

**TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM CONCEPTUALISATION AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN KENYA**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

Most curriculums start to gain life from the time they are conceived and written. In order to create a strong curriculum, teachers must play an integral role in every step of the process of curriculum development. Within the context of the current curriculum changes in education in Kenya, stringent demands are being made on teachers to deliver. This study focused on teacher participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design and 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. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analyses. The study results established that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualisation and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Teachers strongly agreed that participation would improve their ability to interpret the philosophy, aims and goals of education as well as the general and specific objectives of the curriculum. However, results also indicated that teachers participated in curriculum conceptualization to a small extent due to the top-down models of curriculum development employed by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). This study recommends that teachers should be involved in the planning and development of the curriculum in all stages. Also, curriculum development should be decentralized to local levels starting with school committees, sub-counties, counties and finally to the national level taking into considerations all relevant contributions by various stakeholders.

Key Words: Teacher Participation, Curriculum Conceptualisation, Effective Implementation, Secondary School Curriculum

### 1.1 Introduction

In many curriculum circles, curriculum conceptualisation is also referred to as needs analyses stage (Abiero, 2009; Shiundu & Omulando, 1992) or situational analyses (Bishop, 1985). Carl (1995) and MOE – Trinidad and Tobago, (2012) refer to conceptualisation stage as curriculum planning stage. Under this stage, all the preliminary work is carried to ensure that curriculum is relevant, appropriate and workable. It is during this stage, when needs analysis is conducted, which involves collecting data on the existing curriculum, and whether it meets the needs of the society and those of learners, weaknesses and strengths of the existing curriculum, the emerging issues and needs of the society (Abiero, 2009). Factors such as the socio-economic developments of the country, the government policies and directives; the expectations of the parents and society and the prevailing values and norms are considered (Bennars, Boisvert & Otiende, 1994).

According to Bude (1999), systematic approaches to curriculum development should begin with situational analyses. Curriculum planners then identify the major tasks necessary for developing, implementing, evaluating and maintaining the instructional programmes (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). Attention is paid to the arrangement of varied components including philosophical underpinnings, educational goals and objectives, subject matter (content), learning experiences and evaluation, all established with stakeholders (Abiero, 2009; Malebye, 1999). Curriculum conceptualization also provides guidance on the importance and relevance of the curriculum project

to the needs of the nation, the resources required to implement the project, the required personnel and their responsibilities as well as statement of work plan with time-table for the project (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992; Bennars, 1994; MOE – Trinidad & Tobago, 2012). Ways of translating stated goals into practice have to be carefully thought out from the outset (Bude, 1999). Cincioglu (2014) noted that in situational analyses, considering teacher factor is one of the elements to be analysed, teachers' quality and educational background is important as teachers are the ones to make application of innovation easier or harder in line with their teaching beliefs and habits. Participation by key stakeholder at different levels of the process is essential to a genuinely systematic process.

In this phase, teachers can play the role of developers in various ways: they can be members of curriculum project teams, curriculum development panels, or can be invited to attend various meetings, seminars and workshops organized by the institution charged with curriculum development in order to make a contribution to the process of curriculum development or evaluation process (Ben-Peretz, 1990; Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). According to Mokua (2010), teachers can determine the local learning needs, identify and build on existing strengths, utilise local resources, consider a range of models and decide which best suits the situation.

However, Carl (2009) observed that teachers face tremendous challenges, several of which are related to curriculum. The challenges manifest themselves at various levels and in various areas, ranging from the national level to within the classroom level. UNESCO, Global Monitoring Report (2015) found that teachers lacked understanding of the reforms intentions and the reforms lacked grounding in the classroom reality as teachers were not involved in curriculum planning. In Kenya, Mali, Senegal Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania, teachers did not often understand the curricula partly due to a mismatch in training and a lack of support mechanism in the classroom (UNESCO, 2015). A South Africa study by Ramparsad (2006) also found out that teachers who had been left out of planning the curriculum appeared to be mystified by the jargon in the learning programme document provided to them. These challenges support teacher participation in curriculum development process for effective implementation of the curriculum.

Fullan (1991) argues that the teacher is required to have a broad knowledge and understanding of educational views, a knowledge of children, a positive teaching attitude and educational relationships and also knowledge and expertise in respect to both the general curriculum studies and particular subject curriculum studies. Teachers must have at their disposal specific curriculum skills and knowledge which will enable them to be effectively involved in classroom and outside it. Carl (2009) noted that teachers did not wish to be viewed as mere recipients who are supposed to implement the curriculum in the classroom. Teachers expect to be included in the initial process of meaningful decision making where their voices will be heard.

However, Kenya follows the top-down model of curriculum development. The KICD which is a semi-autonomous body under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is charged with the responsibility of developing the curriculum through curriculum development panels (Abiero, 2009; Asiachi & Okech, 1992; KICD, 2014; Obai, 1999; 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). Only during the implementation stage are teachers actually involved with their role being confined to the implementation of the new curriculum in exactly the same way in which the designers

intended it to be. This approach makes teachers tend to think that their role is only in the classroom: to implement what they have received from the KICD with many of the teachers following the externally planned syllabus to the latter without appropriately relating it to the local situation (Shiundu & Omulando; 1992).

Being excluded from curriculum development decisions may lead to lack of ownership and commitment necessary for the success of the curriculum. It may result to and/or misinterpretation of an innovative features (Okda, 2005) thereby hindering the attainment of educational objectives. There was need therefore to understand the relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualisation and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Over the years curriculum change has become a major feature of teaching in Kenya. Whilst this process involves various role-players and interested parties, teachers are in effect the principal role-players. However curriculum development in Kenya is highly centralised and teacher involvement in the process is minimal. Majority of teachers enter the process of curriculum development at a much later stage, during the national implementation. This might create the impression that teachers operate solely within the context of the school and the classroom, making this seem the only place where they can make a contribution to the curriculum. This view denies the broader curriculum functions that could possibly be fulfilled outside the classroom by teachers. Such a scenario may hinder the attainment of national goals of education as teachers' interpretation of the new curriculum may not be well articulated with the curriculum as imaged at the policy and programmatic levels. This study therefore sought to establish the relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualisation and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

- (i) To establish whether there is statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya

### **1.4 Research Hypothesis**

- (i) There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya

### **1.5 Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The research was conducted in Meru and Nairobi Counties, Kenya. The target population was 3146 secondary school teachers comprising of 1781 males and 1365 females drawn from 351 secondary schools. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting a representative sample of 342 teachers who proportionately included 194 males and 148 females from various strata (National, County, and Sub-county Schools). The principals of participating schools were included in the sample. Two sets of research instruments: interview schedule for principals and questionnaire for teachers were utilized during the study. 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. Descriptive statistics

involved frequencies, means and percentages. For inferential statistics, chi square was used to test the hypothesis and was computed and tested for significance at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance.

### 1.6 Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish whether there was statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Respondents were requested to rate the extent to which they participated in curriculum conceptualisation during curriculum development process. The information was analysed by determining the mean and standard deviation of 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 data analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Extent of Teachers' Participation in Curriculum Conceptualisation

Teacher Participation	N	M	SD
Participated as a member of curriculum project team	272	1.90	1.40
Assessed the weaknesses of the current curriculum	272	1.96	1.32
Suggested the needs of society and learners	272	2.31	1.52
Acted as a curriculum subject specialist	272	1.90	1.40
Helped to determine the philosophy of education	272	1.60	1.22
Helped determine the broad goals of education	272	1.74	1.27
Participated in Curriculum discussion sessions on quality of education	272	2.24	1.52
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.09</b>

Key N=Sample size, M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The results in Table 1 show that the overall mean of the respondents was 1.96 out of the maximum mean score of 5 points. This indicates that teachers were involved to a small extent in curriculum conceptualization. Teachers had participated in suggesting the needs of society to a moderate extent as indicated by the mean of 2.31. It was further established that teachers had not at all participated in helping to determine the philosophy of education as it is depicted by the item mean of 1.60. These results suggest that there was minimal involvement of teachers in curriculum conceptualization which could affect the effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya.

Similar findings were obtained from the interviews with principals who indicated that they had little knowledge in curriculum development process. One of the principals commented: *Few teachers participate in curriculum development process and whenever they do, they only participate in workshops discussing the curriculum matters and not the actual development of the curriculum...Even then, our recommendations are rarely considered. Teachers have little knowledge of the development process.*

Another principal remarked: *We are not involved. Teachers feel ambushed by the whole process because they implement the curriculum that is developed by other people. Only through exam results that we know we are doing something. ...Teachers do their best to interpret strange ideas.*

Findings from the principals confirm that teachers in secondary schools are not fully involved in curriculum development process and when they participated in discussions on curriculum matters, there was no guarantee that their suggestions would be taken into consideration. The principals were of the view that the curriculum is developed elsewhere and their main role was that of supervision during implementation. The principals further argued that teachers were more concerned with examination results than with the achievement of the national goals of education. It was only through the achievements of good results showed that the curriculum was being effectively implemented.

Some principals were of the view that teachers did not have the required capacity to develop the curriculum. *...Teachers do not have the required capacity to develop the curriculum. The training received at the university is very little for them to do it.*

The findings of the study confirm what Ben-Peretz had found earlier in his study on the teacher curriculum encounter that teachers were enormously sensitive to the coverage of curriculum content that will be tested (Ben-Peretz 1990). Teachers adapt their teaching in order to prepare their students for examinations. The findings further concur with those of a South African study by Carl (2005) where teachers' perception was that the curriculum was developed elsewhere and that teachers simply needed some guidance for correct application of the curriculum handed down to them from the top. A study by Ramparsad (2006) on a strategy for teacher involvement in curriculum development in South Africa also found out that teacher involvement in curriculum planning was minimal. Similarly, UNESCO (2015) Global Monitoring Report on Education for All found out that teachers were not involved in curriculum planning, leaving them disempowered by the top-down process.

Teachers were also requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed there was a relationship between teacher participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. The information was analyzed by determining the mean and standard deviation on eight items on a 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. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers Participation in Curriculum Conceptualization and Curriculum Implementation

Statement	N	M	SD
Participation in curriculum conceptualization increases teacher ability to Interpret the philosophy, aims and goals of education	272	4.57	0.69
Participation in curriculum conceptualization increases teacher ability to interpret curriculum general and specific objectives in ones area of specialization	272	4.47	0.75
Participation in curriculum conceptualization helps teachers in relating the goals of education with subjects specific objectives	272	4.43	0.76

Participation in curriculum conceptualization process increases ownership of the curriculum by teachers	272	4.34	0.77
Participation in curriculum development process improves teachers' skills and creativity needed for effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum	272	4.29	0.88
Participation in curriculum conceptualization may increase teachers' motivation to work	272	4.04	1.05
Participation in curriculum conceptualization improves teacher professionalism	272	4.02	1.10
Teachers do not implement the curriculum effectively without participating in the initial stages of curriculum development	272	3.45	1.32
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>0.61</b>

Key N=Sample size, M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The findings in Table 2 indicate that overall mean of the respondents was 4.20, out of the maximum mean score of 5 points. This suggests that teachers strongly agreed that there was a relationship between participation in conceptualization activities of curriculum development process and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. The teachers strongly agreed ( $M=4.57$ ) that their participation in curriculum conceptualization improved their ability to interpret philosophy, aims and goals of education. The study further established that teachers agreed ( $M=3.45$ ) that they did not implement the curriculum effectively without participating in the initial stages of curriculum development. The study findings agree with those by UNESCO, Global Monitoring Report (2015) which found that teachers lacked understanding of the reforms intentions and the reforms lacked grounding in the classroom reality as teachers were not involved in curriculum planning. In Kenya, Mali, Senegal Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania, teachers did not often understand the curricula partly due to a mismatch in training and a lack of support mechanism in the classroom (UNESCO, 2015).

A study carried out by Ramparsad (2006) on a strategy for teachers involvement in curriculum development in South Africa found out that teachers who had been left out of planning the curriculum appeared to be mystified by the jargon in the learning programme document provided to them. Carl (2002) indicated that teachers are expected to participate in curriculum discourse and also to provide feedback to evaluate such process which ultimately contributes to greater professionalism and empowerment. Such contribution would therefore be necessary for effective implementation of secondary school curriculum.

According to school principals, teachers should be allowed to develop the curriculum because this would enable them do a better job during implementation. "Involving teachers *will enable them to display and develop their various talents. ... Such a system will also play an important role in providing a more needs-oriented education.*

The principals' views suggest that there is a relationship between teacher involvement in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation. Cincioglu (2014) affirms that teachers play a key role in the phase of planning as there is need for combining their theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge; that is, being able to write down a learning outcome requires the field of knowledge while finding out whether that learning outcome is sensible to realize with that group of

student depends on that teachers previous experience. Taylor (2004) observes that through engagement in participatory curriculum development, individuals are able to build their own knowledge, and share their knowledge and experience with others

Chi square test was carried out to establish whether there existed a statistically significant relationship between participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Chi Square Test Results on Teacher Participation in Curriculum Conceptualization and Effective Implementation

<b>Conceptualization</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig.</b>
Participation in curriculum conceptualization increases teacher ability to Interpret the philosophy, aims and goals of education	431.529	4	.000
Participation in curriculum conceptualization increases teacher ability to interpret curriculum general and specific objectives in ones area of specialization	357.816	4	.000
Participation in curriculum conceptualization helps teachers in relating the goals of education with subjects specific objectives	338.993	4	.000
Participation in curriculum conceptualization process increases ownership of the curriculum by teachers	306.676	4	.000
Participation in curriculum development process improves teachers' skills and creativity needed for effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum	251.235	4	.000
Participation in curriculum conceptualization may increase teachers' motivation to work	171.934	4	.000
Participation in curriculum conceptualization improves teacher professionalism	149.949	4	.000
Teachers do not implement the curriculum effectively without participating in the initial stages of curriculum development	57.816	4	.000
<b>Overall Chi Square</b>	<b>191.890</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>.000</b>

From the results in Table 3, the study established that there existed a statistically significant relationship between teachers' participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya [ $\chi^2 (22, N=272) = 191.890, p=.000 < 0.05$ ]. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

A South African study by Carl (2005) on the voice of the teacher in curriculum development found out that 95.2% of teachers interviewed called for teacher involvement in curriculum decision making outside of the classroom. Teachers further argued that their input was necessary on the ground level as curriculum development is part of teachers daily tasks; that teachers as practitioners are best able to reflect true practice and make a contribution, that it is the teachers who ultimately have to implement the curriculum and that teachers as professionals ought to be involved in all the



processes. These arguments suggest that teachers' involvement would enable them accept ownership of the developed curriculum; make it easier to understand new concepts and to implement changes. These sentiments are supported by principals who argued that teachers need to be involved in all processes of curriculum development because they are answerable for the results in schools.

Respondents were requested to give their views on how teachers could be involved in curriculum conceptualization during the process of curriculum development. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Ways of involving Teachers in Conceptualization Stage of Curriculum Development

<b>Respondents Views</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Teachers can participate through online conference to give the needs of the learners.	65	23.90
Teachers can participate through workshops, seminars, brainstorming sessions and other academic forums.	150	55.15
Teachers can form large groups of those collecting the needs of learners for each category of school.	59	21.69
Teachers should be consulted to give views during the curriculum development process through questionnaires	101	37.13
Creation of panels to be in charge of the curriculum from the school level, county level up to national level would simplify the teachers' involvement dynamics.	94	34.56

The information from Table 4 shows that majority of the teachers (55.15%) suggested that teachers could participate in curriculum conceptualization through workshops, seminars, brainstorming sessions and other academic forums to air their opinions. 37.13% of teachers argued that they could be consulted to give views during the curriculum development process through questionnaires while 34.56% of teachers called for creation of panels to be in charge of the curriculum from the school level to national level which would simplify teachers' involvement dynamics. 23.9% of teachers felt that they could participate through online conferences to give their views on the needs of the society and those of the learners and another 21.69% of teachers suggested that teachers could form large groups of those collecting the needs of learners for each category of school. Teachers' sentiments support a study by Bude on the role of various protagonists in curriculum development which proposed curriculum conferences as settings in which teachers and other local actors can be actively involved in the process (Bude, 1999). The findings are also in agreement with trends in Europe where many teachers are asked to voice their opinion over the internet, and also take part in conferences at which the decision - making process and adjustments to the curriculum are discussed on a regular basis (Eurydice, 2008). In Norway for example, teachers are regularly surveyed about both forthcoming reforms and implementation (Eurydice, 2008). When teachers participate in the development process, they have a detailed knowledge of all the relevant factors about their students, the school and their whole situation (Bude, 1999; Carl, 2005).

From the interviews with principals, the study established that one of the ways of promoting active teacher-participation in curriculum development process was to prepare teachers for any change in curriculum. In this regard, the principal's leadership becomes critical. It is clear that regular staff development through training would enable teachers participate actively in curriculum

conceptualisation. Principals' leadership role is important especially in schools where principals would help teachers to understand and interpret the curriculum correctly if the principals received proper training. Principals' sentiments support the findings of a study carried out by Carl (2009) that teacher empowerment through in-service training programmes was essential if teachers were to be real actors in the change process.

### 1.7 Conclusion

This study established that there was a strong relationship between teacher participation in curriculum conceptualization and effective implementation of secondary school curriculum in Kenya. Teachers strongly agreed that participation would improve their ability to interpret the philosophy, aims and goals of education as well as the general and specific objectives of the curriculum. However, due to the top-down model followed by KICD, curriculum development is still largely centrally-controlled and the experience and talents of many teachers are untapped and under-utilized. Curriculum development process should therefore involve 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. Establishing school – based committees, sub-County, county and then national committees would enable teachers to air their opinions regarding curriculum issues. This would lead to greater participation and understanding of curriculum elements, thus creating ownership of the curriculum by teachers which may lead to effective implementation. The move would probably improve the quality of education in Kenya.

### 1.8 Recommendations

This study recommends that teachers should be involved in the planning and development of the curriculum in all stages. Those who make policies need to acknowledge the experience and talents of the teachers more in the curriculum development process. Also, 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. Studies on innovative models of curriculum development should be conducted with a view to proposing alternative models that would enable more teachers and other stakeholders to participate in curriculum development process.

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