Deviation from Recommended Curriculum and Efforts to Bridge the Gap Between Suggested and Taught Curricula

Dr. Zobia Zaman
Trainer at IQCS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS PTY LTD 7 Korana Street Plympton, South Australia
zobiazaman@yahoo.com

Umair Ashraf Khawaja
Chief Executive Officer at IQCS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS PTY LTD 7 Korana Street Plympton, South Australia
umair@iqcs.com.au

Abstract

This informative study aims to clarify the discrepancy amongst recommended and taught curriculum, as well as serve as a roadmap for educational agencies, curriculum creators, and teachers to determine the reasons for the gap and potential ways to close it. In this article, challenges faced by teachers in implementing the recommended curriculum will be discussed, as well as how effectively the difference between the recommended and taught curriculum are addressed. Six female secondary school teachers were the target demographic, and they were chosen from a private school in Karachi where they are working as coordinators. On-line interviews were used to gather primary data. Participants were asked questions using a semi-structured questionnaire. The results are intended to support the hypothesis that there is a difference amongst suggested and taught curriculum, and that teachers face significant challenges in implementing the recommended curriculum, which is more of a paper exercise than it should be.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Recommended Curriculum, Taught Curriculum*

Introduction

Curriculum refers to all the instructional work; academic material and lesson which is taught in a school or in any instructional program. Curriculum may seem as a single word, but actually it is a broad term which has many branches to it; Recommended curriculum, taught curriculum, supported curriculum, hidden curriculum and many more. All these sub curriculums act like a bridge abridging the gap between what was planned to be taught from taking It towards what is taught both overtly and covertly.

In the words of Glatthorn (2000), the advisory committee delegated to design the curriculum in a particular subject area is directly responsible for aligning the recommended and written curricula, which then aligns itself with the taught curriculum. In the words of John Franklin Bobbitt (1918), curriculum, as an idea, has its origins in the Latin word for race-course, describing the curriculum as the series of activities and interactions by which learners become the individuals, they should be to prosper. The goals of curriculum or lesson plan are the most relevant curriculum requirements they should be used in choosing learning experiences and in measuring educational performance. A curriculum plan is the forecast organization of learning prospects for a specific population of learners. (Anora 2012)

Background of the study

In the words of Shawer (2016), separate teacher perceptions of the same (formal) curriculum led to educators modifying the recommended curriculum to several taught curriculum based on educator and pupil knowledge in various contexts. Teachers are often influenced by teachers' understanding to choose some material, teaching techniques, and evaluation goals and methods over others. Teachers either create or distribute curriculum at the classroom level and teacher curriculum interpretations drive teachers to make different decisions about the same curriculum (Jackson, 1992).

Statement of the Problem

Over the years curriculum development has evolved enormously. Today, curriculum developers and designers not only focus on what is to be taught but also recommend activities about how a particular topic can be taught. This makes it easier for teachers to choose from a wide range of activities and be on track with the recommended curriculum. However, the problem still persists that, teachers on ground have better know-how of their subjects and face the limitations of time, availability of resources, etc. and thus do not readily implement the recommended curriculum as it is envisioned to be implemented.

Significance of the study:

The aim of this study is to clarify the phenomenon of the difference between recommended and taught curriculum, as well as the reasons for it. This will enable stakeholders to comprehend the situation and identify potential solutions. Furthermore, educational institutions, teachers, parents, administration, and educational boards will benefit from this research.

Objectives of the study

- To discover the challenges and barriers faced by teachers while implementing suggested curriculum in their classroom settings.
- To explore whether there exists a gap between the recommended and the taught curriculum.

Research Questions

- What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the recommended curriculum?
- How effectively are the gaps being abridged between the recommended and taught curriculum?

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Literature Review

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This part of the paper contains a literature review of additional related studies that discuss the objective of this study and try to answer the question raised in this study. It is used as secondary data in the investigation at hand.

Recommended Curriculum

Talking about the recommended curriculum Milner (2017) states "to put racism or to assert that the curriculum is suited to a varied student population is naïve, does not exist or take place in schools." In Stanford University research, low socio-economic families have been discriminated against more than other families (Nieto & Bode, 2013). In Philippines, the Department of Education's (DepEd) or Commission on Higher Education's (CHEd) curriculum is an example of a suggested curriculum. In some situations, a legislative body such as the assembly and council, as well as a university or school, might endorse a subject, a course, or any academic programme believed vital for national identity and security, environmental conservation, and maintainable development, among other things. (Alvior, M. G. 2020).

Talking about taught curriculum Alvior (2020) states this is about putting the written prospectus into action. A taught curriculum is anything that is being taught or done in the classroom. The trained curriculum is exhibited when professors give a lecture, commence

group work, or urge pupils to conduct a laboratory experiment under their supervision. To accommodate the requirements and benefits of the students, this curriculum includes a variety of teaching and learning techniques. In her article Leslie (2013), refers to the recommended curriculum as Rhetorical Curriculum and talks about it by saying that its elements include ideas from politicians, school authorities, managers or politicians. This curriculum can also be obtained from those experts who are involved in the production of concepts and the changes in content; or from educational initiatives emerging from decision-making based on national and state reports and public addresses. The rhetorical curriculum can also be derived from public works that update pedagogy.

Curriculum Development:

Curriculum can play an important role in assisting schools and teachers in bridging the gap between the demands of past education systems and the expectations of future education systems (OECD, 2018). However, determining the appropriate curricular revision procedures is a difficult undertaking that is dependent on the individual aims and values for education at various ages and stages of development. Milner's approach to his experiences and experience in writing and his attention to the needs of a more multicultural curriculum contribute richly to his book's reading experiences. Multicultural education stresses the significance of justice in order to address the challenges of society.

Milner's emphasized that we should not be colour-blind with regard to establishing a multicultural curriculum. However, it would seem better to look at cultural blindness. Culture involves all students and leads to an overall strategy in establishing a curriculum that provides all students with profound experience in learning (Sleeter, 2005). Per advantages of justice and equality could be described in a sequel, if curriculum developers and teachers were a culturally different and culturally sensitive group that maintained an open mind and communication line, did not try and compassion while embracing diversity.

Karabacak, and Kürüm-Yapıcıoğlu, (2020), cited the works of Furtak et al., (2008) and Dusenbury et al., (2003), stating faithfulness is one of the words used to examine if the official curriculum is aligned with the curriculum taught. The faithfulness of the curriculum may be characterized by the instructor or practitioner of the curriculum as implementing the OC (Bümen, Çakar & Yıldız, 2014, p. 205). Penuel, Phillips and Harris (2014). In contrast, they view two distinct viewpoints, actor-oriented and integrity, as alignment between the official curriculum and the curriculum.

Taught curriculum:

The results of the study of Karabacak and Kürüm-Yapıcıoğlu (2020) demonstrated that teachers may align the curriculum with their results and content. However, in terms of the teaching and evaluation process, the curriculum cannot be aligned fully. The study also indicated that the instructors of the school can align part of the curriculum and the instructors of many grades cannot assure that the curriculum is aligned significantly with the official curriculum. One of the elements that affects alignment is the lack of technological equipment and materials, difficulties to education in a multiproduct classroom, teachers' skills and beliefs.

Each instructor carries out his/her curriculum by taking into account his or her student characteristics, classroom physical conditions, materials and personal preferences (Livingstone et al., 1986, p. 2-7). Talking on similar lines Karabacak and Kürüm-Yapıcıoğlu (2020) stated that this leads teachers to adjust the official curriculum during its implementation and has an effect on the curriculum success. Wilson (2013), talks about taught curriculum referring it to as curriculum-in-use and stating that it refers to these things in the textbooks and the contents and concepts in the district curriculum guidelines include a formal curriculum (written/open) But these "formal" features are often not taught. The resume is the curriculum that each teacher gives and presents. Rahman et al. (2018) "states that many obstacles such as teaching demands, issues involving the incompatibility of teaching curricula with evaluation, unequipped classrooms and the quality of teacher developments have challenged the instructors to apply the curriculum as set out in the curriculum prescribed."
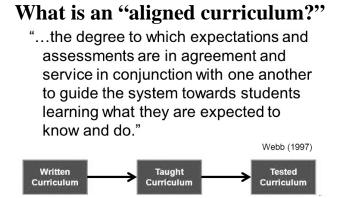
Curriculum Mapping

Dyjur and Lock (2016) give information that enables students, instructors, and managers to make evidence-based choices based on the gaps and strengths and connections between courses and other phases of the curriculum. Curriculum maps come in a variety of shapes and sizes but they all allow for the collection and copy of curriculum-related data, such as material and skills taught, as well as instructions and assessments utilized through the curriculum. People who are asked to use new tools do not always embrace them right away. Innovations and revolutions in universities are frequently met with scepticism or outright opposition, particularly when they are structured top-down (Fraser & Thomas, 2013; Anderson, 2008; Neame, 2013). Implementing a curriculum mapping tool can be difficult due to this opposition. Despite the fact that the project began as a bottom-up initiative in response to challenges on the ground, several employees felt the tool was imposed on them.

Aligning the Curriculum

In the words of Glatthorn (2002), all the curriculums the specific six ones being recommended, written, taught, learnt, supported, and assessed curriculum which are all linked together, at some places their links are strong and weak at some.

The diagram used by Glatthorn states how the recommended curriculum has a weak impact and link on the written curriculum which affects the taught curriculum that is under question in this research. He further states in order to have a good connection between the recommended and taught curriculum the curriculum designers should first try to fill in the gap between the recommended and written curriculum.

What is an "aligned curriculum?"

"…the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and service in conjunction with one another to guide the system towards students learning what they are expected to know and do."

Webb (1997)

To summarize, the curriculum is more than just a course or a list of subjects; it encompasses a student's entire learning experience, as illustrated by the seven categories of curriculum. Although curriculum is a valuable tool for easing transitions, there is no single ideal method to curricular alignment and/or integration for promoting children's learning and well-being. Furthermore, curriculum is entrenched in broader education systems, including the system's organization, governance, and division of tasks, as well as the education system's and its component elements' overarching aims. (Elizabeth et al., 2019)

Research Methodology

The data was collected on the following format for this research:

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen in order to achieve the study's objectives. This allowed the researcher to gain insights into the specific issue of the curriculum discrepancy between suggested and taught using this approach. With the restricted sample size available, this design allowed the researcher to easily collect in-depth data without limiting the study's

reach. Participants will also be able to focus on their own lives, which will lead to new perspectives into the circumstances they are in.

Instrumentation

A semi-structured series of questions were used to construct an interview questionnaire. The secondary data was backed up by a thorough literature review drawn from other similar studies. The information was gathered from teachers at Karachi Secondary School. The data was collected through the questionnaires being sent to the respondents and a focus group meeting held via Google Meet.

Focused Group:

Focus group discussion is a common qualitative method for gaining a deeper understanding of social issues. Rather than a statistically representative sample of a larger population, the method tries to acquire data from a purposefully selected group of individuals. The field of conservation social science has matured (Bennett et al., 2017). Understanding human perspectives has moved from being an anomaly and a footnote in the conservation debate to taking centre stage in conservation decision-making (Bennett et al., 2017; Khadka, Hujala, Wolfslehner, & Vacik, 2013; Paloniemi et al., 2012). Unlike some of the other less well-known techniques, such as the Nominal Group Technique (Hugé & Mukherjee, in preparation) and Q methodology, focus group discussion is commonly employed in conservation research (Zabala & Mukherjee, 2017).

Sampling Design

Because of the Covid'19 scenario, a targeted (purposive) sampling approach will be used. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to find research participants who are willing to share data about a given subject in a convenient manner, as determined by the inclusion criteria.

Population and Sample Size

Six female secondary school teachers from a private school in Karachi made up the population.

Inclusion Criteria. Six female secondary school teachers who met the participation requirements and have served in the system for at least three years.

Exclusion Criteria. The research excluded male teachers, PE teachers, and teachers who served in a school for less than three years.

Statistical technique

The use of thematic analysis was employed. This allowed the researcher to create themes from the collected data and present the data in a more meaningful way. Responses of the participants

were revisited and data was compiled on Microsoft Word and themes were generated from the repeated responses of the participants.

Ethical consideration:

Participants were educated about the study's goals and objectives, as well as the research questions, so they knew what they were getting themselves into. If they did not wish to answer a question, they were given the option to withdraw or skip it. They were given fictitious names in order to maintain their anonymity, and the information acquired from them will be maintained by the researcher.

Discussion and Analysis

The data gathered through the semi structured questions contributed positively to the hypothesis that there is a difference between recommended and taught curriculum, and that teachers face significant challenges in implementing the recommended curriculum, which is more of a paper exercise than it should be. On being asked how effectively they think they are able to teach the recommended curriculum to their students, 5 out of 6 teachers say it is not always in the same pattern or way which is recommended and one respondent responded by stating there is always a huge gap, sometimes things are not even done close by to what is expected to be done.

The major challenges highlighted by the participants in implementing the recommended curriculum was time constraint, they think a lot if suggested to be taught but practically in field teachers are time bound and either have to cut down a lot of material which they think can be coped later or integrated with other subjects or simply rush their lectures which in their opinion leaves the students with ambiguity.

Other challenges highlighted by the research participants were:

- Lack of resources
- Minimal support from administration
- The overcrowded classes which are a mixture of differentiated students
- The short timings of the periods
- Many other administrative works allotted to the teachers

Talking about the above-mentioned pointers teachers stated that most of the time the recommended curriculum comes along with links to be shown to the students, however, unavailability of the resource room, unstable net connection and lack of operating computers in the lab create hindrance for this to take place, At the same time if the teacher wants to carry out something which might require extra time from other periods, or need the resources many

times the administration which itself is occupied in several works fails to assist the teachers in a timely fashion.

In the same way having students from different cultural, educational background and needs make it difficult for the teacher to be able to successfully incorporate a lesson as per the recommended curriculum guidelines. Not forgetting to mention the extra administrative work teachers in this particular school are given without prior notice of distributing the fee challans, filing, calling parents of absent students and etc.

In their responses to how they bridge the gap between both the curriculums in question the teachers responded by stating that they either integrate the lesson with any other subject, or if possible once the curriculum is completed in a rush then they give a detailed and thorough revision of the topics

Conclusion and Recommendation

In the light of the findings of this study it is recommended that

- Teachers get to be part in the designing of the recommended curriculum as they are the ones on field and know better how to accommodate the recommended curriculum according to their students' needs and time.

- Schools should ensure they are well-equipped with the material and resources their teachers might need.

- Curriculum designers at regional levels for schools should take continuous feedback from teachers and take their opinions on board.

- Curriculum documents should be provided to each teacher teaching a specific subject both in soft and hard copy so it is easier for the teachers to move back and forth according to their easiness during the process of implementing the curriculum

To conclude the findings of this research it is important that teachers' well-being is taken om board, their opinion is acted upon and they get a say in order to bridge the gap between the recommended and taught curriculum and also the recommended curriculum should be designed keeping present working teachers in the committee designated for designing it as they know the ground situation more realistically than anyone else. For further research in the same category the researchers can assess the importance and link of written curriculum with the recommended and taught curriculum which was not assessed in this study and might produce more valid results and fill in the research gap if any left.

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