

## Teacher as a Curriculum Developer and Mapper in a School Environment

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### Abstract

This paper studied viewpoints and experiences of instructors engaged in curriculum development and mapping regarding the activities and tasks that improve or prevent from efficient implementation of curriculum. For the aim of this study 6 instructors were elected from two schools. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews conducted to collect data and information. Result supports previous studies and shows a considerable relationship between available procedure and desired procedure for curriculum development and mapping. Moreover, results emphasize some new and significant aspects which neglected or did not adequately discussed in previous studies. The following methods recognized for productive and prosperous curriculum development and mapping: integrated leadership, proper training, access to required resources, continuous communication about the innovations, and increasing motivations.

**Keywords:** Curriculum; curriculum development; curriculum mapping; teaching methods; teachers' strategies

### 1. Introduction

There are many uses of the word "curriculum". The Longman dictionary defines it as "the subjects that are taught by a school, college etc, or the things that are studied in a particular subject". From etymological aspect, the origin of the word "curriculum" backs to a Latin term meaning "the course of a chariot race" (Schubert, 1986). Curriculum is concerning the teaching, methods of instructions, learning and evaluation actions which are deliberately designed, planned

and guided by the education institution involved and carried out by learners in groups or individually, in-classroom or off-classroom context (Mednick, 2006). Therefore, in designing curriculum, the responsible persons should notice and aware objectives, as well as methods, materials, evaluation procedures and systems. Moreover, education curriculum should meet and observe educational requirements of most learners, including those with inabilities and weakness (Njogu, 2012). Curriculum development procedure is a necessary element for prosperous gaining educational objectives for all learners. Traditionally, outside qualified experts and authorities have been responsible for curriculum construct and design and deprive teachers and learners from contribution and having role in the process of curriculum development (Carl, 2009; Craig & Ross, 2008). In narrow perspective, Curriculum refers to content and evaluations. In a wide prospective, curriculum includes needs analysis, aims, subject arrangements, assessment and learning methods (Giroux, 1988; Jacobs, 2004). In other words, broad concept of curriculum describes it as a sophisticated combination of educational strategies, course content, learning outcomes, educational experiences, peripheral learning, assessments, educational environment, learning style and timetable.

Literature and previous studies show that there are noticeable differences between the formal curriculum (developed by authorities, experts or educationalists) and the real curriculum implementing in the educational circumstance or classroom setting. Teachers have a variety of options in related to curriculum and teaching depended on their previous experiences, studies, backgrounds, special circumstances of students and instructional places, their knowledge, and the dominated culture (Cuban, 1993). Based on the curriculum, teachers' roles can favorably change as an executor, facilitator, resource, counselor, problem solver and coordinator. Curriculum development for the aim of this study is sequence and management of contents and subjects.

Literature review shows teachers' affirmative understanding of curriculum development and mapping as a powerful tool to improve their job and also school programs (Huffman, 2002; Lucas, 2005). Moreover, some of the researches have proved connection between teachers' curriculum development and increasing students' achievements (Fairris, 2008; Shanks, 2002). Unfortunately, there are few researches focus on the procedures and actions taking place in the course of curriculum development and mapping or discovered the circumstances and needed support for prosperous and effective curriculum developing (He, Schultz, & Schubert, 2015).

Furthermore, there are few discussions in the previous studies about the problems and difficulties that teachers or instructors may experience through the mapping a curriculum and the ways which these obstacles and situations are removed or controlled. This paper is conducted to elaborate curriculum development and mapping in two school-settings to record both the favorable circumstances and obstacles of the ways of conducting and recognize used strategies for a success curriculum.

## ***2. Literature Review***

Jacobs (1997) introduced a model in which it allowed individual teachers, to use technology and school schedule, to develop their own curriculum, and finally analyze each other's curricula for deficiencies, break, unrelated materials, contradictories and redundancies in order to develop a logical, understandable, homogenous curriculum inside and outside schools which is organized both horizontally and vertically (Kallick & Colosimo, 2009; Udelhofen, 2005). As model proposed by Jacob suggest, every curriculum should be criticize, analyze, adapt or customize on a rational ground to answer school neighborhood's curricular needs as they modify or as a reaction to indicated dynamic and changing requirements (Udelhofen, 2005).

The work of previous theorists identified the importance school teachers' roles in curricular development at the constructing level (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Literature review on teacher leadership highlights that, for almost more than two decades, attempts to generalize teacher as leaders within educational organizational systems have took place with little considerable success (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In addition to the teacher owned curriculum development, Curriculum mapping applied as a method of curriculum analysis in educational institute. As Udelhofen (2005) noted, standards-based reform, improvement and responsibility, curriculum developing and mapping is employed by a number of schools in a greater extent as a planning instrument that let teachers adapt their curricula with the desired national norms and evaluation methods.

Recent studies use Fullan's (2007) theory of educational modification in addition to some careful instructional change standards, notions and fundamentals as a theoretical foundation. This theory proposes three stages in the change course: beginning, performing, organizing or maintenance

and draw desirable matters at every stage. Theorists who support change urge that changes and reforms should not consider as a simple direct or straight process; in fact, according to Marsh (2009) stages of change will blend slowly and unnoticeably in together. Moreover, Fullan (2007) noted that all stages should be considered from the initiation and continually thereafter.

According to Hall and Hord (2010) a good and efficient change starts and closes with realizing the significance of performing dynamics and constructs. The review of educational change studies proposed that implementation has to be real employment of change in exercise. The five aspects of implementation in reality suggested by Fullan and Pomfret (1977) involve “changes in subjects, framework, and role/behavior, knowledge and understanding, and value internalization” (p. 336). The writers emphasized that some aspects of the implementation are simply noticeable, since some of them should be understood or mentioned through papers and interviews.

Due to the difficulties of the implementation process, there are plenty of elements which have positive effects or impacts on change: professional promotion, available sources (e.g., time, equipment, place, materials), response systems that improve cooperation and obstacle recognition, and also role of participations in making a decision (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). The change stages need guidance, cooperation, individual learning, engagement from school personnel, and a common interest and crucial planning (Fullan, 1992; Hall & Hord, 2010).

Literature review of the change emphasizes the critical performance of people in the change procedure. As reported by Hall and Hord (2010), “organizations adopt change –individuals implement change...successful change starts and ends at the individual level. An entire organization does not change until each member has changed” (p. 9). In other words, a successful change requires individual to change. Therefore, it is vital to investigate and examine all the procedures and measures of the change from the perspectives of the curriculum actors (White & Le Cornu, 2011). Curriculum is the focal point for the relationship between teachers and learners. It involves developing programs of study (study plans), particular lesson plans, teaching strategies, allocation of resources, evaluation of students and faculty development (Alberta Education, 2012). Considering these facts curriculum development approach in school is and ought to be one of the serious and common concern for those involved in this task, especially for policy-makers, government, educationalist, educators, parents and the society at large (Alberta Education, 2012; Fish, 2013).

Two questions examined in this paper. What are the action plan and initiatives for curriculum developing and mapping to be prosperous? And, what are the opportunities and problems of curriculum development and mapping implementation?

### ***3. Methodology***

#### ***3.1. Sampling***

This study benefited from a purposeful sampling to choose both research place and participants. Two reputed high schools for curriculum development and mapping were selected. One of school has 460 students and the other has 530 students. The educational degrees of 160 teachers in these two schools were: 50.8% BA, 41.7% MA, and 7.5% had PhD degree.

At first, twenty teachers were accepted to participate in this study and invited for interview. After conducting interview, six teachers (3 female and 3 male) were selected for the aim of this study. The teachers were fully informed for the study. All the participants were experienced teachers at least with 19 years teaching experience. Contributors considered themselves as being fairly qualified and skillful with curriculum development and mapping.

#### ***3.2. Data collection and analysis***

As Miles & Huberman (1994) mentioned Qualitative data authorized the researcher to preserve chronological flow, see exactly which events lead to which outcomes, and derive fruitful explanations. Concentrating on an individual case helped reveal the interplay and impact of significant parts specific to the interested aspect and evaluate disparate tasks and procedures appear in the research setting (Merriam, 2009).

The first way for collecting data was interviews. In 1995, Lincoln and Guba suggested data collection should be done to the extent that satiation or repetition is attained. For every participant, two interviews were conducted. In the course of second interviews, it was understood that extra interviews added no new information related to the research questions. The first interviews lasted 50-65 minutes and the second interviews carried out in 30-45 minutes.

Extra and supplementary information were gained from classroom observations and records. Classroom observations identified the degree that teachers followed the agreed curriculum and

amount of innovative and ingenuity the teachers combined to the developed or mapped curriculum. The documents included records curriculum implementing for different classes and also standardized assessment reports. The classroom monitoring and records were used to validate and confirm the results from interviews.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) suggested that the process of data analysis included classification, encoding, grounded established based on data collection, employing a sustained comparative method. New collected data continually contrasted with old accumulated data; classification established in advance were compared with the emerging ones in order to prove or reject them until the most reasonable analysis and explanation of data was gained (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

#### ***4. Results***

Curriculum development is a process including different phases and is performed after every specified period defined by an educational institution concerned. Although it can be different from school to school, the developers should have enough experienced and knowledge to prepare and also update or revise it. Developing curriculum may take more or less time depending on the size of the institution. An approach to develop curriculum therefore, should encompass design, implementation and assessment. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) Curriculum development includes curriculum planning, implementing and assessment, as well as those participated persons and involved procedures. Using a curriculum model as a road-map can help curriculum planning leader with a systematic and comprehensive approach to this complex and demanding work (O'Neill, 2010).

Most of the respondent disclosed positive understanding and perception of both curriculum developing and mapping as efficient planning instruments which support both short-term and long-term educational purposes, remove gaps and unproductive redundancies in the curriculum, and also provide better adjustment of curriculum with state norms. Meanwhile teachers are developing or mapping curriculum, teachers are able to follow needs, the previous knowledge and skills of their learners and build on them. In other words, it is designed to promote a deeper

level of learning by identifying tailoring the needs of the students with the intention of helping the student achieve learning goals. One participant mentioned, “You know what are students’ needs, what they were wanted to learned and master.” Curriculum mapping helps ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to master specific outcomes. Teacher curriculum development and mapping improved student learning and motivation; whilst curriculum developed by outer expert did not result in significant student learning or increase their motivation.

Some of the participants declared that both teacher curriculum developing and curriculum mapping kept them on the right track. One of the participant mentioned, “having map, keeps you focus on the target.” Another participant shared “Classroom-level curriculum development reflects constructivist principles of active learning and interaction between thought and experience”.

Most participants suggested that curriculum mapping and teacher as a curriculum developer can effect on communication tool with parents, administrators, and other stakeholders. In this study teachers supported both curriculum developing and mapping, they emphasized that it can help new teachers to determine the order and stages suitable for covering the material and to satisfy the school and department needs in one side, and simultaneously consider developmental, cognitive, emotional, and communicative factors in other side. Participants also proposed that experienced teachers should provide opportunities to share their expertise and knowledge with their partners and co-workers through developing a well-designed curricula and maps. All the individuals participated in this study strictly wanted improvement in synergies among teachers within and beyond faculties.

All of the participants asserted that it is essential to provide adequate support, assistance and ongoing training for educators to develop curriculum and maps and not to believe them to do it immediately. Teachers should have enough motivation, interest and initiative to tackle different obstacles and problems. Moreover, curriculum experts should monitor teachers’ works and answer their questions, provide assistance and motivate teachers.

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