

Original Research Article

Rethinking the implementation of the revised history curriculum: challenges faced by teachers, learners and principals in selected public secondary schools in Khomas region, Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose for this study was to rethink the implementation of revised History curriculum in Namibia focusing on the Khomas regions, Windhoek. In line with qualitative research the study adopted an interpretivism paradigm, qualitative approach and case study research design. The targeted population consisted of school principals, history teachers and learners in three selected schools in Immanuel Shifidi cluster. Purposeful sampling technique was used to select teachers with three and more years of experience as history teachers. Cluster sampling was used to select learners from School A, B & C. Face to face interviews, non-participant observation and document analysis were used as data collection methods and thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected using these instruments. The study revealed that training and workshops were conducted on the implementation of revised history curriculum but the majority of participants did not attend the in-service training and workshop because only few teachers were selected to be part of the training. The study also revealed that some teachers lacked knowledge in some history topics and concepts which affected the implementation of the curriculum. The challenges faced in the implementation of the revised curriculum were overcrowded in classrooms, lack of textbooks, inadequate resources such as libraries, lack of government funds and lack of time management. The study recommended teachers should make an effort to collaborate with other history teachers in the Immanuel Shifidi circuit. The collaboration forums are intended to aid them in sharing subject knowledge and assisting one another in teaching diverse historical themes and topics. The school administration should seek funding from various companies in Namibia to help create libraries, purchase textbooks for students, and purchase classroom desks. NIED should hold regular training and workshops in various circuits and have a follow-up system in place to ensure that the trainings are effective. This will aid teachers in understanding the varied expectations of the new curriculum as well as staying current on curricular revisions. The study further recommends that future researchers should focus on training topics that need to be covered during curriculum in-service trainings and workshops for efficient delivery of revised history curriculum.

1. Introduction

There is a lengthy history of international initiatives to change national education systems. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1989 was perhaps one of the first worldwide attempts to take action on education and set goals (Fleisch, Gultig, Allais & Maringe, 2019). Goal 4 of the SDGs aims to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," according

to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, 2015). Goal 4 shines out as being particularly relevant to education. Importantly, education is at the heart of development and is required to achieve all of the proposed SDGs (UNESCO, 2016).

Many governments consider improving education quality to be a top priority in order to support long-term economic development (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). In the last two decades, there have been various initiatives in sub-Saharan

Africa to alter educational techniques in order to increase education quality (Altinyelken, 2010). We live in a time where educational reforms are becoming more and more prevalent. Curriculum reform, as a type of important educational transformation, has been occurring in a wide range of academic areas (Nakanyala, 2020). According to Nkosi (2014), the educational system has undergone numerous modifications in curricula in an effort to enhance and address concerns such as inequality and a lack of quality in the educational system.

Since independence, the Namibian government has changed education three times through the ministry of education. The first revisions were made in the 1990s, then again in 2005 and 2006, and finally in 2016, which were implemented in 2017 for grade 8, 2018 for grade 9, 2019-2020 for grade 10-11, and finally in 2021 for grade 12 AS. Namibia's educational system is being restructured to meet the objectives of Vision 2030, the country's long-term national goal (National Institute for Educational Development, 2013). When the new curriculum was first unveiled, teachers and principals had conflicting opinions about it. Some principals praised the new curriculum, but others worried that teachers and learners, particularly in Grade 8, would struggle to meet the higher expectations (Shapwanale, 2017).

Government and funding agency actions in the development of curriculum are frequently too concentrated and confined, while the intricacies of how the curricula will be implemented at the school level are frequently disregarded (Rogan & Grayson 2003). Teachers who are involved in classrooms and apply the curriculum on a daily basis are, first and foremost, those who are responsible for executing the curriculum for effective teaching and learning. It has also been found that when implementing a new curriculum, teachers confront difficulties, particularly in terms of assistance and training (Haruthaithanasan, 2017). Teachers play a significant role in the success or failure of any adjustment in their teaching method. They frequently require additional time to comprehend what change entails and its significance for their teaching practice (Raselimo & Wilmot, 2013). The role of a teacher and their professional development is a problem in curriculum implementation (Estad and Voogt, 2018). Teachers are expected to have a variety of concerns about the new curriculum and how it will be implemented in schools. The success or failure of such an innovation will be determined by the teachers' concerns (Handler, 2010). Kelly (2009) claims that if the curriculum is not thoroughly grasped, it not only lowers academic standards but also lowers behaviour and attitude. Because teachers are the ones who provide curriculum content, this realisation highlights the necessity of

incorporating teachers in curriculum preparation. If teachers are excluded from curriculum creation and, by chance, get the curriculum wrong, the objective of achieving successful curriculum implementation is assumed to be a phantom (Kelly, 2009). Furthermore, due to their experiences and the management situations in their schools, teachers may have differing perspectives on the implementation of the new curriculum (Tafai, 2017).

As a result, effective curriculum implementation is critical, especially for high-quality teaching and learning. The curricula must be dynamic in order to satisfy the changing needs of the times (Hewitt, 2006). Furthermore, according to Van der Nest (2012, p. 5), "a change in curriculum demands a change in the teacher's function." Teachers must not only focus on changing content knowledge, but also on changing educational knowledge, which presents various problems in the effective implementation of CAPS as the new curriculum." Factors such as teachers' lack of sufficient training to effectively apply the curriculum could have a detrimental impact on implementation. As a result, proper training and induction must be facilitated in order to increase instructors' capacity to properly execute the new curriculum.

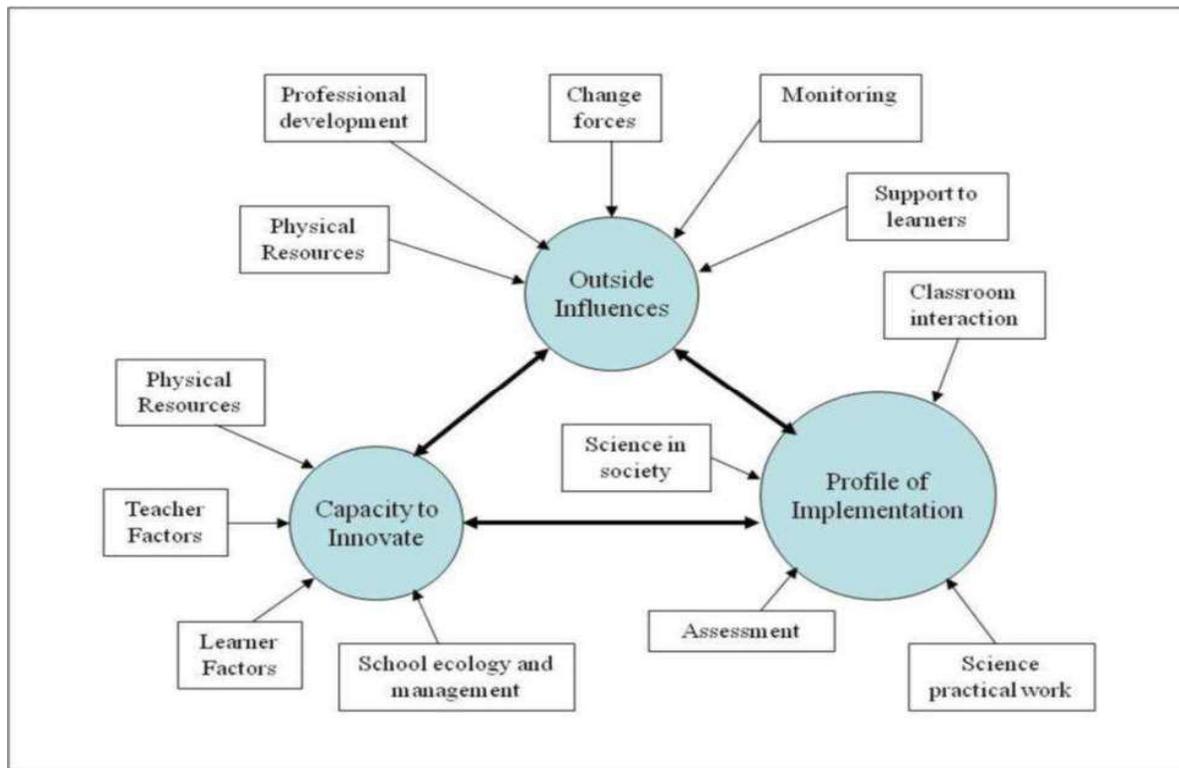
This study focused on the implementation of revised History curriculum in Namibia focusing on the Khomas regions in Windhoek, thus the objective was to establish challenges faced by teachers, learners and Principals in the implementation process of the revised History curriculum. History's importance as a teaching subject in nation-building cannot be overstated, as it is one of the mediums used to communicate the government's intents or national educational goals, as well as instill patriotic values in the younger generation (Lowenthal, 2000). According to Fogo (2014), history is a subject that should be included in a school curriculum since it helps students learn more about themselves by fostering their understanding of their past, both internally and externally.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is a set of interconnected ideas, similar to a theory but not as well developed (Frederic, 2011). Rogan and Grayson's (2003) curriculum theory drove this research project, which focused on the implementation of the redesigned History curriculum for grades 8-12 in Namibia. The implementation process, which included teachers and learners, served as the foundation. This idea provides more information on the teacher's role in the curriculum implementation process. The Rogan and Grayson (2003) curriculum implementation hypothesis is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Curriculum Implementation Model by Rogan and Grayson (2003)



Source: Rogan and Grayson (2003)

2.2 Theory of curriculum implementation

The effectiveness of curriculum implementation can be determined using sub-constructs and assigning levels of operation, according to Rogan and Grayson's (2003) hypothesis. Furthermore, the theory provides a useful framework for investigating teachers' experiences in the classroom and facilitating data interpretation. This theory of Curriculum Implementation and change is based on three main components, namely the Profile of Implementation (PI), Capacity to Innovate (CI) and Outside Influences (OI). The Profile of Implementation focuses on teachers' classroom practices in terms of pedagogical and subject abilities, whereas the Capacity to Innovate includes factors that either help or hinder the implementation process, as well as the problem-solving skills teachers employ to overcome obstacles: as discussed below.

2.2.1. Profile of Implementation (PI)

Rogan and Grayson (2003), define the Profile of Implementation as a term used to describe how teachers implement and practice a new curriculum in the classroom. It recognizes that teachers differ, resulting in a variety of approaches to adopting a new curriculum. Classroom contact (including teacher and learner action), what learners do on their own, and teachers' use of the practical component of a subject

are all sub-constructs of the Profile of Implementation (Rogan and Grayson, 2003).

2.2.2 Capacity to Innovate (CI)

The second construct, the Capacity to Innovate, is described in Rogan and Grayson (2003) as a means of attempting to comprehend and explain in detail the aspects that can help or hinder the adoption of a new curriculum in a school. Because of differences in socioeconomic circumstances, location, resources, and teacher availability, not all schools have the physical resources and support to implement a curriculum properly and to the same level. The availability of physical resources, teacher factors, learner factors, and school ecology and management are the four sub-constructs under the Capacity to Innovate component (Rogan & Grayson, 2003).

2.2.3 Outside Influences (OI)

The third and last construct, the Support of Outside Agencies is described by Rogan and Grayson (2003), as other organisations, such as education departments, that communicate with a school in order to foster innovation. The new curriculum implementation is the most interesting innovation. Professional development, which is focused on implementing change rather than simply providing information to

curriculum implementers, should be delivered as one progress through the stages. This is to better equip teachers and prepare them to implement the curriculum effectively (Rogan & Grayson, 2003).

This theory was chosen as the basis for this research since it considers all stakeholders as well as other materials such as resources (textbooks), facilities (Classrooms), teacher preparedness, and socioeconomic issues. All of these factors have a significant impact on Namibia's adoption of the updated History curriculum. As a result, this study looked at different areas such as teacher preparedness, abilities, knowledge, and obstacles faced by teachers during the history subject's curriculum implementation process, demonstrating its relevance.

2.3 Curriculum implementation

Curriculum implementation entails putting into action what has already been developed in order to get pupils to perform as outlined in the curricular goals (Suyanto, 2017). Curriculum implementation also means putting the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses, and subjects into practice. The procedure entails assisting the student in gaining information or experience. It is critical to remember that curriculum implementation is impossible without the participation of the learner. As a result, the learner is at the centre of the curriculum implementation process (Chaudhary, 2015).

The use of physical facilities as well as the use of relevant pedagogical tactics and methodologies are all part of curriculum implementation. Curriculum implementation is heavily influenced by the availability and quality of resource materials, as well as the availability of appropriate facilities (Chaudhary, 2015). When implementing curriculum, particularly newly revised curriculum, an educator must be able to assess it so that early problems can be identified. Determining what problems a teacher encounters during curriculum implementation can have a positive impact on curriculum success (Karakus 2021a). As a result, a teacher should be able to understand and implement curriculum effectively. The greater a teacher understands of curriculum, the more effectively she or he can develop, design, and administer it. If curriculum innovation compels teachers to assume new roles, Muleya and Mbewe (2018) claim that they typically lack confidence in their own expertise, identity, and classroom mastery. According to Kafu (2010), more training is needed for teachers to be able to deal with new obstacles in the implementation of new curriculum innovations. Bishop (2015) claimed that in order for a curriculum to be successful teachers must have the necessary tools. There must be available and ongoing support services, such as the provision of

appropriate and adequate teaching/learning materials and the establishment of local centres where educational personnel can gather in seminars and workshops to discuss and enhance the new curricula.

2.4 Challenges faced by teachers in implementing revised curriculum

2.4.1 Inadequate financial resources and funding

According to Mkandawire (2010), a lack of financial resources and inadequate finance can have disastrous consequences for curriculum implementation. When the educational system's financial resources are inadequate, it is extremely difficult to successfully implement a curriculum. Financial resources can be used to improve facilities, compensate teachers, launch new projects to aid in the implementation of the curriculum, and schools can make progress toward the goal. Underfunding has a slew of other ramifications for curricula (Mandukwini, 2016).

2.4.2 Lack of professional development and support

Mandukwini (2016) claimed that all changes in education, including curriculum modifications at all levels, necessitate teachers expanding their knowledge and skills. Professional development is most effective when it is a continuous process that involves appropriate, well-planned learning programs and personalized follow-up via supportive observation and feedback. If this isn't done correctly, it will have an impact on the curriculum's effectiveness. The majority of the time, teachers lack training and hence are unable to successfully apply the curriculum.

2.4.3 Insufficient Teaching and Learning Resources

The lack of resources required for effective teaching and learning might stymie curriculum implementation. Textbooks, teacher's reference materials, and the availability of technology equipment are only a few examples of these resources. By providing vital materials, teachers may concentrate on educating their students rather than looking for materials they don't have (Mandukwini, 2016). According to Mkandawire (2010), the lack of or insufficiency of teaching and learning materials can be a major roadblock to curriculum implementation. In schools, these resources are hard to get by and are few. Books, writing materials, chalk, science gear, and an inadequate or out-of-date library are all in short supply or not available at all (Kelly 1999). The textbooks and reference books offered did not represent the current syllabus, according to the teachers. Furthermore, the textbook content lacked clarification on how to

instruct pupils in accordance with CBC standards (Makunja, 2016).

2.4.4 Lack of technology

Technology, according to Erstad & Voogt (2018), can be one of the contributing causes to inadequate curriculum implementation. "Technology is seen as critical to the implementation of 21st-century courses." As a result, as societies are becoming increasingly digital in all aspects of social life, technology as a social component is interwoven in the preconditions and arguments for new curriculum improvements. As a result, technology might be a difficult barrier to overcome because curricula cannot function well without it. Technology is used to conduct the assessment. The idea was that technology has the capacity to change educational evaluation, particularly towards formative assessment methods, and so help the development of critical 21st-century skills (Erstad & Voogt, 2018).

2.4.5 Inadequate Learning facilities

Classrooms, libraries, resource centres, offices, desks, school halls, and other school facilities and equipment are unavailable. The government's underfunding of the education sector has a severe impact on the availability and quality of learning institutions' facilities (Mkandawire, 2010). The lack of teaching and learning tools in schools suggests that curriculum implementation is impeded (Tambulukani, 2014).

2.4.6 Overcrowded classrooms

Overcrowding in the classroom was noted as a barrier to curriculum implementation. During group discussions, overcrowded classrooms have a negative impact on teacher-student and student-student interactions (Tambulukani, 2014). Teachers, for example, neglected to pay attention to individual pupils with learning disabilities. Teachers' workload was also raised as a result of overcrowding in the classroom (Makunja, 2016).

2.4.7 Poor Conditions of Service May Affect Curriculum Implementation

Another hindrance to curriculum implementation is poor service conditions for curriculum implementers. When curriculum implementers have lower income, no housing units, uncertain job security, bad transportation, and generally terrible working conditions, it can be a severe hindrance to curriculum implementation since they will resort to looking for resources to support their families (Mkandawire, 2010).

2.4.8 Poor monitoring and evaluation of schools

According to the findings, most Zambian schools are rarely visited by school administrators to check that standards are upheld (Mkandawire, 2010). Educational officials should visit schools to ensure that standards are maintained and to remind school administrators of their primary responsibility in the education area.

3. Findings and Discussions

Challenges faced by teachers, learners and Principals in the implementation process of the revised History curriculum

3.1 Overcrowded classrooms

The study revealed classrooms are overcrowded, which has an impact on learners' performance in class. Also, because there is no movement in the classroom, teachers are unable to access some learners and evaluate their progress or provide them particular attention. In literature, the same was noted by various authors. Tambulukani, (2014) reported that during group discussions, overcrowded classrooms have a negative impact on teacher-student and student-student interactions. Teachers, for example, neglected to pay attention to individual pupils with learning disabilities. Teachers' workload was also raised as a result of overcrowding in the classroom (Makunja, 2016). As a result, they are needed to address overcrowdings in schools so as to assist the revised history curriculum.

3.2 Lack of Textbooks

The study revealed that teachers and learners are facing textbook shortages, as some teachers do not have a copy of the textbook and the ratio of learners to one textbook prevents others from having access to or sufficient time with the textbook. Similarly, in a study of Suyanto (2017) reported that the scarcity of learners and teacher textbooks contributed to the schools' insufficient preparation to apply the C13 Curriculum. The author further indicated that curriculum implementation relies heavily on learning materials such as textbooks (Suyanto, 2017). Hence by providing vital materials, teachers may concentrate on educating their students rather than looking for materials they don't have (Mandukwini, 2016). As a result failure of effective implementation of revised History curriculum is attributed by lack of textbooks to use by teachers and learners.

3.3 Inadequate resources

The study revealed that supporting supplies such as libraries and classroom tables are insufficient; posing a teaching and learning problem that has an impact on curriculum implementation because certain learners will not have access to a library or a conducive learning environment. While in literature it has been noted that curriculum implementation is heavily influenced by the availability and quality of resource materials, as well as the availability of appropriate facilities (Chaudhary, 2015). In literature, it was noted that lack of teaching and learning tools in schools suggests that curriculum implementation is impeded (Tambulukani, 2014). As a result, schools should strive to have necessary resources so as to smoothen the curriculum implementation process.

3.4 Lack of government funds

The study revealed that the government was expected to support trainings and workshops on the implementation of the updated curriculum, but the government lacked the funds to do so. In literature, Mkandawire (2010) reported that lack of financial resources and inadequate finance can have disastrous consequences for curriculum implementation. When the educational system's financial resources are inadequate, it is extremely difficult to successfully implement a curriculum. Hence, there is need for government of Namibia to avail funds for implementation of new curriculums and these funds should be availed for regular trainings and workshops in regions of Namibia.

4. Recommendations

Before implementing revised or updated curriculums, the Ministry of education should make resources available, and subject experts such as teachers should be involved in the design of these materials. NIED through the directorate of Education in the ministry, needs to develop resources, such as Learning and Teacher Support Material (LTSM), textbooks and

teachers' guides with practical advice for teachers regarding ways to implement the revised curriculum effectively in the classroom. These resources must be designed to assist teachers with what and how best to teach; furthermore, each learner should have his or her own textbooks.

The Ministry of education and NIED should collaborate to hold workshops and trainings to provide teachers with the information and skills they need to apply the new curriculums. Any material regarding the implementation of the curriculum should be supplied to all schools by the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture. Follow-up workshops should be conducted to ensure effective progress of the implementation of the revised curriculum. Proper training of all teachers is needed to provide teachers with clarity regarding what is expected of them in the implementation of the revised curriculum.

5. Conclusion

The research uncovered a number of obstacles to effective curriculum implementation in understudy schools. One of the issues raised by participants was overcrowding in the classroom. This has an impact on the teacher's workload as well as the amount of time spent checking on each learner's progress. The lack of textbooks has been identified as a barrier to the implementation of the updated history curriculum, particularly in grade 12. Other grades have textbooks, but the ratio of texts to learners is high, thus some students did not have enough time to use the textbook.

Inadequate resources, such as libraries, were also mentioned as difficulties in the schools that were being investigated as a result of the implementation process being hampered. The government's lack of funding to conduct trainings was also mentioned, as the government, through NIED, must provide monies to train all Namibian teachers. Teachers' inability to manage their time resulted in a lack of syllabus coverage, which hampered the complete implementation of the updated history curriculum.

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