

Language Teachers' Involvement in Language Curriculum Development: Teachers' perception at a private institution

Pech Rathana¹; Phon Sopha²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Educational Management, Saint Louis University, Baguio City, Philippines

¹Director of Research Center, Saint Paul Institute, Cambodia

²Director/Rector of Saint Paul Institute (SPI), Cambodia

²Member of executive board of the Association of the Southeast and East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASEACCU)

Corresponding Author Email: rathana606@gmail.com

Abstract—Curriculum development is an ongoing process that must be developed and evaluated for its effectiveness in meeting learners' needs and the changing world. The development process requires school leaders, specialists, and other stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, etc. The researcher tends to understand teachers' involvement in language curriculum development at his institution. Qualitative research is utilized in this research paper. Phenomenological design is employed to understand the language teachers' experience regarding their involvement in the developmental process. The researcher selected six participants working as both full-time and part-time teachers at the institute. A set of Semi-structured interviews were utilized to get in-depth experiences of the participants. The data was transcribed and analyzed utilizing thematic coding. The result shows that full-time teachers have fewer roles to join in the development process. They have just joined the meeting and discussed what course books or courses should be removed from or added to the curriculum. Part-time teachers have no chance to participate in the official discussion or meeting because they were not invited to join. The academic director just discusses it personally with them. As a result, teachers view that they should be invited to take part in the development process because the effective implementors are teachers, so they know a lot about their learners. Not only teachers, but they also recommend that other related stakeholders should be involved in the development.

Keywords: development process, full-time teachers, part-time teachers, implementors.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term curriculum refers to the steps of selecting contents and instructional materials that are used as strategies and blueprints for language teaching. It also specifies the aims of instruction and the means of learning background (Su, 2012 & Mohanasundaram, 2018). In designing a curriculum, educators need to identify the approaches for teaching, teachers' and learners' roles, assessment tools and processes, and curriculum objectives. A curriculum is a formal plan that paves the way for students to go through their academic success, identify their purposes in lives, guide the methods for instructors, and identify and evaluate the outcomes.

In Cambodia, higher education is essential to improving the country's overall educational standard and promoting sustainable development. Higher education is essential as the nation works to get past its turbulent history for a number of reasons with the specific participants from teachers and professors. In particular, Cambodia's future depends on the growth of high-quality higher education in the nation. It not only improves the state of education but also promotes social, cultural, and economic development, putting Cambodia in a position to thrive and grow steadily on the international stage. Despite several obstacles, Cambodia's higher education system has grown significantly since 1993. This trend has brought attention to the pressing need for institutions' curricula to be improved. Cambodia can enhance its graduates' readiness for the labor market and support the country's sustainable growth by emphasizing the enhancement of academic standards and guaranteeing their alignment with market demands. In order to promote a more robust and efficient higher education system, it is imperative that these curriculum challenges be addressed with participation from lectures and different stakeholders. In Cambodia, there were 130 HEIs as of August 2022, of which 82 were private. 198,363 students (98,535 females) are enrolled in these HEIs for the 2020–2021 academic year; these HEIs are governed by 16 different ministries and institutes, although MoEYS is in charge of 82 of them (MoEYS, 2022).

The role of curriculum is to provide a plan for instruction and learning. It offers a clear structure for what, when, and how they should learn it (Rajurka et al., 2018). A well-designed curriculum is vital for making sure that all students have the opportunity to reach their competence. The curriculum is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a roadmap for teaching and learning because it outlines what, when, and how students should learn it. This helps to ensure that all students are covering the same material and progressing at a similar pace. Secondly, curriculum is important for promoting equity, for it must be developed to meet all learners' needs, despite their background, abilities, or socioeconomic status. Last but not least, curriculum is important for ensuring academic achievement. It should be challenging and rigorous and align with state and national standards. This helps guarantee that students are developing the learners' capacity and capability they need to be successful in school and beyond.

Teachers are also a part of stakeholders to share their experiences and ideas regarding curriculum creation, and they are implementors. To effectively implement curriculums, some guidelines should be taken into account. First, gain support from stakeholders, for example, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It is important to communicate the importance of the curriculum and how it will benefit students. Providing professional development for teachers is a need, too, because teachers should be trained on how to put curriculum into practice effectively (Alsubaie, 2016). This training should include information on the content of the curriculum, the learning objectives, and the teaching and assessment strategies that should be used.

Teachers need support and resources to guarantee the effectiveness of implementation. Teachers have to access to the needed resources to implement the curriculum effectively such as textbooks, materials, and technology. Teachers may also need support from administrators and other teachers. After the implementation, the curriculum needs monitoring and evaluating (Sinnema 2011). Curriculum implementors should make sure they are able to measure and monitor the effectiveness of implementation which can be done through observations, interviews, and student assessments.

Mohanasundaram (2018), curriculum development refers to a dynamic step that creates a suitable instruction environment, and it needs development to meet institutional and societal needs. It is possible to say that education has dramatically developed worldwide in the last few decades, and curriculum changes aim to meet the updated methodologies and approaches to teaching and learning. Many approaches and methods in language teaching have been developed, and the developments moved from passive to active learners. Curriculum and its development concerns what should and should not be taught, so curriculum professionals need to determine how content subjects should be delivered to the learners. Furthermore, its development is always influenced by its economy, religion, region, and government policy. These are what every educator has to think about when developing a curriculum. Some countries use top-down approaches, and others use bottom-up approaches which educators need to consider and follow.

Teacher's involvement in curriculum development is vital for designing a curriculum that is effective, engaging, and relevant to all students' needs. Teachers have a deep understanding of their students' learning needs, interests, and abilities, and they can use this knowledge to develop a curriculum that is tailored to their specific classrooms. Baş & Senturk (2019), asserted that teachers actively involved in curriculum development signify classroom experience and educational reform efforts. Alsubaie (2012) also clarifies that teachers play significant roles in identifying objectives and planning the lessons to meet learners' needs. Teachers associate attentively with learners to understand what learners want, how they feel, and what motivates them to learn. To validate, Jadhav & Partaka (2013), cited in Baş & Senturk (2019), also claimed that teachers who collaboratively relate to learners might understand learners' psychology, apply appropriate teaching methods, and create pleasant learning environments, as well as assessment procedures.

Prescriptive Curriculum Model is utilized in this research as a theoretical basis. PCM offers concepts for both teachers and learners on what happens, and it also begins with the form of a plan, an intended program, or an expert opinion about what needs to occur in the study courses (Yaşar, C. G., & Aslan, B., 2021). The curriculum is all about the learned experiences or planned courses and is directed by the school stakeholders to obtain its instructional objectives.

The prescriptive model can be contextualized by taking into account some essential factors, namely, student needs, and the curriculum should be tailored to benefit to the students who will take it. This includes considering the students' academic abilities, prior knowledge, and cultural backgrounds. Teachers' needs which means teachers should be involved in the development of curriculum process, so they have a say in what and how is being taught. This helps to ensure that teachers are comfortable with the curriculum, and they have the resources to support the needs of effective implementation. Moreover, community needs also plays a critical part in prescriptive model. The curriculum should be aligned with the community's needs in which the schools are based in. This includes considering the community's values, priorities, and economic goals. Last but not least, global needs that is the curriculum should prepare students to live and work in a globalized world. This includes teaching students about different cultures and languages, as well as the skills they need to succeed in a global economy.

Saint Paul Institute is the only one catholic higher education in Cambodia located in Tramkak District, Takeo Province around 70 kilometers from Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. It was established in 2009 offering five majors for bachelor degree and eight majors for associate degree. Those are bachelors in Information Technology (IT), English Literature, Agronomy, Tourism Management, and Social Work. Saint Paul Institute is under the supervision of Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, so the curriculum follows the guardian ministry. Every four years of academic study, the institute always develops its curriculum in order to assure the quality of education. The purpose of development is to update courses in the curriculum, adjust course syllabus, justify curriculum objectives as well as educational program learning outcomes. Two types of resource lecturers are full-time lecturers who work for the institute and part-time lecturers who are from Phnom Penh to teach on the set schedule. The development process always involves teachers in the discussion to gain more insight.

II. PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at investigating how are language teachers involved in the language curriculum development of a school at a private institute in Takeo Province, Cambodia by considering their roles in the development process and implementation. Specifically, the objective of the study is to understand the teachers' perception in participating language curriculum development.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How involved are language teachers in the language curriculum development?
2. What are teachers' perceptions about their involvement in language curriculum development?

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will offer some benefits. It may provide beneficial information the institute curriculum stakeholders; namely, institute director, academic manager, teachers, and students, and other relevant stakeholders in general to improve their actual curriculum practice and betterment. Furthermore, it should also serve as feedbacks to education departments with contribution of school curriculum to implement and improve school curriculum by enhancing the participation of teachers. The study will greatly motivate more interested researchers to make further area of study.

V. METHODOLOGY

V.I. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research method will be employed in the study. It is a multiple method in focus which involves understanding the naturalistic approach to its contents area (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It means that the research investigate phenomenon in their natural manners, attempting to understand or interpret problems in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative study is naturally inductive, and the researcher generally finds out meanings and insights in a given situation (Personal & Archive, 2018). This is a very convenient method for the study because it can create an in-depth understanding of the involvement of teachers in language curriculum development by bagging teachers' perceptions.

V.II. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, a phenomenological design will be employed. Phenomenological studies examine the living experiences by the descriptions provided by the participants involved (Flick, 2012). Participants are asked to give their perceived experiences through interviews in the design. The purpose of this approach is to illuminate and identify the specific phenomena through how they are perceived by the participants in a situation (Mann, 1980). Phenomenological research is the most appropriate for understanding lived experiences from the personal views of the subjects.

V.III. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This study involves six language teachers who are teaching English at Saint Paul Institute, Cambodia, and they are all male teachers with experience ranging from three to ten years. Different resources suggest a variety of participants in the phenomenological study, but a sample of between 6 to 20 participants is sufficient according to Ellis (2016). The participants were chosen because they have enough teaching experience and are capable of understanding curriculum development. The phenomenology could be challenging to understand, particularly if the participants have limited experiences. That's why the researcher decided to select them as the research participants.

V.IV. DATA GATHERING TOOL

Interviews have been used as a means of data collection in research for decades (Roberts, 2020). In this research, open-ended questionnaires were specially designed to gain insights into the teachers' involvement in language curriculum development with semi-structured interview questions. Two main approaches are used in the data gathering procedures for any qualitative study; for instance, interviews and observation. Many interview forms may be occurred in qualitative study, but the most commonly used in phenomenological studies are in-depth, unstructured, or semi-structured interviews.

V.V. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The researcher scheduled the dates for interview, but the date and time did not mention because agreement is made with the participants. The researcher respectively asked permission from the institute vice-director of academic affairs and scheduled the time with two full-time teachers there. There is a problem in scheduling time with four others part-time teachers because they are visiting teachers who come to the institute only on Monday and Tuesday. However, they agree to give the interview at the end of their classes. The researcher interviewed a participant once. The interview responses were recorded and noted down. The interview duration varies from one individual to the others with a different schedule. All participants participated consecutively; hence, it was semi-structured interview questionnaires. It is like a normal conversation. The researcher had the role of asking questions, but at the same time, the researcher listened patiently when the participants were answering. At the end of every interview, the researcher admired the participants for advocating their priceless time to attend the interview.

V.VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data was analyzed by describing or summarizing the generated data from interviews or observation. The researcher needs to find out the relationship between various themes which have been emerged (Kraska et al., 2020). Thematic analysis is an approach for systematically determining, preparing, and suggesting insights into meanings of dataset. By focusing on importance of data, thematic analysis requires the researcher to understand meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher utilized the thematic analysis method to analyze data. This method involves the process of coding and constructing themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This method is utilized because it will be an applicable method of interpreting data, as it generates all the significant data to the specific phenomenon which inspires the researcher.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

VII. INVOLVEMENT OF TEACHERS IN THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The results revealed teachers' participation in developmental process is low. Two teachers among six who work as full-time teachers have the chance to join in curriculum development meetings, but they have fewer roles in joining the curriculum development. They have just participated in the meeting to discuss what course books or courses should be removed from or added to the curriculum, select course books, and update the course outline to fit with new course books.

I joined in the meeting and shared ideas about selecting course books and preparing a course outline [T3 & T6].

The other four part-time teachers have never joined in any official meeting regarding curriculum development because they are not invited to join. They have just chances to discuss personally what subjects should be removed or what subjects should be included or replaced to meet the current job markets. They are not invited because of the schedule. They just come to teach two days a week, and they have to teach all days on those two days. On the other days, they teach at other schools, so it is difficult to schedule the time to join the meeting.

In the past, there was no teachers' involvement in the curriculum development, but now there is just little chance to join [T4].

I have just joined in the private discussion with the academic director about what subjects should be removed, included, or added more [T1 & T4].

I have never been invited to join in curriculum development [T5].

It may be because part-time teachers are from Phnom Penh, so it is difficult to find suitable for a meeting [T4].

A teacher believed that he was not invited to join in the development process because the existing curriculum was just the adaptation of other curriculums.

I believe they just adapted the curriculum from other schools [T6].

The level of participation in development is low, and the role of teachers' involvement in the development is unnecessary. Oloruntegbe (2011) mentioned that Nigerian teachers and some other countries are occasionally participated in the curriculum development process. Only one teacher has participated in the curriculum development. However, the seven other teachers have never participated in the development process. Otherwise, they just put the revised curriculum into practice (Nghihalwa, 2018). In the study of Mwanza (2017) revealed dissatisfaction with curriculum development practices with teachers largely uninvolved, so they face challenges in effective implementation. All teachers will to participate so that they can help with the analyzing needs, formulating educational goals, and designing curriculum materials like coursebooks. It can be concluded that when the teachers' participation is low, the ineffective implementation usually occurs.

VI.II. IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Their participation is important as mentioned by most teachers. Because they teach students and work closely with students, they know students' needs, learning styles, motivation, and abilities. Another teacher has mentioned that he teaches at a different school, so he has the experience and knows other schools' curricula. If he were able to join, he would have some ideas to share. All teachers support to have their participation in curriculum development. They also stated that teachers are implementors, so they know in advance before the implementation when they join.

One of the most important things to do about language curriculum development is to actively engage teachers in the process because teachers know their learners' needs, abilities, and so forth [T1, [2], [3], [4], [5], and [T6].

Teachers are the key stakeholders because they are implementors who transform theory into practice. In this regard, teachers need to join in the development process (Cincioğlu, n.d.). Teachers know every stakeholder's needs and learners' psychology and learn methodologies and teaching strategies (Jaghav & Patankar, 2013).

VI.III. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

All teachers indicated that besides teachers and specialists, there should be other stakeholders' involvement in the curriculum development. Students, parents, community, company managers, and other related institutions should be. They mentioned that when many stakeholders were involved in curriculum development, many ideas will come up with for the development. For instance, if students are invited to join, curriculum developers will receive informed feedbacks from them. Moreover, when curriculum developers invite related institutions or companies, they will know what each institution needs. They will incorporate great ideas to develop the curriculum to match the current market jobs.

The stakeholders should be teachers, the community, and companies. They will inform us what they need [T2, T4, T5 & T6].

Akdeniz (2011), cited in Nghihalwa (2018), has mentioned that curriculum development is planning, revising, improving, and evaluating, so other vital stakeholders should be included parents, teachers, students, and so forth. Moreover, Matković. et al., (2014) clarify that curriculum stakeholders play a crucial role in curriculum development, collaborating and fostering open dialogue for recommendations, feedback, and advice to effectively meet the needs of the wider community.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The essential findings of this research are that teachers take fewer roles in attending to curriculum development. Some teachers have just a chance to personally share their insight regarding the selecting course books, and others have never been invited to participate in the discussion. However, from teachers' perception, they support and suggest involving teachers' participation in the development process. The main reason is that teachers work closely with students, and teachers are influential implementors, so they know who their students are. Besides the involvement of teachers, they also recommended having other stakeholders, who are parents, students, school leaders, academic directors, and so forth, to attend in the development process. Curriculum development is an ongoing process, so teachers should be involved in planning, developing, and evaluating stages. Teachers should be invited to join as well as other related stakeholders so that enough information should be gathered to the curriculum significant outcomes.

All teachers wish to participate in the development process because they think their presence is essential to all stages. The researcher also highly recommends that the institute should take teachers' participation into account and offer the opportunities for them to take part in the developmental process. The school should take into account other stakeholders' roles in every stage to develop curriculum which is more applicable to the current needs of society or job markets.

The findings of the recent study, however, must be treated with caution. The major limitation of this study lies in the fact that this study was conducted with a small number of participants, so it is suggested that the next researchers should extend their study with more participants from various institution to gain more insight and broaden the study findings. Subsequent studies may utilize both qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to find out whether the involvement of teachers would have positive impacts on the outcome of curriculum.

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