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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN SELECTION AND ORGANIZATION OF CURRICULUM CONTENT AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Educational literature, theory, and reform trends have long promoted putting teachers in a central role in curricular design. The longevity of the discourse for meaningful and sustained teacher involvement in curriculum development reflects the failure of such involvement to become common practice in secondary schools in Kenya. This article attempt to investigate teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content and its impact on curriculum implementation in Kenya. The study was conducted in Meru and Nairobi Counties, Kenya. The target population was 3146 secondary school teachers comprising of 1781 males and 1365 females. Stratified random sampling was used to draw the participating schools and teachers. A sample of 342 teachers participated in the study. A questionnaire for teachers and an interview schedule for Principals were employed in data collection. Data was analyzed by use descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content had a positive relationship with effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. The study findings also reveal that curriculum development is largely centrally-controlled due to the top-down models of curriculum development employed by Kenya Institute of curriculum development. The study recommends a shift of decision-making from the centre to the periphery which will cause a change in teachers' and administrators' roles, involving them in greater decision making regarding the total curriculum development and implementation. Teachers should be empowered through training and new curriculum orientations for effective participation in curriculum development and implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The school curriculum is organized around content, which is the complete range of knowledge and skills that the pupil has to learn at school (Bennars, 1994). According to Munazzar (2004), content or subject matter occupies an important place in the curriculum. It provides the means for achieving the goals of education, a means for organising the activities and experiences required by the child to have a gainful understanding of the world he or she is living in.

Content or knowledge is grouped in courses or subjects. The curricula developers have to deal with the problem of selection and organization of curriculum content and learning experiences to enable them achieve the aims and goals set for various levels of learning. Teachers ought to be within the process of organising the content, keeping in mind the target students and their needs. According to Young (1988); teachers have practical knowledge based on their daily work with students. This knowledge is useful to curriculum committees because teachers can assess whether the ideas being developed will work in the classroom. Munazza (2004) observes that the teacher is the key person in curriculum planning. Teachers tend to think in terms of what content students should learn and what content is of value to the learner when they begin to plan for curriculum development. However, one of the major gaps reported by KICD evaluation study (2014) was that many

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course panellists lacked expertise in their particular subject areas. Participation of teachers in the selection and organisation of content could therefore ensure relevance of the content selected. Howson (1981) noted that teachers' role in curriculum development varies from country to country because of national differences in expectations and conceptions of their responsibilities. In many parts of the world such as USA, Britain, Australia and some European and Asian countries, attempts have been made to develop the curriculum using the bottom-up model of curriculum development (Howson, 1981; Okda, 2005). In the bottom up model of curriculum development, the teacher is viewed as a participant in the curriculum design and development process (Skilbeck, 2005). According to Okda (2005), teachers of a particular school or region of a country are entrusted with developing their school curricula collaboratively. This makes the curricula meet the needs of the learners and local communities. It ensures teacher autonomy and reduces the problems associated with top-down models of curriculum development.

However, in several developing and centralized countries such as Sweden and Spain (Howson, 1981); most of Arab countries (Okda, 2005; Mullick, 2013) and African countries such as South Africa (Carl, 2002) and Botswana (Mosothwane, 2012), curriculum development process is centralized and top-down. In top-down models of curriculum development, curriculum decisions come from the central government (Ministry of Education) as to what courses should be placed in the curriculum (Okda, 2005; Taylor, 2004). Curriculum development officers in the ministry of education with the help of outside experts decide when it is time to initiate curriculum change and what that change will look like according to society's current national needs (Obai, 1999; Carl, 2002; Mosothwane, 2012). Plans of curriculum change and implementation are then formulated, developed and sent to schools where teachers are neither prepared nor have the inclination to implement the change (Okda, 2005; Asiachi & Okech, 1992; Bishop, 1985). This model is worrisome as it contributes to lack of curriculum initiatives, input and ownership by teachers (Bayona, 1995; Mosothwane, 2012).

Several researchers have observed that there is a wide gap between what is stated in the education policy with what is carried out in practice in the classroom (Taylor, 2005; Bude, 1999; Obai, 1999; Bishop, 1985). Okobia's study in Nigeria (2011) found out that teacher effectiveness was impeded if the teacher was unfamiliar with the body of knowledge being taught. A study carried out by Mafoa (2013) established minimal teacher participation in curriculum development in Samoa. This resulted in lack of understanding of its content as well as lack of effective implementation. In Kenya, just like in South Africa, Botswana and many other developing and centralised countries, curriculum is top-down. The KICD which is a semi-autonomous body under the ministry of education (MOE) is charged with the responsibility of developing the curriculum through curriculum development panels (KICD, 2014; Abiero, 2009; Obai, 1999; Asiachi and Okech 1992; Oluoch, 1982). Teachers are then supplied with curriculum packages consisting of comprehensive syllabuses, curriculum support materials, teaching suggestions, and even

tests for students and for teachers' self- evaluation. Teachers' role becomes that of a consumer rather than a producer (Mosothwane, 2012). This approach makes teachers tend to think that their role is only in the classroom: to implement what they have received from the central office with many of the teachers following the externally planned syllabus to the later without appropriately relating it to the local situation (Shiundu and Omulando, 1992). Being excluded from curriculum development decisions may lead to lack of ownership and commitment necessary for the success of the new curriculum. It may result to and/or misinterpretation of an innovative features (Okada, 2005) thereby hindering the attainment of educational objectives.

Statement of the Problem

Kenya follows the top- down model of curriculum development. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) is the main government agency charged with the development of the curriculum through the course and subjects panels. There has been limited engagement of teachers in selection and organisation of curriculum content and this is elemental in the failure of meaningful educational reform efforts. Studies in the area of curriculum development have failed to demonstrate a strong or consistent correlation between teacher participation in selection and organisation of curriculum content and improved secondary school curriculum implementation. This study sought to establish the relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content which is part of the overall curriculum development process and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

The Objective of the Study

(i) To determine whether there is statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya

Research Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Meru and Nairobi Counties. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population for this study was 3146 secondary school teachers drawn from 351 secondary schools in Nairobi and Meru Counties. The study employed stratified random sampling procedures to select a representative sample of 342 teachers. The principals of participating schools were included in the sample. A questionnaire for teachers and an interview guide for school principals were utilized in data collection. Likert type questions with a 5 point scale and a nominal value of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 were used to collect data. A total of 272 teachers responded to the questionnaire and 19 interviews were

conducted. This gave a response rate of 85.09%. Descriptive and inferential statistics in data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analysis. Chi square was used to test hypothesis that there was no statistically significant relationship between teacher participation in selection and organization of curriculum content and secondary school curriculum implementation. It was carried out at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. The results of quantitative data were presented in summary using frequency tables and bar graphs for clarity and brevity. Qualitative data was organized and presented in narrative and discussion form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they participated in selection and organization of curriculum content during curriculum development process. The information was analysed by determining the mean and standard deviation on seven items on a 5 – point Likert scale where: To a Greater Extent= 5; Some Extent= 4, Undecided = 3; To a Small Extent = 2 and Not at All = 1. However, the ranges of mean scores were interpreted as follows: To a Greater Extent= 4.2 – 5.0; Some Extent = 3.4 – 4.2; Moderate extent = 2.6 – 3.4; To a Small Extent= 1.8 – 2.6 and Not at All 1.0 – 1.8. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

In overall, teachers were involved in the selection and organization of curriculum content to a small extent ($M=1.99$). This implies that teachers' involvement in the process of selecting and organizing curriculum content was very minimal. Teachers did not at all act as curriculum panellist to guide in curriculum construction at Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) as it is indicated by the mean of 1.53. Teachers participated in organization of subject content into units and topics per class to a small extent as depicted by the response item mean of 2.36. According to the principals, teachers are supposed to be involved in content selection and organisation of curriculum content. One of the principals remarked:

Respondent 3: Involvement of teachers is likely to ensure relevant content is put into the system. It is likely to eradicate issues of overloaded curriculums because teachers know the strengths of their learners. As it is now, the developers are not implementers and we have many problems

The views of these principals point to the need of involving teachers in the selection and organisation of content. Bude (1999) observed that the number of teachers playing active role in curriculum design was small, though as implementers of the curriculum, their contribution to the success was vital. The findings are in agreement with a study by Mosothwane (2012) on the role of senior secondary school teachers in the development of mathematics curriculum in Botswana. In Mosothwane's study (2012), teachers complained that some needed topics had been removed from the core BGSE mathematics syllabus, suggesting that their participation in curriculum development was minimal. Involvement of teachers from the outset would have enabled them play the role of diagnostician by identifying the conspicuous absence of some topics thus remedying the gaps created (Mosothwane, 2012).

According to Cincioglu (2014), teachers need to be within the process of organizing the content, keeping in mind the target students and their needs. However, some of the principals argued that many secondary school teachers did not have the requisite knowledge needed to participate in the selection and organisation of curriculum content. Some of principals' comments include:

Respondent 4: Many teachers do not have the requisite knowledge needed to select and organize curriculum content due to poor training and lack of further professional development.

Respondent 7: Teachers hardly connect the content with the general aims and national goals of education. They will need new skills to actively participate in selection and development of content

These statements support Handlers study findings that university teacher preparation programs fundamentally influence the view of teachers relative to the conceptualization of curriculum and their level of responsibility for its determination. While most teachers leave their university training with knowledge of instructional and evaluation methodologies to effectively manage classroom curricular implementation tasks, few have the depth and breadth of areas to be effectively curriculum leaders (Handler, 2010).

The researcher also sought information from the teachers on the extent to which they agreed there was a relationship between teacher participation in selection and organization of curriculum content and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. The information was analyzed by determining the mean and standard deviation on seven items on 5 point Likert scale where Strongly Agree = 5; Agree = 4, Undecided = 3; Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. However, the ranges of mean scores were interpreted as follows: Strongly Agree= 4.2 – 5.0; Agree = 3.4 – 4.2; Moderately Agree = 2.6 – 3.4; Disagree= 1.8 – 2.6 and Strongly Disagree = 1.0 – 1.8.

Table 2 presents the results.

From the findings in Table 2, the average mean of teachers' responses on the relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content was 4.33. This indicates that teachers strongly agreed that participation in selection and organization of curriculum content had a significant relationship with effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. Teachers also strongly agreed ($M=4.50$) that participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content could help teachers to relate the national goals of education with secondary education objectives. Also teachers ($M=4.11$) thought that participation increased teachers' ability to achieve curriculum objectives within the stipulated time. The study findings concur with a study by Okobia (2011) on "social studies teachers' perceptions of the junior secondary school social studies curriculum in Edo State" which found out that teacher effectiveness was impeded if the teacher was unfamiliar with the body of knowledge being taught.

Table 1. Teachers' Participation in Selection and Organization of Curriculum Content

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Formulation of secondary school general objectives	272	1.92	1.37
Formulation of secondary school subject objectives	272	2.03	1.49
Selection and development of subject content	272	1.96	1.41
Organization of subject content into units and topics per class	272	2.36	1.69
Deciding on the scope of the subject content	272	2.07	1.45
Revising the relevance of existing subject content and restructuring overlapping concepts	272	2.03	1.47
Acted as a curriculum panelist to guide in curriculum construction at KICD	272	1.53	1.16
Overall mean	272	1.99	1.21

Table 2. Participation in Selection and Organization of Curriculum Content and Effective Curriculum Implementation

Responses	N	M	SD
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content may help teachers to relate the national goals of education with secondary education objectives	272	4.50	0.70
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content enables teachers to relate the specific curriculum objectives with the Subject content during implementation	272	4.39	0.73
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content increases teachers ability to appropriately interpret subject content for effective implementation	272	4.32	0.79
Participation increases teachers' ability to achieve curriculum objectives within the stipulated time	272	4.11	0.99
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content increases ability to select appropriate learning activities	272	4.42	2.55
Participation in the selection and organization curriculum content may lead to greater understanding of syllabus content during implementation	272	4.34	0.76
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content increases teacher ability to select appropriate skills, attitudes and values for effective implementation	272	4.19	0.98
Overall mean	272	4.33	0.68

KEY: N=Total, M=mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 3. Chi Square Test on Teachers Participation in Selection and Organization of Curriculum Content and Effective Curriculum Implementation

Response	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content may help teachers to relate the national goals of education with secondary education objectives	377.485	4	.000
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content enables teachers to relate the specific curriculum objectives with the Subject content during implementation	345.757	4	.000
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content increases teachers ability to appropriately interpret subject content for effective implementation	297.890	4	.000
Participation increases teachers' ability to achieve curriculum objectives within the stipulated time	220.279	4	.000
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content increases ability to select appropriate learning activities	362.765	5	.000
Participation in the selection and organization curriculum content may lead to greater understanding of syllabus content during implementation	323.551	4	.000
Participation in the selection and organization of curriculum content increases teacher ability to select appropriate skills, attitudes and values for effective implementation	230.132	4	.000
Overall Chi Square	283.147	4	0.000

Table 4. Ways in Which Participation in Selection and Organization of Curriculum Content May Improve Curriculum Implementation

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
It would enable teachers to link the goals and objectives with the content they implement.	106	38.97
It would help modify the existing concepts to suit the varying climatic conditions and cultural practices.	74	27.21
Enable teachers to air their views on organization of the curriculum content as this would help them be conversant with the current changes in the curriculum.	147	54.04
Capacitate teachers to own the ideas produced, ease the understanding and give deeper insight into the curriculum content during implementation.	164	60.29

Teachers whose understanding of the topic is thorough use clearer language and provide a more connected discourse and better understanding than those whose background is weaker. However there were mixed results from the principals' interview. Some principals felt that there were other major factors that could impede effective implementation of secondary school curriculum even if teachers had participated in its construction.

They cited lack of adequate training and government failure to release free education funds in time to carry out school activities that would support effective implementation. However other principals felt it was necessary for teachers to be involved because it would create ownership and motivate teachers to ensure that curriculum succeeds since they would take it as their project.

When the principals were asked whether they would like to participate in the selection and development of curriculum content in future, 88.3% responded in affirmative while 11.7% responded in negative. Some of the principals who were willing to participate gave their some of following reasons:

Respondent 2: Yes I would like to. It would lead to better understanding of curriculum goals and objectives. I will be in a better position to supervise its implementation

Respondent 17: Yes I would like to. I will be able to conceptualize the scope of work to be covered to fully fulfil the curriculum goals

Respondent 19: Yes I would like to participate because participation will help me own what I am delivering to the learners

The findings also imply there is a positive relationship between teachers' participation and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. Many other researchers have found that teachers are willing to participate in curriculum development process (Obai, 1999; Carl, 2005; Ramparsad, 2006; Mullick, 2013). Chi square test was carried out to establish whether there existed a statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content and effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum in Kenya. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3. The Chi Square test from Table 3 indicates that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in selection and organization of curriculum content and effective implementation of that curriculum ($\chi^2(4, N=272) = 283.147, p=0.000<0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Importance of Teacher Participation in Selection and Organization of Curriculum Content

Teachers were requested to give views on ways in which they thought participation in selection and organization of curriculum content could improve curriculum implementation. Table 4 summarizes teachers' views. The findings in Table 4 indicate that majority of the teachers (60.29%) were of the opinion that participation in selection and organization of curriculum content would capacitate teachers to own the ideas produced, ease the understanding and give deeper insight into the curriculum content during implementation. This would eventually contribute to the improvement of curriculum implementation. The minority of the teachers (27.21%) felt that participation in selection and organization of curriculum content would help in modifying the existing concepts to suit the varying climatic conditions and cultural practices. This would improve the curriculum and make more relevant during implementation. The findings agree with Carl's (2002) observations that teachers' participation in all stages of curriculum development enables teachers to be conversant with educational objectives, to scrutinize the syllabus and suggest changes.

Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that there existed a statistically significant relationship between teacher's participation in the selection and organization of curriculum

content and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Teachers strongly agreed that participation in the selection and organisation of curriculum content would enable them relate the national goals of education, with secondary objectives. However, due to the top-down model of curriculum development employed by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, teachers had participated in the selection and organization of curriculum content to a small extent.

Recommendations

This study recommends that teachers should be fully involved in the selection and organisation of curriculum content. Those who make policies need to acknowledge the experience and talents of the teachers more in the curriculum development process. Curriculum development should be decentralized to local levels for easier participation from schools, sub-counties, counties and finally the national level taking into considerations all relevant contributions by various stakeholders.

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