

Unpacking Teachers' Roles in the implementation of New School Curriculum



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ABSTRACT: Teachers play a vital role in the implementation of educational policies and inventions. Without a clear understanding of any programme that teachers have to implement, teachers may not deliver expected outcome. The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of teachers in the implementation of the school curriculum in Namibian schools. The study used a qualitative research methodology, which employed a case study design. Semi structured interview and open-ended questionnaire were used to obtain data from the participants and respondents. The sample was made up of teachers and schools principals who were purposively sampled because of their typicality to the subject of research. The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis method.

Key findings reveal that teachers have key roles to play in facilitating the implementation of the new school curriculum. Teachers have a fundamental role to ensure quality implementation of the curriculum. Teachers play an important operational duty of implementing curriculum in the class, and without teachers' concerted efforts, the quality of curriculum implementation will be compromised. Teachers should also serve as effective collaborators during curriculum implementations. Teachers alone in their own classrooms could hardly implement curriculum effectively, requiring them to collaborate with each other's on how best they can implement the curriculum collectively. As teachers are key implementers, they should be actively involved in evaluating and assessing learning outcomes of the new curriculum, in order to inform continuous training for improved quality of learning outcomes. Teachers should be cognisant of the key roles that they have to play in ensuring an effective implementation of the new curriculum.

KEYWORDS: School Curriculum, Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Teachers

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Teachers are the foot soldiers in the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers interpret the curriculum, plan it, implement it through teaching and evaluate it. Teachers make recommendations which when enshrined in the curriculum can make learners realise their dreams after some instruction. The study was conducted to examine teachers' own understanding of the roles that they have to play in the implementation of the new curriculum in Secondary Schools of the Omusati Region, Namibia. The success of the students in the examination lies with the effective implementation of the curriculum as well understood by teachers as key implementers. But the big question is, are the teachers understand their roles to be able to implement the new curriculum effectively? Teachers should be well versed with the curriculum expectations, have an understanding of the revised and new curriculum, and have adequate knowledge of the curriculum, and the role that they have to play.

Before Namibia's independence in 1990, the country's education system was designed to reinforce the Apartheid system in what was termed the Bantu Education system whereby Afrikaans was a medium of instruction. This type of education was segregating in nature and intended to perpetuate the white's supremacy over the black majority. After independence, the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) reformed the old curriculum by introducing the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the High International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) in 1994, in collaboration with the University of Cambridge.

The education curriculum post-independence was inclusive in nature and embraced everyone in Namibia regardless of race, religion or creed. The second curriculum reform was done in 2006 in which IGCSE and HIGCSE were replaced with the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary and Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate High Level (NSSCO/H).

The third curriculum review in 2019 has resulted in the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSCO) Level, a two-year course for Grade 10 and Grade 11, and the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS), a one-year course for Grade 12 which replaces Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate High Level (NSSCH). Every time there are reforms or developments happening around the world, the school curricula are affected. Hence, there is a need to update curriculum through

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reviews to address the society's needs and aspirations (Mohanasundaram, 2018). Global changes have also a bearing on the curriculum since curriculum is the drive way of solving societal problems as well as addressing societal challenges.

According to Alsubaie (2016), the rationale behind a successful educational program and effective curriculum development has to do with meeting the needs and current market demands in the industry. Mandukwini (2016) states that change in curriculum is made to improve the intended quality of education for the benefit of both learners and teachers. Therefore, teachers are expected to play a pivotal role in ensuring effective implementation of curriculum reviews and new curriculum, which requires them to be very clear and knowledgeable of their roles. Hussain, Dogar, Azeem and Shakoor (2011) made it clear that the goals of education can be attained only through valid and reliable curriculum that is well understood by its implementers, and a proper evaluation of the process for updating and fulfilling required social needs. All these ideas are valuable on paper, if teachers do not understand their implementation. Therefore, this research intended to establish the exact roles of teachers in the implementation of new school curriculum.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The introduction of new curriculum requires proper implementation to be able to yield anticipated outcomes. The new curriculum should be understood by all teachers who are the front runner of curriculum implementation, so that teachers have a clear understanding of the new curriculum requirements for an efficient and effective implementation. The Namibian government has implemented a new curriculum to ensure that teaching and learning in Namibian schools addresses the country's emerging trends and supports the country's development needs and aspirations.

Despite the significance of implementing the new curriculum to achieve desired national development goals, little evidence is available on whether teachers really understand their in the implementation of the revised or new curriculum. Current observation in the case study schools suggests that teachers falls short of the clarity of their roles with regard to curriculum implementation. Hence, this study intended to establish the exact roles of teachers in ensuring an effective implementation of the new school curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research methodology allows the sample to express themselves freely without being limited to confined answers to questions. Qualitative allows for more autonomy of expression during the data collection process. Kumar (2011) states that in a case where a researcher tries to solicit information from the direct source, qualitative approach is most appropriate approach to use. McCombes (2020) purports that qualitative research is multifaceted in comparison to quantitative research, as it deals with the real situation at hand. The qualitative methodology was carried out through a case study investigation in order to acquire an in-depth comprehension of the implementation of the new curriculum from the perspective of the members in the case study schools. The population was made up of teachers and principals drawn from the case study schools. The study used a purposive sampling method to select the sample of eight teachers and two school principals. McCombes (2020) states purposive sampling involves the researcher using own judgment to select a sample that is most useful to the purposes of the research. Open-ended questionnaires were administered to teachers while face-to-face interview was conducted with school principals. The interviewer pursued in-depth discussion with school principals on the challenges facing the implementation of the new curriculum, while open-ended questionnaires gave teachers the freedom to express their views freely in answering the given questions. The collected data was analysed by reviewing the data and establish common patterns which informed the development of the themes and subsequent categories for interpretation and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis has yielded the thematic areas of the key roles of teachers in the implementation of the new curriculum as discussed below.

Quality implementation of the curriculum

Teachers have a mandate to implement the curriculum in a quality, efficient and effective way. They are central in the transfer of knowledge from the print to the deserving students. They also see to it that the curriculum is implemented in the best possible way to prepare the future of the students. The participants spoke of the need for teachers to be knowledgeable and confident during the implementation process. "Teachers have a major role in the implementation of the curriculum, a new curriculum needs teachers to be confident, knowledgeable of the new curriculum, confident in the delivery for the purpose of the material we use for accurate delivery." "Teachers are mostly seen managing the curriculum as their primary mission to develop the whole child." Neeta (2018) underscored that teachers are there to ensure that quality implementation of the curriculum prevails. All this comes on the need for teachers to be aware of the material to be used and the knowledge of the curriculum at hand. Flores (2005) reiterates the importance of the teacher in curriculum implementation by asserting that teachers play multiple roles of being translators of learning objectives into learning out-comes and a mediator between students and the curriculum. The findings really show that teachers play key roles during the curriculum implementation process.

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Translating the Curriculum

Teachers have multiple roles in the implementation of the curriculum. The roles vary from, the facilitator of learning; the mediator of the learning between the student and the curriculum as well as the translator of the curriculum for the student to grasp what the curriculum is and the intended out-comes. *"All these roles require the teacher who is fully knowledgeable to the curriculum and knows what is expected for students to know from the curriculum."* In addition, *teachers must have both expert and referent power in the implementation of this curriculum."* The teacher facilitates learning through transcribing the curriculum, planning and delivering lessons in a systematic manner.

Neeta (2018) who purports that teachers can play multiple roles such as translator of learning objectives into outcome, mediator between curriculum and students. Teachers actualizes the curriculum; hence the knowledge of the curriculum makes this task easy for them to implement it. Translating the curriculum comes from an understanding of what it entails, and hence teachers need to have knowledge of the curriculum so that translation becomes easier for them. It appears that the classroom is probably that level at which the teacher will become more actively engaged in curriculum development since it is the level at which the actual implementation of the curriculum takes place. In the classroom the teacher plays a significant role particularly in terms of developing the classroom curriculum. To be able to do this, the teacher must be able to identify objectives, analyse content, plan activities and learning experiences, select training methods and sequence learning events.

Evaluating and assessing learning outcomes

Teachers play an important role in the assessment and evaluation of learning out comes. The school principals and other teachers evaluate the curriculum so that strengths and weaknesses during the implementation process are noted and appropriate recommendations are made for further reimplementation. *"We teachers are the assault troops at the site of delivery, the curriculum was introduced without proper orientation on our part, this normally has a bearing on the way we evaluate and assess learning outcomes, there by compromising the performance of learners."* Teachers evaluate the curriculum implementation process so as to note the strengths and weaknesses of the process and come up with suggestive remarks for improvement. *"There is need for subject advisory teachers to visit schools and meet the teachers and offer them help in the new curriculum. It has been seen that subject advisory teachers have also a role to play to ensure the teachers are staff developed in the new curriculum, but this is not the case, these are often seated in their offices instead of visiting schools."*

Chaudhary (2016) who alludes that during the curriculum's implementation for the evaluation of learning outcomes, teachers take on the function of the evaluator. Evaluation is a necessary component of every curriculum since it serves as a checklist to determine whether progress is being made. The implementation of the curriculum is evaluated by teachers. Some academics have emphasized the difficulties teachers confront in this area. They record the challenges faced in putting the curriculum into practice as well as suggestions on how to make it better. The absence of continuing review procedures has contributed to the failure of several curricular efforts. The curriculum should not sometimes allow for the shortcomings of educational innovations to be found out years after they were first introduced. Continuous assessment, which should not only be done at the conclusion of a process but also as part of it, is essential for implementation success.

Collaboration of the new curriculum

The role of the teacher is to collaborate the new curriculum with the stakeholders. The new curriculum must be sold to all stakeholders and be accepted by all stakeholders in the schools. Teachers also play the leading role in implementing the written curriculum into the actual curriculum as they support the process by means of working in partnership with other stakeholders in the industry. Teachers are the key to curriculum implementation and hence they need to know the curriculum fully so as to sell it correctly to the stakeholders. *"The teacher has a role to make sure that all stakeholders are involved in the in the planning of the new curriculum so as to accommodate diverse cultures and views."* Moreover, *"all stakeholders must be seen taking part in the curriculum planning and implementation process so as to have their input documented or heard. In addition, "teachers have to be knowledgeable enough if the curriculum is to be successfully implemented."*

Hellen (2019) states that teachers take the lead in turning the written curriculum into the actual one since they assist the process by collaborating with other industry players. As they carry out the curriculum, teachers actualize it. Teachers who are familiar with the curriculum are now required for this curriculum actualization. Teachers collaborate with other education partners to ensure that students obtain the skills required by business so they may find employment. The stakeholders involved in higher education institutions (HEIs) range from internal groups like students and faculty staff to external groups including different governmental agencies, sponsors, communities, rivals and employers.

Initiate Continuous Training

If any curriculum is being implemented, teachers must be well-versed with what is to come and how it will be imparted on learners. The case of the new curriculum was concerned, teachers did not get training and this is making it a daunting task of some teachers who had lack of knowledge in teaching some subjects. *"The new curriculum is a bit challenging to some of us, we were not trained on it and hence only directed to implement it. This is like putting a new swimmer at the deep end of the pool."* In addition, *"teachers need to be well geared so as to effectively implement the curriculum."* Teachers need constant mentoring so as to be able to tackle the concepts of the new curriculum.

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Chaudhary (2016) who claims that every job needs a qualified person to implement what is expected with great efficiency and expertise. A qualified person will exhibit skills in the area of jurisdiction. Hellen (2019) argues that teachers' professional qualifications play a very important role in teaching because it boosts competence during instruction and identifies existing problems in a particular subject. Nghihalwa (2018) further purports that since teachers are qualified and experienced, they have the necessary knowledge and skills to be integrated into the curriculum development, which would make it easy for the implementation process. Qualified teacher will show what they have invested in their professional estate as they impart knowledge to the learners. Since competencies are observable, they are also measurable. It is possible to assess a competency from a teacher's performance. Teaching competencies may require equal amounts of knowledge, skill and attitude, but some will not. This really shows that teachers really need knowledge of the new curriculum so that they implement it effectively and efficiently in class. Curriculum implementation needs implementers to have adequate training so that they implement it effectively in schools.

SUMMARY

Teachers are the key implementers at the site of delivery the schools hence they have a major role in the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers in schools have these roles as research has unveiled. Teachers monitor the quality control in the implementation of curriculum. That is to see to it that what is being implemented match the basic competences as shown in the course outlines. Teachers are the catalyst of the curriculum that is to develop the curriculum to suit the taste of delivery in class to the students.

Teachers evaluate what has been learnt in the classroom. In this case teachers evaluate work done and the curriculum itself. Teachers also work in collaboration with all educational stakeholders. The curriculum should meet the needs of industry and commerce. So, it is the work of the teacher to sell what the school offers even to parents. Teachers have also a role of improving subject delivery and content. They are also expected to show competence in their work. It can be seen that teachers have multiple roles in implementing the curriculum; these roles must be backed by adequate knowledge, proper training and staff development.

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