoretical bases on which to build and they must be able to functionally separate the theoretical from the practical as needed.¹⁵

Curricular leaders must demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of education as a political and social enterprise.

¹⁴ Ornstein & Hunkins, *Curriculum: Foundation, principles, and issues*, 4th ed, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2004).

¹⁵ Hlebowitsch, The burdens of the new curricularist, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 29(3), 343-354, 1999; and W.F. Pinar, Dreamt into existence by others: Curriculum theory and school reform, *Theory into Practice*, 31(3), 228-235, 1992.

Curricular leaders must understand educational purposes of school, what educational experiences are likely to serve those purposes, and how to effectively organize and evaluate those experiences.¹⁶ They must be ever cognizant of the ideology, bias, political agendas, and hegemonies that influence what is taught, how it is taught, and by whom it is taught in every classroom.¹⁷ With the locus of control over the curriculum having shifted to that of the State (Fullan, 2001), today's curriculum leaders must have a substantial and current knowledge of state and national educational policy development, implementation. They must also be diligent in ongoing monitoring of debates and changing policies at all levels of influence.

4. A Strategy for Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development

Devolving of responsibilities for syllabus and materials design to teachers will only work if teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills, and are given time to evaluate the thinking behind new developments.¹⁸

The way in which the term curriculum is defined ultimately determines the scope of teacher involvement in curriculum development. During the early 1900s curriculum was viewed as a plan for action.¹⁹ This way of defining the curriculum was also known as the content-centred, objectives or traditional approach. According to Nomdo (1995), the objectives model for curriculum development possesses four main stages, namely:²⁰

- a. Identifying the aims and objectives of the curriculum.
- b. Selecting topics to be learnt cumulatively.

¹⁶ Look at, R.W. Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

¹⁷ M. W. Apple, *Cultural politics & education*, (New York: Teacher College Press, 1996). Look at M. W. Apple, *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age* (2nd ed.). (New York: Routledge, 2000), see also, M. W. Apple, *Ideology and curriculum* (3rd ed.), (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004); Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1970/2004)

¹⁸ Chris Kennedy, *Teacher Roles in Curriculum Reform*, (ELTED, autumn, 1996), p. 87

¹⁹ Ornstein & Hunkins, *Curriculum Foundation, Principles, and Issues*, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1993), p. 9.

²⁰ L. Nomdo, *Collaborative Curriculum Development Through Action Research*, (University of Sussex: Institute of Education, 1995), p. 12.

- c. Organizing and sequencing the content.
- d. Evaluating the selected content.

The mechanisms for curriculum implementation included the cascade training model, learning area committees and specific program for Foundation Phase. These mechanisms appeared to be inadequate to provide the quality training that teachers required in preparation for the implementation of the new curriculum. The facilitators also appeared to have limited time to train teachers adequately, given the national deadline for the implementation of Grade 1. On the other hand, the level of de-skilling teachers, due to their lack of participation in curriculum development in the past, has resulted in an enormous dependency culture, with teachers awaiting instruction, training, and curriculum interpretation/implementation from a top-down structure. Although minimum training had been provided by the department, generally teachers in the study appeared to be waiting for more details and step by step prescriptions on how to manage/implement the new curriculum. The empowering experience that the new curriculum offers, only if they are creative or innovative enough, appears to totally escape them.

The strategy suggested, includes the four phases of curriculum development and goes beyond them as well. In terms of curriculum design, it was encouraging to note that teachers were for the first time ever invited to make submissions on curriculum policy issues. In terms of policy there was teacher involvement in the design phase at the national level.²¹

- a. A strategy for teacher involvement during the design phase should include
 - 1) *The nature of teacher participation*
Teachers should be trained on policy formulation if effective participation is to be guaranteed. In terms of policy development, teachers should be encouraged to make suggestions. However, this has to be supported by training in order that quality information is able to inform policy decisions.

²¹ R. Ramparsad, A Strategy for Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development, *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4), 2001, p. 290.

2) *Large scale in-service training (INSET)*

In order to participate fully in the curriculum development process, the department needed firstly to conduct massive INSET on the curriculum change process. This should involve an understanding of both the theoretical aspects of curriculum as well as the curriculum change process. The most important dimension of the strategy proposed by this study is the INSET program. Because teachers did not have necessary skills to impact on policy decisions due to the lack of training.

3) *Ensure majority teacher groupings/greater involvement*

Teachers should be represented by teacher organizations (e.g. KKG/Kelompok Kerja Guru), national Learning Area committees and by means of specialist subject/focus groupings. This would ensure that design and implementation does not occur in isolation. However, there has to be clear lines of accountability to teacher groupings, and a mandate to take every step forward.²² It should be an undertaking of all teacher groupings represented that feedback to the rest of the teachers is compulsory and part of the participation process.

b. A strategy for teacher involvement in the dissemination phase should include:

1) *INSET course / newsletters*

Teachers who attend the Inset program will be obliged to disseminate information to their colleagues and communities by means of on going workshops, newsletters and brochures. The rationale relates to the fact that the teachers in the study who were tasked to disseminate information did not feel confident. They also wanted more training and information in order to disseminate the information. The Cascade training model resulted in information being diluted as it was transmitted from the national to the school level. This resulted in confusion, lack of adequate information and selective interpretation of information.

²² Fakhruddin, Revitalisasi Kelompok Kerja Guru dalam Mengembangkan Kurikulum Satuan Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar di Kota Semarang, *Research Report on Faculty of Educational Sciences, Semarang State University*, 2010), p. 10.

2) *Confident / articulate and informed teachers*

In terms of disseminating the new curriculum, teachers who are informed, confident and articulate need to advocate the new information. This could be a core team of teachers from a district who have volunteered their service. It is not a suggested compulsory process for all teachers in the curriculum development process. Teachers participating in the design phase may also disseminate information as one of the preconditions for participation.

3) *Curriculum implementation*

In terms of the four phases of curriculum development, teachers played the most significant role in the implementation phase. The new educational approach introduced by the department certainly dwelled on the implementation roles of educators.

c. A strategy for teacher involvement in the implementation phase should include:

1) *Realistic time frames*

The process of curriculum change should be gradual because quality is important and major curriculum reform occurs very few times. There is a need for teachers to be truly involved in this process. The rationale for this relates to the fact that the teachers in the study believed that they needed more information and time to be trained before the implementation phase. Teachers had to undergo major changes in terms of management skills, methodological and training skills. This was undertaken in a relatively short period prior to implementation. The training needs of teachers to bring about quality implementation outweighed the timeframes set.

2) *Realistic goals*

Teachers could be involved in the implementation phase by playing innovative, supportive and networking roles. However, these implementation roles can only be achieved if training, financial resource, and overcrowding needs are addressed. The teachers in the study repeatedly indicated their needs in terms of resources. The innovative methodologies suggested by an Outcomes-based approach,

requires a vast amount of resources. These are both physical and human resources. Classroom accommodation, physical resources and parental support are problematic.

3) *Large scale INSET / appropriate training program*

The roles suggested are underpinned by greater training over a period of time as reflected in the INSET program proposed. The rationale for this relates to the fact that teachers implemented policy that they could not clearly interpret and understand. This was as a result of inadequate training and a proper understanding of the new educational approach. INSET program become more important because the success of implementation of curriculum depends on creativity, skill, and hardworking of teachers. Hence, teachers should be able to choose and create joyful learning situation, choose the suitable method of teaching, and make students enjoy in their study.²³

d. A strategy for teacher involvement in the evaluation phase

The rationale relates to the fact that such a curriculum reform process needs to be evaluated during each phase. The strategy suggested in this study needs to be reflected on critically before the next phase of implementation of Curriculum. This information may also be used to get teachers involved in larger numbers in all phases of the curriculum development process. The National Department of Education should guard against being driven by unrealistic timeframes for curriculum implementation. The process needs to be slower and deliberate in order that teachers for the first time ever will be involved in curriculum development.

Overall, the implementation of curriculum should be evaluated. Teachers, as the end user of curriculum, have many useful informations concerning the process of curriculum development. So, teacher involvement in this phase is a must to support the process.

²³ Prof. Dr. Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Pengembangan Kurikulum: Teori dan Praktik*, (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2007), p. 200.

C. Conclusion

Based on previous explanation about the process of curriculum development, the writer can conclude that teachers have important role in curriculum development. The rationale relates to their existence as end user of curriculum. They interpret the ideas of ideal curriculum in instructional process in the class. So, their creativity, innovation, and hardworking in teaching have deep meaning in curriculum development process.

Finally, it is important to recognize and address arguments that teacher knowledge reflects a complex and lengthy acquisition process that is not completed within academic settings. As such, professional development in the area of curriculum theory and critical pedagogy for in-service educators needs greater attention and should be supported to the fullest. To this end, professional development activities of sustained duration which allow focused, rigorous, and reflective study of curricular issues, theories, and critical pedagogy should be offered to all working professional teachers. Hence, a teacher is critical aspect of curriculum development process.

The strategy suggested to involve teachers in curriculum development, includes the four phases (design, dissemination, implementation, and evaluation) of curriculum development and goes beyond them as well. In terms of curriculum design, it was encouraging to note that teachers were for the first time ever invited to make submissions on curriculum policy issues. In terms of policy there was teacher involvement in the design phase at the national level.

Moreover, teachers usually regarded as curriculum leader. If the expectation is that teachers will be placed in the role of Curriculum Leader, whether in their grade level teams or on building or district level committees, it is essential that they have the depth of knowledge required to fulfill that role effectively. Support for the acquisition of that knowledge must begin in teacher preparation programs and continue through professional development activities. With such support, the sustained educational reform and improved student outcomes hypothesized to be possible when teachers take meaningful roles in organization level decision making may come to fruition.

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