

Towards an Efficient and Effective Implementation of the New Curriculum in Namibian Schools



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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to explore measures that could best serve as prerequisites for the efficient and effective implementation of the new 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 efficient and effective implementation of the new curriculum could best be achieved through the provision of adequate resources to schools before the curriculum was rolled out. Adequate resources were regarded as a measure of school readiness in implementing the new curriculum. Support programmes were also essential to equip teachers with necessary skills for them to meet the expectations of the new curriculum and enable them to discharge their duties effectively. The study also revealed that any implementation of the new curriculum should be informed by promising evidence of piloting, suggesting that a pilot study was needed to render the implementation of the curriculum effective. The study concluded that the implementation of the new curriculum in slowly gaining momentum due to various critical measures that needed to be considered before it was implemented. Thus, it is recommended that the measures as discussed in this article could still be considered and applied for improved operational efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the new curriculum in Namibian schools.

KEYWORDS: School Curriculum, New Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Operational efficiency and effectiveness

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Mohanasundaram (2018) states that curriculum review is considered as a planned, purposeful, progressive and systematic process of creating positive improvements in the educational system. Through curriculum review, government realises its intended objectives. Concerns have always been raised on the preparedness of teachers in implementing reviewed and new curriculum efficiently and effectively. The concerns among the teaching fraternity on new curriculum versus the preparedness for its implementation, has prompted research interventions such as this current research, to explore modalities related to new curriculum and direct the preparedness of teachers in particular and their institutions at large on the efficient and effective implementation of new curriculum.

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 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.

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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, school leaders are expected to play a pivotal role in ensuring effective implementation of curriculum reviews. Hussain, Dogar, Azeem and Shakoor (2011) made it clear that the goals of education can be attained only through valid and reliable curriculum, and proper evaluation of the process for updating and fulfilling required social needs. All these ideas are valuable on paper, with little evidence of their implementation and effectiveness thereof. Therefore, this research intended to establish the prerequisites for an efficient and effective implementation of the new curriculum in Namibian schools.

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 stakeholders especially 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 what constitutes an efficient and effective implementation of the new curriculum by teachers. Current observation in the case study schools suggests that the implementation of a new curriculum is not efficient as anticipated, negatively affecting its effectiveness. It is against this background that this study intended to establish the operational requirements necessary for an efficient and effective implementation of the new curriculum in Namibian secondary schools.

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 findings suggested factors to consider prior to the implementation of new curriculum, which are also useful for improving already implemented new curriculum by teachers. Efficient and effective implementation of the curriculum is dependent on a number of factors which relates to provision of adequate resources to the teachers, implementing supportive programs for sustained effective implementation the new curriculum, monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum, and carrying out pilot studies by curriculum developers to gain an insight of what is happening in schools for improvement of the implementation. These factors are discussed next.

Provision of adequate instructional resources

One of the significant factor of ensuring that the new curriculum is efficiently implemented in schools is to provide teachers with enough operational resources. Resources help teachers to operationalise the new curriculum intentions. Despite this recognition, most schools were under-resourced and were not ready to implement the new curriculum. For effective implementation, the line ministry which is the Ministry of Education, together with its cooperating partners should ensure provisions of adequate resources prior to rolling out the new curriculum. *"Resources are the bedrock of any curriculum implementation process, hence enough instructional resources should be made available prior to the deployment of the new curriculum into the classrooms."* Teachers are well-known with being given programmes to implement without adequate resource provision, a situation that has always compromised the effectiveness of the programme implementation and continues to necessitate resource provision to teachers (Aspari, 2013)

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The majority of schools lack adequate resources, which costs students a lot by causing them to fail classes. If there are insufficient resources in the schools, nothing worthwhile comes out in the teaching and learning class. The new curriculum requires text books which are currently not available and some textbooks are available in limited amount. Lack of textbooks for students is making the situation similar to the new curriculum in schools, where teachers lack expertise and comprehension. Along with instructional tools, teachers must have sufficient resources for an efficient implementation of the new curriculum.

The Ministry of Education should provide enough teaching and learning materials to smoothen the implementation a new curriculum. There is a need for teachers to be provided with teaching and learning facilities, which could help them to easily implement the new curriculum. *“If the Ministry of Education can make the resources available, the implementation process would be easy and manageable.”* There’s need for the *“provision of the teaching and learning facilities, which might help teachers to easily implement the new curriculum.”*

Bongco and David (2020), asserts that support personnel and community engagement are among the resources for effective teaching and learning. For the new curriculum to be implemented effectively, teachers and students need to be given the tools they need. A new curriculum cannot be achieved without funding. To ensure that schools function smoothly, the ministry of education must guarantee that learners and teachers have access to resources. For learners, receiving a great education is a fundamental human right, and the government is responsible for doing so. According to Patius (2014), the ministry must offer ample teaching and learning resources to facilitate the adoption of the new curriculum in schools. These are crucial since learning is impossible without teaching and learning materials. Resources put learning into practice. Even worse, a new curriculum has to have ample resources. However, this is not the situation in classrooms, where eight to fourteen kids will share a single book. These few volumes are being ripped as a result of the rush for them. In most schools, a lack of resources has made it difficult to maintain standards and promote effective learning. A new curriculum needs sufficient funding and thorough implementation training.

Supportive programmes

Support programs are important before and during curriculum implementation. The programmes equip teachers with skills needed to discharge their duties effectively. Regional education officers play an important role in steering support programmes as capacity building intervention for teachers to successfully implement the curriculum. *“We need to be in-service training before the new curriculum gains ground so that we are able to deliver the proper message to the learners as expected.”* *“We as teachers and principals need joint mentoring so that the supervisor and the supervisee speak the same language when it comes to curriculum implementation and evaluation, and avoid conflicting views on what needs to be done.”* As the new curriculum is now implemented, in-service programs should be exploited to offer teachers with the capacitate teachers to effectively implement the new curriculum. It is important to have a functional curriculum support forum at schools, circuit and district levels aiming at effective implementation of the new curriculum (Lizer, 2013). Hellen (2019) emphasises that successful curriculum implementation is informed by appropriate support programme. Guha and Sudha (2016) advocate for training for any new curriculum in order to enhance the teachers’ skills. Subject specialists and advisory teachers should not spend most of their time in offices but should visit schools and support the teachers in implementing the new curriculum. Advisory staff should come up with staff development programs to assist teachers in implementing the curriculum. Such programmes should entail among others, frequent seminars on syllabus interpretation and usage of new instructional resources.

Monitoring Curriculum Implementation

Monitoring the curriculum is very important. Participants talk of monitoring since it helps in making checkpoints to see how well the curriculum is being implemented. The advisory teachers have to monitor the teachers as well as giving them advice on how to perfect the implementation. In monitoring the implementation of the curriculum is where challenges are raised and suggestions for improvement are given. Subject advisors/specialists, circuit’s officials should keep supervising and monitoring the implementation of the curriculum. Citations from the study participants back these claims. *“Monitoring of the curriculum implementation process help in scouting for gaps which when plugged can result in students getting better results in examinations.”* Monitoring the curriculum implementation process *“helps identify strengths and weaknesses for further improvements.”*

There must be frequent and continuous monitoring and support system for teachers to be able to succeed in implementing the new curriculum (Nghihalwa, 2018; Alsubaie, 2016). Principals should have time set aside for assisting teachers who experience problems in- and outside the classroom. Amakali (2020) see the principal’s role of monitoring and support as a leadership function which involves professional observation of teaching and learning events and ensures improvement of the teachers’ teaching abilities with the view to professional development. Neeta (2018) suggests that the improvement of curriculum implementation must start with the teacher. This really shows how important monitoring and evaluation is, to the teacher’s effectiveness. Monitoring helps to keep the curriculum in track as well as the teachers on track. Class visits by principals and Head of Departments could significantly improve the implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers can also form support groups and discuss challenges they face and tap on each other’s talents. They may be some teachers who are fully knowledgeable and could help colleagues in areas they face challenges.

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Curriculum Pilot Study

New curriculum should be piloted to inform the mass implementation process. The new curriculum was not implemented first to establish its feasibility and practicality, and was thus implemented without piloting. Piloting helps to identify areas of improvement and informs the necessary amendments that needs to be done for improved effectiveness., “*Piloting builds a strong based curriculum with input from the implementers and other stakeholders, as it ensures refinement of the curriculum through stakeholder input.*”

Hussain et al., (2011) advocates for testing of the new curriculum before it is implemented in schools. Piloting helps in perfecting the curriculum before it is disseminated in schools for implementation. Nghihalwa (2018) reiterates the need for pilot study as it perfects the curriculum before being sent to schools for implementation. It has been seen in most fields that pilot study is not done in most cases, and the new curriculum is just given schools to implement without being informed by any promising pilot study evidence.

SUMMARY

This article discussed various factors and strategies that are essential for ensuring an efficient and effective implementation of the new curriculum. The suggestion discussed in this article as established by current research, are also corroborated with prior research evidence. Among other strategies, teachers must be provided with adequate resources in schools to help them operationalise the implementation of the new curriculum. Teachers need support programmes to equip them with the skills required to successfully implement the new curriculum. Advisory teachers as well as subject specialist should be instrumental in providing the required support to teachers. In addition to support services from advisory officers, there is a need for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the new curriculum to help identifying emerging areas of concerns and get them address on time. There is also a need for piloting new curriculum in order to address flaws that may rise before the curriculum is fully implemented in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for improved efficient and effectiveness of the implementation of the new curriculum:

- a) Teachers should be provided with adequate instructional resources to effectively implement the new curriculum. Ideally teachers should be involved in the planning and development of the envisaged curriculum so that they can indicate the resources requirements they need to use in operationalising the new curriculum. Being fully involved in curriculum design and development also ensure that teachers take ownership of the curriculum during its implementing stage.
- b) A pilot study should be carried out before new curriculum is implemented in schools. Piloting serves as a barometer to test the efficiency and shortcomings related to the new curriculum before it is fully cascaded to schools to operationalise it.
- c) The Ministry of Education should ensure that teachers are provided with enough support programmes and support services to help them implement the curriculum successfully.
- d) There should be sufficient control mechanism to monitor the implementation of the curriculum and address shortcomings as they arise, thereby ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation process.

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