

## **Examine the importance of teachers' participation in curriculum development**

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### **Abstract**

*Curriculum has an essential importance in the field of Education. It is the most basic and foremost part of one's Education and learning. Had there been no concept of curriculum, people would have been confused and misguided as to what to study and learn at what time. There would not have been any sequence of objectives and aims to be fulfilled for students' learning. For the development of curriculum, there are many people who work together. There is always a special curriculum development committee with their core capabilities in the domain of curriculum designing. Having many different stakeholders for the process of curriculum development, this paper specifically highlights the critical analysis of importance of teachers' participation in the curriculum development process. Not only in Pakistan, there are different contexts like South Africa, India and Turkey where the issue of applicability of curriculum into the classroom is found out. This paper is based on the critical commentary in which the first part of it discusses the general concept of curriculum and its development. Besides, it also discusses a bit of teachers' involvement into the process along with mentioning rational and objectives of paper. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the paper critically analyses the previous researches which has talked about significance of teachers' involvement in curriculum development process. Moreover, it has then touched to specific discussion of teachers' involvement by moving forward to the encounters that teachers face in curriculum development process. Continuing on the same pace, it has then discussed how can teachers be prepared to put in their contribution in the beginning phase of development since they are not only supposed to work for implementation phase. Other than this, in the next part, the overall discussion has been concluded with author's own stance regarding the topic. In the last part, some of the recommendations have been given to curriculum development authorities or committees to involve teachers in the process accurately so that the quality of education can be improved. Also, it will add to the improved interaction between the committee of teachers when they will work for the same cause.*

## **Introduction**

Curriculum development is not merely a systematic, purposeful, planned and progressive process to bring positive improvements in the educational system; rather it is a whole learning experience of individuals in school and society. Since there are always different happenings and changes in society, curriculum development is also a very dynamic process which keeps changing due to the changes in society. Curriculum is always evolving and it is proved by a very ancient timed curriculum, known as “saber-tooth curriculum”. The purpose of this curriculum was teaching for survival. For example: in ancient times, people taught their children to learn skills like fishing and hunting of animals for their survival. Although, on that time there was no formal education but children still learnt and acquired that knowledge and skills. Other than this, curriculum development is significantly important as it is not just about teachers, students and school; rather it is the development of whole society in general. Moreover, it has different foundations such as philosophical, psychological, sociological and historical. When curriculum is developed based on all these foundations, it really contributes to holistic human development. In philosophical foundation, it is necessary to develop curriculum in a way which can educate a person rationally by cultivating their intellect, and make them able to grow as a competent learner. By focusing on the interdisciplinary approach, it is to promote democratic social living. Moreover, teacher needs to be a change agent so that purpose of education should be the “change” in person and society. By keeping in mind the psychological foundation, there are different theories of well-known theorists like Ivan Pavlov, Jean Piaget, Robert Gagne, Edward Thorndike and Lev Vygotsky which need to be taken in account while developing the curriculum so that teaching learning process in the classroom be very smooth and beneficial for both teachers and students. Other than this, it also has sociological foundation through which curriculum is designed in a way where different aspects of society and education are merged. The contents in such curriculum are developed to encourage experimental intelligence and plurality which can build sense of belonging in people and make them able to accept diversity. Curriculum development is also based on historical foundation which claims that curriculum should be designed with aligned approach in which the objectives and activities should be matched and classes should be child-centered. Historians like Werret Charters, Franklin Bobbit and William Kilpartick believed that

curriculum should prepare a learner for adult life by emphasizing their needs. Since the purpose of curriculum is growth and development of child; William introduced project method where teacher and students work together to plan classroom activities. With these foundations, better outcomes can be yielded as results.

Additionally, the relationship and function of education and curriculum is highly integrated and connected as they both serve to enhance each other. For example: curriculum works as foundation of Education, if it is designed and implemented well, the quality of education stands out. Similarly, curriculum also has to be designed for holistic development and strong enough from teaching standpoint. Moreover, there are 5 basic and fundamental functions of curriculum

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that basically deals with providing quality education. That education is general, specialized, exploratory, enrichment and specialized-interest. This is further elaborated as to provide Education with the curriculum for the common universe of discourse, understanding and competence for the purpose of enhanced critical thinking and be the responsible citizen of society. Besides, it is also designed for professional field or programs with specialized educational objectives at all the levels of education; be it school, college or university.

With better and specialized educational objectives it at all levels, it is really important that curriculum is designed and prepared accordingly. Since teachers spend most part of the time with their students, they can be better contributor in the developmental process. Teachers know their students' mental capacities and their potentials, as per that, they can add or subtract things from curriculum so that the curriculum designed is also applicable into the classroom. Moreover, a study conducted by Ornstein & Hunkins (2012), claims that when teachers participate in the process, they grow professionally. When they participate in decision making, this makes them more confident and competent which results in their work achievement and better job satisfaction. They get to think and rethink for their own ideas multiple times since they know that their ideas in the process of curriculum would be affecting the end product for their students. Their personal gains like primary job satisfaction and work achievements keep them committed with organizational goals as well.

However, one of the research studies highlights that teachers in the context of South Africa had

claimed that even if they contribute in the process of curriculum development, their ideas and opinions are never seen or observed in the final version of prepared curriculum. This may be due to the reason that those ideas were maybe not worth considering. Teachers may have little knowledge to invest in the whole process. This, anyway, discourage teachers to be involved in the curriculum development process. To better know about importance of teachers' involvement in the curriculum development process and how do they see the whole process, the rationale of this paper is to dive deeper into significance of teachers' involvement in the process of curriculum development along with other stakeholders. Moreover, the main purpose is to investigate teachers' own perspectives with regard to their participation in the whole process. Also, this paper will recommend some important implications for curriculum developing committees to involve teachers in the process so that a need based curriculum can be prepared with teachers' participation. Keeping in mind the rational of this paper, following objectives have guided the study:

- To develop the understanding of significance of teachers' participation in curriculum development process.
- To explore teacher's own perspectives regarding their engagement in curriculum development process

### **Review of Literature**

Curriculum development is a process that is usually performed by committees of people working together for the education at different levels such as school, district, state and province (Young, 1988). For an effective working of committees to develop curriculum, multiple expertise are needed. Some may know about recent changes in subject matter, others may better know how to implement thing like curriculum in class. Teachers, on their part, are well aware and knowledgeable when it comes to working with students. No stakeholder than teacher better knows how to deal with students. For curriculum committees, this knowledge is useful because teachers can better asses weather the ideas being used for curriculum can be bring into practice with students or not. However, a Turkish research study by Baş & Şentürk (2019), highlights very important issue that teachers are usually never be the part of curriculum development

process. It says that by examining the regulations of Ministry of National Education regarding the curriculum development process, it was noticed that the tasks and duties of teachers are bit ambiguous. Moreover, this is also evident in our Pakistani context where teachers are never the part of curriculum developing committees. They are only curriculum implementers. Besides, the Turkish study claims that in certain committees of curriculum, teachers do participate, nevertheless, that number is less as compared to the total number of teachers. Besides, when it comes to identification of issues in the field of curriculum; there are many problems, especially regarding the implementation. The curriculum which is designed is far beyond the applicability into the classroom. Again in our Pakistani context, if we analyze our curriculum, it is prepared so well that if that is applied into the classroom in same way, the quality of education provided to students will have a total shift. However, it's opposite because the way curriculum is designed and the parameters that are set for its implementation is never being focused and followed in real classroom settings. Teachers are just handed over with the already designed curriculum and are expected to apply that in classes well. Teachers, being the implementers know every nook and cranny of curriculum which should be implemented into classroom. Since they are the ones who are implementers, it is rational to take advantage from their classroom experiences because their effective participation is really crucial for the success of educational reforms (Fullan, 2007).

However, a few authors have distinguished a more restricted job for instructors' cooperation in the Curriculum development process (e.g., Beane, Toepfer, and Alessi, 1986; Glatthorn, 1987; and Wiles and Bondi, 2007). Teachers' are restricted and reluctant to participate in whole process due to certain factors. They have already a huge workload that when they are asked to do something extra, they feel reluctant. The curriculum development process is not easy, it requires efforts, time and critical opinions from teachers' side; to which most of them never agree to contribute. Although the job of instructors in the curriculum development is limited, according to some studies, the help for the viable support of educators in this cycle is expanding (e.g. Doll, 1996; Oliva, 2008; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012; Voogt, Pieters, and Handelzalts, 2016; Young, 1990). Oliver (1977), by stressing the significance of instructor involvement in the curriculum development, attests that educators will adjust the curriculum to learners' inclinations and needs and the collaboration among instructors will be enhanced. Since if the teachers participate, they will need to discuss with each other as per the grade level and students' capabilities, this way the

collaboration among colleagues will also be developed along with preparing a need based curriculum for students. Starting here of view, it tends to be said that it is vital for instructors to partake viably in the developmental process as they have the vast experience with classroom and students.

Accordingly, it tends to be contended that teachers' experience of learning and guidance has a huge spot in the curriculum development process (Young, 1988). Since regardless of how well the current curriculum is being ready, an instructor can more readily recognize the most quality learning encounters for their students as opposed to the set curriculum (Doll, 1996). As such, regardless of how well the current curriculum is prepared, instructors with their abilities and comprehension can all the more likely recognize learning experiences for their learners. (Ben-Peretz, 1990). Furthermore, educators in curriculum development councils can effectively see the weaknesses of the current curriculum and better distinguish the requirements of students (Boyle and Charles, 2016). As indicated by Messick and Reynolds (1991), educators are the nearest people to students and can thus more effectively react to their requirements. At the end of the day, instructors, by understanding the mental capacity of their students, know about the most reasonable showing strategies, learning conditions, and evaluation methods in the classroom (Jadhav and Patankar, 2013).

### **Significance of Teachers' Involvement in Curriculum Development**

Without any question, the main individual in the curriculum execution measure is the instructor. With their information, experiences and skills, instructors are vital to any curriculum development process. Better instructors support better learning since they are generally proficient about the act of educating and are answerable for presenting the curriculum in the classroom. In an event, when one party has effectively fostered the curriculum development, the instructors need to put forth an attempt to know and get it before implementing it on students. For example: curriculum is prepared within a committee where all the stakeholders are involved except teachers so when the curriculum will be handed over to teachers, they will first need to get it and understand it. It is not a piece of cake that the set curriculum is coming to someone's hands for doing the last phase of it i.e. implementation. For the effective implementation, teachers should

be part of it since the beginning. For example, instructor's conclusions and thoughts ought to be joined into the curriculum for advancement. Then again, the curriculum development committee needs to consider the instructor as a feature of the climate that influences curriculum (Carl, 2009). Consequently, instructor engagement is significant for fruitful and effective curriculum implementation as teachers being the implementers are important for the last phase of the curriculum development.

### **Challenges faced by teachers in the process of developing curriculum**

The instructor's involvement in curriculum development process is fundamental in addressing the requirements of society. The process of curriculum development expects instructors to act and consider society's necessities in each phase of the development process. In any case, now and again this process which instructors are mentioned to follow is hazy and ambiguous.

For instance, in South Africa most instructors are not qualified and do not have the vital abilities to take part in curriculum development. Their methodology of interest in the process isn't distinct and exceptionally troublesome on educators, so they face numerous difficulties in regards to their contribution in educational plan advancement (Ramparsad, 2000). Other than this, one more reason highlighted by teachers that is challenging for them is the workload. Teachers already feel burdened because they have to complete the given syllabus so when they are asked to contribute their time and efforts in curriculum development process, they feel reluctant and restricted. In a study of University of Alberta by Young, (1988), one of the teachers was asked how you see the entire curriculum development process with regard to your participation in it. She replied, "I feel like I have so much to do; when I was asked to put in my efforts into the process, I felt like it was already too much of workload for me". Thus, I envision that there must be significant advances in instructor improvement with the end goal for teachers to effectively consider society's requirements in each phase of the educational program advancement measure. Then again, in any curriculum implementation process, not all instructors will get a chance to be engaged with these cycles. Besides, my viewpoint for such issue which can solve it well is incentives. Incentives and rewards work really well and can motivate anyone to give their best. If teachers are asked to put in their best in developing curriculum on the condition of being rewarded, I don't feel like they

will be any more reluctant.

Moreover, professional development of instructors is a significant factor adding to the accomplishment of curriculum development and implementation (Handler, 2010). In this way, we should consider to what degree teacher education programs are required for imminent instructors to examine curriculum development.

### **Preparing Teachers for their Involvement in curriculum development process**

Teachers have to play the crucial in curriculum development process. For that, they should be given prior training to enhance their knowledge and skills to contribute their opinions and ideas. Based on the review of literature, it has been highlighted in many studies i.e. Ramparsad, (2000): Handler, (2010): Carl, (2009) that even if teachers are given chance to participate in curriculum development process, they feel reluctant. Some due to lack of knowledge and skills, others due to other reasons. When it comes to the point of lack of knowledge regarding the process, it is utmost important to prepare teachers at first. Teachers can be prepared well for their involvement in curriculum development process by attending seminars, workshops, panel discussions, so and so forth. These informative seminars can help them to enhance their knowledge of curriculum development process as a whole. Teachers are not only required to implement the curriculum, rather they are the most important people who can invest in their ideas and opinions to prepare the need based curriculum for their learners. Therefore, teachers need training which can contribute in their professional development and to make them able to contribute in curriculum development process.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Curriculum development process is scholarly and research action. It needs the capable people for arranging, creating, planning, carrying out, assessment and improving stage. Teachers know the requirements of all stakeholders of teacher education. They can comprehend the potential and mental capacities of the student. They know about the teaching strategies and its methods. Moreover, they additionally assume their part as an evaluator for the consideration of learning



results. Teacher can be filled in as organizer, creator, supervisor, programmer, implementer, facilitator, chief, evaluator, and analyst and so on, so instructors can play their crucial role in curriculum development process of teacher education. Also, it is vital that teachers, with their experiences in learning and guidance, ought to take part effectively in the curriculum development process (Young, 1988), without the effective cooperation of teachers, the curriculum development process may end up being insufficient (Ramparsad, 2001). Expanding the involvement of instructors in the curriculum development cycle will both upgrade the situation with the teaching profession status and improve the curriculum to give a better education system (Klein, 1991). Simultaneously, while the effective participation of teachers in the curriculum development process has expanded their obligations (Posner, 2003), it has likewise decidedly affected the fruitful implementation of curriculum (Kimpston and Rogers, 1988; Young, 1989). Along these lines instructors, who know about the flaws and the insufficiencies in the actualization of the teaching strategies in the classroom, ought to have an extraordinary arrangement to add to the improvement of the curriculum (Alsubaie, 2016).

Therefore, while the field specialists impacted the curriculum development process previously, the job and unmistakable quality of the teachers in curriculum development has expanded consistently (Oliver, 1977). In this regard, the involvement or engagement of teachers in the curriculum development process ought to be viewed as a crucial piece of the cycle, not as a welcome motion to them (Bolstad, 2004). In the event that the instructing is a profession, educators should play a functioning role in curriculum development since professionalism is inseparably interlaced with the process of curriculum development (Tanner and Tanner, 2007).

In a nutshell, teachers or educators have really crucial role that can't be overlooked during the whole process (Oliva, 2008). Without adequate investment of teachers in it, the chance of effectively implementing curriculum reduces (Carl, 2005). The achievement or disappointment of any curriculum relies upon the effective involvement of teachers in the curriculum development process (Messick and Reynolds, 1991). In this specific circumstance, it tends to be contended that it is vital for the teachers/instructors to get high level investment in the process both at the focal and neighborhood levels.

## **Recommendations**

This section highlights some of the recommendations for curriculum developers as to how the process can be effective and improved overall. It recommends:

- The curriculum should be need based. Curriculum development committee should emphasize their people to put in their ideas into the process which can make curriculum a need based for students. For this, certain questions can be kept in mind. For example: what are the students' interests? What skills can be incorporated in them? How can the gap between theory and practical understanding be bridged?
- It also recommends that there should be seminars and workshops for teachers to improve their knowledge of curriculum development process. Time is a big constraint so it should be within realistic time frames where a sufficient time is allotted to teachers' training before asking for their participation in process.
- Moreover, curriculum should be revised and updated. With passing time, there are different generations with different mindsets and higher intellectualism so not every generation's students can learn the same thing in classroom. It should be updated by keeping in mind the diverse mindset of learners.
- In this era of technology, the curriculum developers should keep their focus on technology driven curriculum content. Also, having old teachers with old school of thoughts and rigid mindsets, there should be guidance for such teachers to be more flexible as per the need of time.
- Besides, there should be criteria to involve teachers into the curriculum development process since not every teacher is capable and knowledgeable to invest their opinions.
- Lastly, as the research says that teachers somehow feel burdened to take extra work (curriculum development process) on their heads, it is recommended to get done with curriculum development processes in the time when teachers are on break. They usually get summer or winter breaks, it is better that the break time is utilized for something productive with extra benefits and incentives.

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