

IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM OF PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES FACED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN DISTRICT SKARDU, GILGIT BALTISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the problems faced by secondary school teachers in implementing the curriculum in public school of District Skardu. Curriculum implementation plays a crucial role in achieving the intended learning outcomes; however, teachers in remote regions like district Skardu often face numerous challenges that hinder effective execution. Using a qualitative case study design, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with eight purposively selected teachers five male and three females who possessed Master's degrees, professional qualifications, and more than five years of teaching experience. Data were analyzed through thematic interpretation after transcription, triangulation, and ensuring ethical considerations. The findings reveal multiple barriers that obstruct successful curriculum implementation. A major challenge identified was the unavailability of the National Curriculum document in schools, resulting in teachers' limited understanding of curriculum aims and standards. Teachers reported no participation in curriculum development or planning processes, which further weakened their sense of ownership and clarity. Inadequate learning facilities, such as outdated laboratories, insufficient computers, and lack of libraries, significantly affected the achievement of curriculum objectives. Overcrowded classrooms and examination-oriented teaching practices compelled teachers to focus on syllabus completion rather than conceptual understanding or intended learning outcomes. The study also highlights shortages of qualified and specialized staff, overburdened teachers, limited opportunities for professional development, weak monitoring mechanisms, and late provision of textbooks as major obstacles. These challenges collectively contribute to rote learning, poor classroom practices, and ineffective implementation of the curriculum. The study emphasizes the need for improved teacher participation in curriculum processes, adequate learning resources, timely provision of textbooks, strong monitoring systems, and sustained professional development programs. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, school leaders, and educational planners to support equitable and effective curriculum implementation in remote regions like Skardu

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Curriculum Implementation, National Curriculum of Pakistan, Teachers' Competency in curriculum implementation, Secondary Level

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in the social, moral, spiritual, economic, and psychological development of human beings. It enables human beings to respond to changes in the society. In the educational institutions, education is managed by a curriculum that it will change in response to the forces affecting it (Shahzad et. al, 2021). Through rapid development of technology, knowledge and knowledge changes unavoidably occur in and educational environment. Among these developments or changes new curriculum implementations are visible (Retnawati al, 2016). As a whole, curriculum plays a vital role in achieving educational aims and objectives.

In schools, it is the teacher who practically executes the implementation of curriculum. Today it is a generally accepted reality that implementation of curriculum with its true sense is very complex and difficult. As a curriculum implementer the educator is one who carries the curriculum document into practical frame. The significance of the teachers as curriculum implementer cannot be overlooked (Obilo, 2010).

Studies have shown that in Pakistan every new government tries to bring about changes in the curriculum (Aslam et al., 2024). without a proper baseline studies, planning for implementation and teacher training in the curriculum development, all such initiatives always create challenges, and confusions among teachers, administrators and parents. For instance, recently, the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022-23, is being implemented without any training to teachers and other education service providers. in addition, parents, students, and schools in the remote regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan, face huge challenges in connection with the availability of textbooks. This study attempted to explore the challenges and problems face by teachers at secondary level in implementation of curriculum. As curriculum and its implementation is considered the driving force in development of learners and education; therefore, the study was intended;

Objective 1: To explore the experiences of secondary school teachers concerning the challenges encountered in implementing the curriculum in District Skardu schools.

The researcher developed the following basic research question to get the views and experiences of the participants regarding problems face in curriculum implementation at secondary level:

Research Question 1: What are the problems or challenges do secondary school teachers face in curriculum implementation at secondary level in District Skardu?

The study was significant in several ways, primarily by concentrating on teachers' practices and problems of teachers, it provides real-life empirical evidences of curriculum implementations in a remoted area. Secondly by pinpointing exact barriers in curriculum implementation the research provides way forwards for sustainable policy development and implementation in this regard. Finally, the study adds literature by providing locally data that can serve as guidelines for teachers, school leaders, educational administrators and policy makers to take initiatives, ultimately aiming to provide and facilitate more equitable learning opportunities to the most remoted learners in the region.

Literature Review

According to Mkandawire (2010), curriculum is defined as a series of planned learning activities. It reflects the curricular and co-curricular activities in educational institutions such as, the courses of study, the educational aims and objectives, the approaches of teaching including instructional materials and assessment process, values and skills that are deliberately designed to attain well-defined objectives with a specific group of learners (Rohman et al., 2024). Furthermore, curriculum is the basic element of the whole educational process as it serves as a guide to grasp the targeted education which makes curriculum as a component that sets the quality of an education system (Aspari, 2018). Curriculum as a veritable element it consists of the specific knowledge and skills learner must know in that particular field (Muskin, 2015).

The curriculum does not just mean to choose some content and apply some approaches rather it also contains the unplanned and planned activities involving the learners' participation in the activities. A well planned and designed curriculum ensures the communication and interaction among teachers and students in a

conducive learning environment with required human and physical resources which helps to achieve targeted educational goals and assist in development of the society (Olamo, et al., 2019). According to McLachlan, et al. (2018) a curriculum is a document comprising the organization of the learning environment, judgements and plans taken by the educators about learning processes or the views of society, parents and external authorities. The philosophy of curriculum may be influenced by the cultural, religious, socio-economic, psychological and political factors (Mkandawire, 2010)

Curriculum Implementation

Development of an effective curriculum is not an end by itself, the actual thing is that it has to be implemented as to achieve the goals and learning objectives developed in it Olamo (2019). According to Kwatizhe (2015), implementation of a curriculum is an application of officially developed course, content, activities and process, it is the transformation of curriculum document into classroom activities and developing an attitude towards learners involving and accepting these activities.

The fundamental purpose of the implementation of curriculum is also stated in the literature as: to give learners the required knowledge skills and attitudes, to assure pupils' benefit within available opportunities and resources at the maximum level, to certify that students get knowledge, experiences, skills and learners use all of them efficiently (Badugela, 2012).

Curriculum implementation also intends to apply the same curriculum at the same standards in all learning institutions and expects changes in students' behaviours under the supervision and control of the implementer (Muskin, 2015). Dimiri and Marimo (2015) are of the view that implementation of curriculum is a very crucial and a challenging phase of curriculum. Because without the implementation of curriculum success and failure, strengths and weaknesses and inadequate components of the curriculum cannot be observed or determined. Finding these deficiencies and weaknesses in a curriculum guides teachers and curriculum

developers areas to review and know the curriculum (Ekawati, 2017).

Marques and Xavier (2020) concluded that every curriculum generally provides suggestions related to teaching and learning, lesson plans, text and evaluation process. The educator is expected to implement the curriculum accordingly and change the curriculum into learning activities. During the process of curriculum implementation school administration, teachers can face various challenges and problems related to curriculum, teachers, resources and management. The curriculum implementer should implement the curriculum very carefully and ensure its proper implementation otherwise the teachers may become demoralized and learners become disinterested in that course of study (Rosen, & NRC, 1989).

A Teacher's Role in Curriculum Implementation

The educators have to play various unique roles in their social lives and have become centre of consideration in the contemporary world. Being nation builders, teachers have to become prestigious in all spheres of life in the society. Teachers are considered actual agents of curriculum implementation. Handler (2010), concluded that being a curriculum implementer a teachers have not only knowledge and clear understanding of the curriculum and teaching learning practices but also must have universal understanding of education as social enterprise. It is the teacher who transforms the curriculum document into practice.

In contemporary world the role of a teacher as curriculum implementer has been transformed. Now teacher is not merely a transformer of information, rather he manages the learning activities and processes within classroom or school and for this a teacher can make some amendments in curriculum implementation (Bingolbali, 2008).

Ngwenya (2020) found that team work and collaboration of educator can improve the operational skills of teachers in implement the proper implementation of curriculum. While implementing the curriculum teacher point outs possible anticipated problems, perceives societal and political structure of the institution, assess capability and applicability of curriculum and

applies pedagogical knowledge, creativity and critical thinking to develop himself. According to McLachlan, et al. (2018), during curriculum implementation the teacher's interpretation of curriculum is very significant because it drives the whole education process.

According to Champan (2019), for effective implementation of curriculum physical and human resources in school, school structure and level and other facilities are very crucial.

Moreover, an effective implementation of curriculum requires that the teacher must have understanding to use or apply the curriculum material (Pak, et al., 2020). When teachers do not get complete understanding of curriculum, they may not be able to implement the curriculum according to its aim and objectives (Cheung & Wong, 2012).

Methodology

Qualitative case study research design was applied to explore the problems faced by secondary school teachers in a public sector in implementation of curriculum. As qualitative case study provides the insight views or in-depth understanding of the participants about the questions of the study (Creswell 2003). For this purpose, the researcher took face to face interviews of the participants and used a semi-structured interview guide to get the understanding of the problem.

In order to get the answers to the research questions eight teachers were selected through purposive sampling technique, who were teaching in a secondary level school in District Skardu. The school was deliberately chosen as it was the oldest and largest institution in the research area. Out of these eight participants five were male and three female teachers. All teachers had Masters level qualifications with professional degrees (B.Ed./M.Ed.), and had more than five years teaching experience. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity pseudonyms were used.

The researcher ensured the trustworthiness, and rigor of data collection and analysis through various ways including: extensive fieldwork and triangulating the data through various sources including interviews, document reviews, and observations. In connection with the interviews, the researcher visited the targeted schools and conducted the interviews using semi-structured

interview methods and transcribed the audio recordings. The collected data was analyzed by using several levels of abstraction and categorized the responses into different themes and developed analytical interpretation of the data. Ethical considerations were ensured (Khan et al., 2021) of the study through ensuring voluntary participation, anonymity, data validation and data protection.

Findings of the Study

The analysis of data enabled the researchers to generate the following thematic areas which generally highlight the problems faced by teachers in curriculum implementation at secondary level in the study area:

Un-availability of Curriculum Document in Schools

National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022-23 is being implemented and its availability in educational institutions is the prime responsibility of the institution and department. The first question was: Do you have Curriculum Document in your school? Out of the eight participants seven responded that they do not have curriculum document at their school. Most of them responded that they had studied about National Curriculum in a Course during B.Ed. and M.Ed. but did not find any curriculum document in their schools. It was also found that the targeted schools did not have the National Curriculum document and did not receive any type of trainings or workshops regarding the knowledge and implementation of the National Curriculum. Most of the participants only heard the name of National Curriculum of Pakistan. This finding aligned with Aslam et al. (2024).

No Participation of Teachers in Curriculum Development and Planning Process

Data analysis of the study also found that out of eight participants' no one got any type of participation in National Curriculum planning and development process and any workshop or training sessions on the implementation of the curriculum. Najuma Begum (pseudonym) a teacher at a secondary level school responded that:

I have been serving as a subject specialist in one of the biggest schools in the district for 20 years but I never got any type of role or participation

at any stage of National Curriculum planning and development process. i have also never attended a training on the implementation of the curriculum. These concerns result in lesser understanding of curriculum and causing poor implementation of curriculum.

The participants concluded that one of the major factors in improper implementation of curriculum is that any teacher hardly gets a chance in curriculum development process. A teacher (Iqbal & Almani, 2018) is considered real stakeholder of curriculum implementation process yet their actual participation in the curriculum development has always remained a question.

Unavailability of Adequate Learning Facilities

Most of the participants of the study concluded that one of the major problems in curriculum implementation is lack of material resources needed for effective implementation. Shahid Ali, a secondary level teacher viewed as:

I face many problems due to unavailability of teaching materials to implement the curriculum in the school. There is no well-furnished library in our school. The equipment and tools in science lab are also scare and outdated.

Ahmad a computer instructor at a secondary level school in Skardu responded his views about problems in curriculum implementation as:

There are hardly five computers in computer lab at our school for 80 students of computer science at secondary level. I think it is a big hurdle or challenge to achieve the set objectives of this course with limited number of computer, as it is a practical based subject.

Availability of teaching learning resources play an important role in the attainment of curriculum aims and objectives and in case of the scarcity of resources intended objectives of curriculum implementation (Amin & Mahmood, 2023).

Over Sized Classrooms

The another problem which was identified by the participants of the study was overly large size classrooms. The participants responded that overcrowded classrooms create certain problems in proper implementation of curriculum. It becomes very difficult to create a learning atmosphere which meets the learning objectives set in curriculum. Due to a number of students'

classroom control during different activities cannot be maintained. Teacher cannot focus on individual learning of students. Even cannot make formative or summative assessment and students' performance in class. Iftikhar an English teacher in teaching at the secondary school noted:

There are 50 students in class 10th. Due to over-crowded class I even could not check the notebooks of the students properly. Even most of the students are unable to read but I could not focus on it and just strive to complete the syllabus and could not focus on the skills anticipated in the curriculum for this level students in the course.

Due to a number of students' classroom control during different activities cannot be maintained. Teacher cannot focus on individual learning of students. Even cannot take formative assessment of students in class. Thomas and Onyango (2022) also highlighted over-sized classroom as key hurdle in true implementation of curriculum.

Lack of Subject Teachers

The participants interviewed reported that due to shortage of staff they have to cover so much work. One of the participant told that he has to teach four or five different subjects (English, Science, Islamiyat and Civics) at secondary level and has to take five to six classes regularly. As a result, he has to compromised on the quality of teaching, as a teacher cannot has competency to teach different subjects as it should be taught. One of the respondent said that he is a science teacher but due to shortage of teachers he had to teach Islamiyat to class 9th. Since, Islmiyat has not been his specialization; therefore, he faced challenges in teaching the subject.

One of the participant Sughra Batool viewed: Implementation of curriculum in its true sense cannot be possible without sufficient supply of well qualified, subject specialist and professionally well trained teachers. As teacher-student ratio is too high in our institution there are only 12 teachers for more than 600 pupils. The few are overloaded and it is the big hindrance in curriculum implementation and provision of quality education at secondary level at schools.

The participants interviewed also shared their experience that in schools' teachers also have to

take different responsibilities than only teaching in class. They have to be class teacher, day master, have to take and maintain records of formative and summative assessment, have to be a member of admission committee and other committees at school. With all these responsibilities teachers do not get time to focus on entire learning outcomes mentioned in the curriculum (Saleem & Akbar, 2020).

Lack of Monitoring and Supervision

Effective supervision and monitoring is considered one of the important tools of effective curriculum implementation. In monitoring process, the supervisors (Coordinator, Head of Department, Head teacher and Director) professionally observe the teaching and learning process and ensures the effective implementation of curriculum which results in holistic development of a child. According to the participant there is not proper monitoring system in schools:

I have been teaching since 2017 in this school but unfortunately I do not remember that the head teacher ever visited the class. A director once visited the class and he was only concerned with the availability of furniture and number of students in the class. There is no mechanism of internal and external supervision of teaching learning process in the institutions. (Teacher D)

Most participants indicated that supervisors showed limited interest in classroom teaching-learning practices, a situation that may contribute to weakened instructional performance and true curriculum implementation among teachers. Mughal (2020) also highlighted proper and effective monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation can be one of the effective technique of proper implementation of curriculum in institutions.

Late or Unavailability of Textbooks

As all the participants of the study belong to government institutions. They all were of the same view that as government provides free textbooks in public institutions but unfortunately, could not make sure in time delivery of textbooks to schools. Due to which teachers get short time to complete the courses and cannot focus to implement the curriculum with its true sense.

Ashraf shared his views about the problems as:

The provisions of free books by the government has become one of the crucial problem in implementation of curriculum in schools. Till the end of first-term students did not receive course books in our school. As course book are main source to implement the curriculum in schools. This was the main hurdle in curriculum implementation at secondary level.

As textbooks are considered one of the major source to implement the curriculum in schools and due to late provision much of the time of academic session is wasted and without textbooks teachers and students do not concentrate on teaching learning process. Which in turn cannot achieve set goals and learning objectives of the curriculum (Gul & Malik, 2023).

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the problems face by secondary school teachers in curriculum implementation in District Skardu. We used semi-structured interviews to get the responses of the participants of the study. The study found that there are several problems which are hindering in successful implementation of the curriculum at secondary level in focused area such as, un-availability of curriculum document in schools, no participation of teachers in curriculum development and planning process, unavailability of adequate learning facilities, overly large size classrooms, teaching pupils to pass examinations, lack of quantity and quality of staff and lack of professional development and support of teachers at secondary level and lack of monitoring and supervision.

The findings of the study correspond with Thomas et. Al (2022) who concluded that shortage of physical resource, insufficient professional development of teachers and over workloads are some basic challenges in successful implementation of curriculum.

This study found that one of the main challenge in curriculum implementation is lack of quality of teachers. Teachers do not have competence and skills to implement the contemporary curriculum particularly at secondary level schools. Prasetyono et. al. (2021) concluded that there is a great need for teachers' professional development programs to improve their content knowledge, skills and dispositions for effective implementation of curriculum at schools.

Similarly, another study by Okoth (2016), also found that lack of quantity and quality human resources, lack of adequate physical resources, no focus on teachers' professional development and insufficient course affect proper and effective implementation of curriculum.

Iqbal et. al (2018), also revealed that lack of financial and other learning resources affects the true implementation of curriculum. The study also found that timely unavailability of text books and lack of teachers in schools are the major barrier in implementation of curriculum at secondary level in Pakistan. This study also concludes that one of the another major cause of poor implementation of curriculum is totally examination oriented culture and approach by the institutions and educators which results in superficial education, only focus is given on transfer of information and intended educational goals and learning objective of the curriculum cannot be attained.

Conclusion

This study showed that secondary school teachers in District Skardu face many challenges that make effective curriculum implementation difficult. Teachers often work without the actual curriculum document, have little or no role in curriculum planning, and receive very limited professional development. With overcrowded classrooms, shortages of qualified staff, and a lack of basic learning resources such as textbooks, functional labs, and libraries teachers struggle to meet the goals of the curriculum.

An exam-driven culture further pressures teachers to focus only on completing the syllabus instead of helping students develop real understanding and skills. Weak monitoring and supervision systems also mean that teachers receive little guidance or support in improving their classroom practices.

Overall, the study concludes that curriculum implementation in the district is hindered by interconnected problems. Improving the system will require better teacher support, timely resources, strong supervision, and meaningful involvement of teachers in curriculum-related decisions. By addressing these barriers, schools in Skardu can move toward more effective and meaningful teaching and learning.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the education department should ensure the availability and provision of National Curriculum documents in every school in the district.
- It is suggested that a reasonable participation of teachers should be ensured in National Curriculum planning and development process.
- As examination system is being shifted from rote learning to SLOs based assessment, in this regard schools management should provide all learning facilities particularly technological support to teachers at secondary level to ensure the successful implementation of curriculum.
- School management should make efforts to develop libraries, internet facilities, science and computer labs, and language laboratories as these facilities are vital in attainment of learning objectives intended in curriculum and to meet the new trends in the field.
- The government should ensure in time provision of text-books. Schools also should develop book banks to avoid the wastage of time in case of late delivery of books.
- Further researches can be done to investigate the problems face by teachers in implementation of curriculum at elementary and higher secondary level in the area.

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