

The Role of Teachers in Curriculum Management Implementation: A Narrative Literature Review on Challenges, Best Practices, and Professional Development

ABSTRACT

Aims: This study aims to acquire comprehensive information regarding the role of teachers in curriculum management implementation. The focus of this study lies on the challenges, best practices, and professional development of teachers in the implementation of curriculum management within the educational context of Indonesia.

Study design: This study constitutes qualitative research employing a narrative literature review approach.

Duration of Study: This literature review was conducted over a two-month period, spanning from 1st September to 30th October 2023.

Methodology: As this study adopts a qualitative approach with a narrative literature review, the primary data sources include scholarly journal articles and seminar proceedings. These data were collected online through the Google Scholar database. In this study, a total of 20 articles were reviewed.

Results: This study demonstrates that: 1) teachers face several challenges in the implementation of curriculum management, including: (1) Understanding Complex Curricula; (2) adapting to the interests and needs of students; (3) limited time; (4) comprehensive assessment; (5) continuous professional development, and (6) adequate resources. 2) As for best practices in curriculum management implementation, they include: (1) understanding and interpreting the curriculum; (2) structured lesson planning; (3) using varied teaching methods and strategies; (4) differentiated learning; (5) utilizing technology in teaching; (6) collaboration and knowledge exchange; (7) reflection and practice renewal; and (8) involving students in learning. 3) Regarding the professional development of teachers in curriculum management implementation, it encompasses: (1) training and workshops; (2) participation in certification programs; (3) mentoring and collaboration; (4) academic development programs; and (5) attending conferences and seminars.

Conclusion: The role of teachers in curriculum management implementation confronts intricate challenges. Furthermore, best practices in curriculum management implementation encompass numerous aspects that need to be addressed. Therefore, strategic steps in teacher professional development are imperative.

Keywords: *Implementation, management, curriculum, challenges, best practices, professional.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality education stands as the primary goal of every nation in preparing competent future generations. In achieving this objective, the curriculum plays a crucial role as a guide in the learning process. Similarly, teachers play an even more pivotal role as the individuals responsible for the management functions – designing, implementing, and evaluating the

curriculum. However, the importance of the teacher's role in curriculum management implementation is often overlooked.

The neglect of the crucial role of teachers in implementing curriculum management in the field of education, particularly in Indonesia, is attributed by the author to various factors. Firstly, there is an emphasis on educational policies, with teachers often directed towards matters related to the formulation of policies and broad curriculum changes. Secondly, societal perceptions confine teachers to their traditional role as classroom instructors, leading to a lack of full acknowledgment of their involvement in curriculum management encompassing planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Thirdly, there is a noticeable inadequacy in training and preparation for curriculum management, as training tends to focus more on teaching methods and specific learning materials, with insufficient attention given to curriculum management itself. Fourthly, teachers grapple with a substantial workload, encompassing teaching responsibilities, lesson preparation, and student assessment, making curriculum management an additional and challenging task. Lastly, the absence of collaboration and communication among teachers, school principals, and other relevant parties can impede the teacher's role in curriculum management, resulting in the oversight of their contributions when there is no space for sharing knowledge, experiences, and ideas.

The role of teachers in curriculum management implementation is crucial to examine, as teachers serve as the primary implementers of the curriculum within educational institutions. Teachers bear direct responsibilities for instructing and guiding students, as well as executing the curriculum prescribed by the government or educational institutions. Moreover, teachers play a vital role in developing instructional materials aligned with the curriculum. They need to assess and select relevant and up-to-date learning materials, organizing them effectively to facilitate student comprehension. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to the design of more effective educational policies and programs, providing appropriate support to enhance the quality of learning in schools.

The research theme on the role of teachers in curriculum management implementation is not a novel inquiry; it has been explored in numerous academic studies. Fatmawati (2021) investigated the teacher's role in curriculum and instructional development. Fathurrochman (2017) examined the implementation of curriculum management to enhance the quality of Islamic boarding school students. Bafadal (2018) explored curriculum implementation management based on tauhid for character formation of learners. Aji & Ngumarno (2017) delved into the implementation of the 2013 curriculum for the Indonesian language. However, previous studies have not comprehensively depicted the challenges, best practices, and professional development of teachers in curriculum management implementation. This study aims to provide a comprehensive description of the challenges, best practices, and professionalism of teachers in curriculum management implementation through a literature review. Therefore, this research contributes to the enrichment and strengthening of insights into curriculum implementation, specifically regarding challenges, best practices, and the professional development of teachers.

2. METHODS

This research constitutes a qualitative study employing a narrative literature review approach. The data utilized include journal articles and seminar proceeding articles. Data were collected through online searches in databases, particularly Google Scholar. The gathered data and information were then subjected to in-depth analysis to explore and comprehend the crucial role of teachers in curriculum management. The number of articles reviewed amounted to 20 articles.

This narrative literature review was conducted in several stages: firstly, the author delineated the study's objectives and scope; secondly, the author identified literature sources; thirdly, the author performed selection and review of the sources or references; fourthly, the author analysed and synthesised the literature; fifthly, the author wrote and presented the study's findings; sixthly, the author evaluated and revised the report. These stages were employed to ensure that the literature review was conducted systematically, comprehensively, and reliably in attaining a profound understanding of the teacher's role in curriculum management implementation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Challenges Faced by Teachers in The Implementation of Curriculum Management

The implementation of curriculum management involves a myriad of challenges faced by teachers. Researchers observe that this is partially a consequence of advancements in technology and information, societal cultural shifts, and the evolving educational demands of society. Lukmantlya (2022) asserts that curriculum management encounters increasingly intricate challenges due to shifts in industry demands, technological advancements, the impact of globalization, and government policy changes that can affect the curriculum.

Several primary challenges commonly encountered by teachers in their role in curriculum management implementation include:

3.1.1 Understanding a Complex Curriculum

Curricula can become intricate due to continuous changes and refinements. Educators need to comprehensively grasp the content, objectives, and requirements of the curriculum. This is particularly crucial as the government has recently introduced the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, which encompasses various aspects that are either subtracted or added. Such conditions contribute to the complexity of a singular curriculum. According to Mawati et al. (2023), in order to effectively implement a new curriculum and achieve the desired outcomes, teachers must possess a thorough understanding of the curriculum and all its components. Regardless of how well-crafted a new curriculum may be, if educators are unable to implement it effectively in the learning process, the curriculum cannot function optimally.

The author contends that frequently changing curricula can be challenging to comprehend, potentially fostering uncertainty and chaos within the educational sphere. Both students and teachers may find it difficult to adapt to incessant changes. Moreover, if the objectives behind curriculum alterations are unclear or unknown to stakeholders, it can impede their understanding of the rationale behind such changes. Unclear objectives may lead to misunderstanding and disagreement.

3.1.2 Adaptation to the Needs and Interests of Learners

Students within a single school, and even within a single class, exhibit diverse characteristics (Hanifah et al., 2020). Each group of students possesses varying needs, interests, talents, and preferences (Hanifah et al., 2020). This aligns with the research findings of Nurcahyono & Putra (2022), indicating that the heterogeneity of students within a classroom is linked to their levels of understanding, thinking abilities, skills, learning styles, self-confidence, and concentration levels, thereby presenting obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The author deals with that adapting to diverse needs and characteristics poses a challenge for teachers in curriculum management. This challenge involves the introduction of varied learning approaches and appropriate instructional differentiation to effectively meet the needs of students. In this context, teachers are required to implement the curriculum while considering students' learning styles, skill levels, and interests. Consequently, self-alignment takes time and does not guarantee that teachers will have a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing curriculum (Retnawati, 2015), thus posing a challenge for educators.

The author argues that difficulties in adapting to the needs of learners may arise from changes in paradigms and learning approaches. Additionally, time constraints and limited available resources may not adequately cover the needs of students with diverse characteristics. Furthermore, changes in materials and content, along with challenges in assessment, can also present significant hurdles in adapting to students' needs.

3.1.3 Limited Time

Teachers often grapple with the challenge of managing limited time to implement the curriculum. A study by Aji & Ngumarno (2017) indicates that the constraint of time during learning implementation is one of the hurdles in curriculum management. This is particularly pronounced in science subjects, which are perceived as requiring a substantial amount of time (Retnawati, 2015). Researchers observe that the content in science subjects is often complex and demands a profound understanding.

Scientific concepts and principles taught in science subjects require ample time for thorough learning and mastery by students. Profound understanding, observation, problem-solving, and experimentation are often necessary to test hypotheses related to these concepts. Additionally, a packed schedule and other demands may limit the time available for a comprehensive implementation of the learning materials. Hence, this challenge involves efficient time management, the selection of relevant content, and emphasis on understanding fundamental concepts.

According to Aji & Ngumarno (2017), time constraints can be addressed through various creative efforts. For instance, administrative tasks such as Lesson Implementation Plans, Annual Programs, Semester Programs, Assessment Rubrics, Assessment Guidelines, Competency Standard or Basic Competency Analyses, and others can be completed at home without sacrificing valuable learning time at school. Furthermore, time limitations can be overcome through assignments or homework. Time constraints in assessment can also be addressed through group assessments in the form of project evaluations. The author suggests that these efforts can be considered in addressing time limitations in curriculum management.

3.1.4 Comprehensive Assessment

The author perceives that the form of comprehensive assessment poses a distinct challenge for teachers. The comprehensive aspects and criteria of assessment demand patience from educators, requiring meticulous and thorough evaluation. This form of assessment extends beyond cognitive appraisal, encompassing affective and psychomotor aspects throughout the educational process and in a continuous manner. Moreover, high-quality assessment is not solely focused on end results; it involves a complex assessment system that includes planning, execution, and reporting (Wuryani & Irham, 2014).

This challenge necessitates teachers to be adept at conducting comprehensive assessments of students' learning progress. It involves selecting appropriate assessment instruments, collecting accurate data, and interpreting assessment results to provide effective feedback to students. Teachers also need to tailor assessment instruments to align with the implemented curriculum.

In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, a study by Firdaus et al. (2022) indicates that the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum emphasize creativity, problem-solving-focused learning, and an approach based on the demands of societal needs and the workforce. Additionally, the use of a comprehensive assessment system is a distinctive feature of the Merdeka Curriculum, posing a challenge for teachers in the assessment process.

3.1.5 Continuous Professional Development

The author argues that continuous professional development refers to ongoing efforts to continuously enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices throughout their careers. In the context of curriculum management, challenges in implementing continuous professional development encompass the continuity of learning, access to resources and training, implementation in practice, evaluation and feedback, and knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Continuous professional development for teachers in mastering a curriculum poses a significant challenge. In her study on the constraints of implementing the 2013 Curriculum, Retnawati (2015) reported that the training and socialization for the 2013 Curriculum have not yielded effective and efficient results. This issue is attributed to diverse interpretations from presenters, limited training and socialization time, as well as inadequate quantity and quality of training materials. Consequently, there is a lack of understanding among teachers regarding the curriculum.

In this regard, teachers need to stay abreast of the latest developments in education and update their skills and knowledge. This challenge involves active participation in relevant professional training and development, allowing teachers to continually enhance the quality of curriculum implementation. For instance, Daubert (as cited Murtafiah et al., 2022) recommends that mastery of play-based curriculum is a fundamental component of continuous professional development for teachers.

3.1.6 Securing Adequate Support and Resources

Teachers often require adequate support and resources to effectively implement the curriculum. These challenges encompass access to up-to-date learning materials, adequate facilities, educational technology, and administrative support. The lack of resources can serve as a hindrance to the optimal execution of the curriculum.

Infrastructure-related obstacles arise from the shared use of spaces among units and levels, as well as ongoing processes of refinement and building improvements, impeding the implementation of learning activities (Bafadal, 2018). Nurcahyono & Putra (2022) reported that among the hurdles in the implementation of the "Merdeka Curriculum" is the limitation of infrastructure, particularly in terms of internet connectivity and hardware such as computers or PCs. This complicates teachers' efforts to access a variety of reference materials and diverse, adaptable learning examples.

Addressing these challenges necessitates thorough planning, collaboration between teachers and relevant stakeholders, and sustained support to ensure the successful implementation of curriculum management.

3.2 Best Practices of the Teacher's Role in Curriculum Management Implementation

The role of teachers in curriculum management is highly significant, exerting a considerable impact on the learning process and the attainment of educational objectives. Teachers serve as the primary agents in the learning process and the implementation of the curriculum within the classroom. Therefore, teachers must execute their roles adeptly, as they possess the power to shape positive learning experiences, motivate students, and effectively achieve curriculum goals.

Drawing upon a review of literature, several best practices can be identified for teachers in the implementation of curriculum management, as follows:

3.2.1 Understanding and Interpreting the Curriculum

The curriculum serves as a guiding framework for teachers in developing relevant teaching strategies. This demands that teachers play a crucial role in communicating and interpreting the messages embedded in curriculum planning to students (Fathurrochman, 2017). In this regard, teachers need to comprehensively understand the curriculum to be implemented. They must delve into the goals, content, and teaching strategies outlined in the curriculum. With a solid understanding, teachers can interpret the curriculum effectively and design appropriate lesson plans.

3.2.2 Structured Lesson Planning

Teachers must plan lessons with a clear structure. They need to design lesson plans that encompass learning objectives, appropriate teaching methods, relevant teaching materials, and suitable assessments. Well-structured planning aids teachers in efficiently organizing time and resources.

3.2.3 Utilizing Diverse Teaching Methods and Strategies

Teachers can leverage a variety of teaching methods and strategies that align with curriculum objectives and students' needs. By employing diverse approaches, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, experiments, or presentations, teachers can create engaging learning experiences that support student comprehension.

3.2.4 Differentiated Learning

Teachers need to accommodate individual differences among students by implementing differentiated learning. They can adjust methods, materials, and task difficulty levels based on the needs and abilities of the students. The differentiation approach aids each student in reaching their potential in learning. Differentiated learning operates on the principle that each individual possesses unique interests, potential, and talents (Faiz et al., 2022). Consequently, the teacher's role in differentiated learning is to manage and integrate these differences using appropriate strategies.

There are several indicators that teachers must possess when implementing differentiated learning: 1) The teacher has the ability to create a learning environment that encourages students to achieve high learning goals. 2) The teacher is capable of responding to students' learning needs by providing diverse lesson plans, learning resources, teaching strategies, instructional media, assignments, and assessments. 3) The teacher has the skills to manage a productive class by following procedures and routines that allow flexibility within a clear structure, ensuring that even though activities may vary, the class can still function effectively (Nurcahyono & Putra, 2022). In this regard, Rusman (2018), in his study, recommends that these teachers also organize "class clinics" specifically for lower-grade students who are still not proficient in reading. The class clinic endeavors to bridge students with differences in interests, intellectual levels, and other aspects, providing them with specialized guidance.

3.2.5 Utilization of Technology in Learning

The role of technology in enhancing curriculum quality lies in its contribution to the effectiveness of instruction, learning phases, and monitoring students' progress (Lazwardi, 2017). In this context, teachers can harness educational technology as a tool in curriculum implementation. The use of software, applications, multimedia, or online resources can enhance students' learning experiences and facilitate access to a broader range of information and learning materials.

3.2.6 Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

Teachers can engage in collaboration with colleagues to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices. The exchange of ideas and discussions with fellow teachers can help enhance understanding of the curriculum and create opportunities for mutual learning. In this regard, Rusman (2018) reports his findings that one of the best practices in curriculum management implementation is the collaboration among teachers in developing Lesson Implementation Plans (RPP) through Teacher Working Groups and Cluster Teacher Working Groups. They engage in sharing activities and in-house training by inviting national instructors and Curriculum 2013 speakers to share knowledge and experiences.

3.2.7 Reflection and Practice Renewal

Teachers need to regularly reflect on their teaching practices. They should identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum implementation and seek ways to enhance their practices. Through reflection, teachers can continually renew and improve their teaching approaches. In this context, teachers also develop alternative activities that are not listed in the predetermined Lesson Implementation Plans (Rusman, 2018).

3.2.8 Involving Students in the Learning Process

Education is not an individual endeavour but a collaborative activity that involves interaction and cooperation between teachers and students, among students, and between students and their environment and other learning resources. Through these interactions and collaborations, students strive to overcome challenges they face in society with the aim of shaping a better community (Lazwardi, 2017). Therefore, teachers can strengthen curriculum implementation by actively involving students in the learning process.

Additionally, teachers can encourage student participation, discussions, and collaboration to build a deeper understanding and enhance learning motivation.

3.3. Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development encompasses various forms of learning and experiences designed to enhance knowledge, skills, and teaching practices. This literature review indicates several forms of teacher professional development, as follows:

3.3.1 Training and Workshops

The author observes that teachers can participate in training and workshops organized by educational institutions, training centers, or professional organizations. These training sessions may cover topics such as the use of technology in teaching, innovative teaching strategies, effective assessment methods, and classroom management. Training and workshops provide opportunities for teachers to update their knowledge, as the understanding of the curriculum by school administrators and teachers is a key variable influencing the performance and existence of a school (Mafudah, 2016). Therefore, the author views that training and workshops are significant investments in the professional development of teachers, as they assist educators in continuous growth, adaptation to changes, and providing a more substantial contribution to student education.

The author agrees that teachers should receive adequate training and workshops to develop their professionalism. Training and workshops play a crucial role in the professional development of teachers. Through training, teachers can update their knowledge and acquire new skills relevant to the latest developments in education. Through workshops, teachers can comprehend more effective teaching methods, evaluation strategies, and pedagogical approaches that can enhance the quality of learning in the classroom. Additionally, teachers engaged in training and workshops have the opportunity for continuous professional development.

3.3.2 Certification Programs and Professional Recognition

Professional recognition of a teacher's status can be seen through the awarding of educator certificates to those who meet the established requirements (Kartowagiran, 2011). Certification programs are designed to acknowledge a teacher's competence in specific fields. For example, there are certification programs for subject-specific teachers, inclusive education teachers, or guidance and counseling teachers. These certification programs typically involve advanced studies, specialized training, and competency assessments.

The author believes that certification and professional recognition contribute to enhancing the quality of teachers and gaining acknowledgment for their expertise. Through certification, teachers are expected to exhibit greater professionalism in fulfilling their roles. However, Kartowagiran (2011) concludes in his study that even though teachers have obtained certification, they still require ongoing support and guidance, particularly in the development of academic writing skills and research proficiency.

3.3.3 Mentoring and Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers has positive impacts not only on the teachers themselves but also on students and the school. Regarding teachers, collaboration plays a crucial role in enhancing their competencies, including knowledge, skills, and experiences. These teacher competencies will contribute to the improvement of their performance, ultimately having a

positive impact on student achievements (Kasmawati, 2020). The author is optimistic that by combining mentoring and collaboration, the professional development of teachers can become more holistic, profound, and sustainable. Both aspects provide critical support in shaping teachers into more high-quality and effective educational practitioners.

To enhance their professionalism, teachers can engage in mentoring programs where they collaborate with more experienced educators to receive guidance and support. Mentoring enables the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices between experienced teachers and those who are new or looking to enhance their skills (Kasmawati, 2020). Additionally, collaboration with peers is also an effective form of professional development. Teachers can work together in teaching teams, conduct discussions, and share ideas to improve their teaching practices. Therefore, leadership plays a crucial role in supporting teacher collaboration, leading to effective collaboration. To reap long-term benefits, teacher collaboration needs to be encouraged, enhanced, and maintained.

3.3.4 Academic Development Programs

Improving the professional and pedagogical competence of teachers, a crucial aspect of professionalism development, can be achieved through enhancing academic qualifications. This is elucidated in research indicating that the enhancement of pedagogical and professional skills can be attained through mastery of the subject area aligned with the educational background and academic qualifications of teachers (Mulyani, 2019). This underscores that pursuing postgraduate studies is one of the ways to foster the professionalism of teachers.

The author contends that enhancing academic qualifications is a crucial step in elevating the professionalism of teachers. Higher academic qualifications provide teachers with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in specific fields. Additionally, teachers with higher academic qualifications tend to possess better teaching skills. With increased academic qualifications, teachers are better prepared to face complex challenges in the field of education. Moreover, by improving academic qualifications, teachers can have a more significant impact on student learning.

3.3.5 Conferences and Seminars

Attending educational conferences and seminars is another way for teachers to enhance their professionalism. In addition, measures to continually improve teachers' professionalism include implementing classroom action research, enhancing educators' competence through classroom research, and participating in continuous professional development programs designed for educators and subject matter instructors. This may involve attending empowerment conferences, taking education courses that boost educator motivation, accreditation programs, as well as participating in seminars and similar activities (Iman et al., 2022).

The conferences typically involve presentations by leading education experts, panel discussions, and opportunities to interact with fellow educators. Teachers can gain new insights into current trends, recent research, and best practices in education through active participation in conferences and seminars. Therefore, conferences on management can contribute to the sustained professionalism of teachers.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that: 1) teachers face several challenges in the implementation of curriculum management, including: (1) Understanding Complex Curricula; (2) adapting to the interests and needs of students; (3) limited time; (4) comprehensive assessment; (5) continuous professional development, and (6) adequate resources. 2) As for best practices in curriculum management implementation, they include: (1) understanding and interpreting the curriculum; (2) structured lesson planning; (3) using varied teaching methods and strategies; (4) differentiated learning; (5) utilizing technology in teaching; (6) collaboration and knowledge exchange; (7) reflection and practice renewal; and (8) involving students in learning. 3) Regarding the professional development of teachers in curriculum management implementation, it encompasses: (1) training and workshops; (2) participation in certification programs; (3) mentoring and collaboration; (4) academic development programs; and (5) attending conferences and seminars.

Based on the findings of the conducted study, there are several recommendations for further research, namely: 1) In-depth analysis of teacher challenges, which includes first, focusing on a detailed analysis of each identified challenge by exploring the underlying factors and their impacts in greater detail; second, conducting research to assess the extent to which each challenge can influence the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. 2) Further research can focus on the impact of technology in curriculum management implementation; 3) Subsequent research can also concentrate on the evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development programs.

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