

What Categories of Teachers and Subject Advisers are involved in Curriculum Development in the Fort Beaufort District in the Eastern Cape Province?

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ABSTRACT The study investigated and analysed the extent of stakeholders' participation in curriculum development. Specifically, it sought to identify the categories of teachers and subject advisers who were involved in curriculum development process in the Fort Beaufort District in the Eastern Cape. Data was collected through structured face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with 22 experienced participants comprised teachers, subject advisers and principals. The participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. The findings revealed that teachers and subject advisers were involved in the curriculum development processes in the Fort Beaufort District in the Eastern Cape but their participation was based mainly on their position and seniority. Hence the study recommends that teachers and subject advisers be meaningfully involved in curriculum development.

INTRODUCTION

There has generally been a perception that the enhanced participation of stakeholders in the governance of schools, including the development and implementation of the curriculum, would improve the educational experience and enhance its relevance to national developmental goals (Harber 2001). In South Africa, this perception has become intertwined with the expectation that the great political freedom gained in 1994 would embrace more voice for the generality of the population in virtually all facets of society (Sayed 2001). Coming from the history of extreme repression, deprivation and exclusion that characterized the past under the infamous apartheid regime, this mindset is understandable.

Provision for educational decentralization and modes of representation and participation was specified in the Constitution which came into force in 1996. There is one national education department and nine provincial departments (Carrim 2001). With the decentralization of power, the provinces are 'free to determine educational policy, curricula, manage educational institutions, employ educators and utilize educational budgets as they deem necessary' (Carrim

2001: 101). More people at the provincial level are able to make decisions and hence, ensure their effective participation in educational transformation. Participation is also specified in policies such as the South African Schools Act (SASA) which states that all schools must be democratically governed or managed: "A school governance structure should involve all stakeholder groups in active and responsible roles, encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision making" (Department of Education 1996: 16). Similarly, the White Paper on Education and Training emphasizes the full participation of stakeholders in the process of curriculum development (Department of Education 1995).

Carl (2005: 223) defines curriculum development as "the encompassing and continual process during which any form of planning, designing, dissemination, implementation and assessment of curricula may take place. This takes place in different areas of the curriculum ranging from national and provincial levels to schools and classrooms". Carl (2005) observes that it is within this process of curriculum development that the different stakeholders can and should become involved. There are many stakeholders in curriculum development and they are those who are affected by or can affect a decision (Bryson 2004). According to Carrim (2001: 105), stakeholders in the schools are those who have a direct 'stake' (or interest) in the affairs of the school. These include policy makers, heads of

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institutions (principals), curriculum specialists, and school management boards, educators, learners, parents, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), publishers and the community.

Teachers can participate at different stages in the curriculum development process and at different levels. As the executioners of the curriculum, they can take part in designing/planning, implementation and evaluation. The importance of teacher involvement in curriculum development has been recognised and Handler (2010) suggests that teachers work collaboratively with curriculum specialists to organise content and materials and align these with the students they teach, (Handler 2010) a view that Alsubaie (2016) supports. Teachers should be involved in the process of curriculum development, especially as the roles of teachers as stated in the South Africa's Norms and Standards of Teacher Education (DoE 1998) include the following: (1) mediators of learning, (2) designers of curriculum and assessment, (3) managers and leaders, (4) researchers and learners, (5) learning area or phase specialists, (6) members of the school community and (7) pastoral care (DoE 1998).

Like teachers, subject advisers can participate in various areas of the curriculum development process. They can participate in designing, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum. This participation can also be at different levels: that is, on the national, provincial or district level. Subject advisers are academic advisers too. In some places they are called curriculum leaders, curriculum co-ordinators or curriculum managers. The main objective of subject advisers is to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. They are also subject specialists in their various disciplines who guide the teachers in the implementation of the curriculum. As stated in the Provincial Curriculum Guidelines produced in 2005, subject advisers coordinate the subject content. They act as a link between the province and the schools.

As subject specialists, subject advisers should be involved in designing the curriculum so that they can offer their specialist advice (Rorrer et al. 2008). Hence, there is hardly any possibility that any credible and systematic curriculum could be designed without the involvement of subject advisers. According to the Provincial Curriculum Guidelines (PCG 05/2006), the level of curriculum implementation and the quality of teaching and learning in schools is best determined by paying regular visits to schools and individual classrooms. As curriculum implement-

ers, subject advisers have some basic roles to perform during the implementation stage.

In the evaluation stage, subject advisers design and develop evaluation plans and tools to ensure effective, valid and reliable data and they also complete and submit monitoring and evaluation reports (Eastern Cape DoE 2005; KZN DoE 2012). Subject advisers employ curriculum management strategies at various levels, namely: district, provincial and national to enable them assess the effectiveness of the delivery methodology and quality of curriculum delivery. The subject advisers are able to evaluate the work of the educators and learners (DoE 2009; KZN DoE 2012).

In view of the above roles and different capacities in which teachers and subject advisers can participate in the curriculum development process, one may ask if the South African government really considers these roles while carrying out curriculum development processes, or does it assume that these roles become operative only when the curriculum is implemented in the classroom? "Teaching is more than the activities defined within the classroom walls", as rightly suggested by Hecht et al. (1999: 152). This view is also supported by Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) who feel that teachers' knowledge is much more than the knowledge of what happens in a classroom.

It is true that being a teacher involves much more than just understanding the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, learning theories and classroom management strategies. The researchers quoted above opine that teachers who act as leaders improve the entire school community and do not just manage classroom activities (Katzenmeyer and Moller 1996; York-Barr and Duke 2004). So, if the South African government accepts that teachers in South Africa play these roles, why did they not involve them in the curriculum development that took place in the country after 1994? If teachers were involved actively in this process, why are there so many criticisms and complaints? What categories of teachers and subject advisers were involved in the curriculum development? This study examined the categories of teachers and subject advisers involved in the curriculum development process.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the categories of teachers and subject

advisers involved in curriculum development in the Fort Beaufort District of the Eastern Cape. The researchers examined the different areas/aspects of curriculum development process in which teachers and subject advisers were involved.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Approach

In this study, the researchers adopted a qualitative approach which enabled them to understand the particular phenomenon in its natural setting; in this case the categories of teachers and subject advisers involved in curriculum development process. This approach goes with the case study design which was used. Using the case study to do this research made it possible for the researchers to concentrate on a specific instance or situation.

Instruments

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data for this study. The researchers used semi-structured questioning methods to collect data on the involvement of teachers and subject advisers as well as the process used in the curriculum change that took place. The researchers thought of specific topics such as stakeholders' level of participation, voice and power that they explored during the interview and recorded them. All the interviews were held in the participants' offices during office hours which made them feel very relaxed. Also the focus group discussions were held in a mini staff room in the schools selected. During interviews, it is very important for the researcher to record as many details as possible (Deem 2002: 840). Hence, the researcher used an audio recorder to capture detailed information. The focus group discussions concentrated on the participants sharing their views, experiences and participation in the curriculum development processes that took place in the Fort Beaufort District, as well as explaining the categories of teachers and subject advisers who were involved. Document analysis was another source that was used to collect data. The researcher did close readings of various documents relating to teachers' and subject advisers' participation in the curriculum development. It was used to

complement interviews and enhance accountability. For this reason, the documents were not analysed in detail as substantive evidence (Lincoln et al. 2011). During data analysis, the data was grouped in themes.

Participants

A purposive convenience sample of eight experienced teachers and six subject advisers were interviewed for this study, while eight teachers participated in two focus group discussions. There are forty-seven secondary schools in the Fort Beaufort District in six clusters. The study was done in four public schools which were selected from six clusters. The schools selected for the study were an ex-model C school, an urban school, a boarding school and a rural school. This was done to ensure that different categories of schools were included. These high schools in the Fort Beaufort District were selected to examine the categories of teachers and subject advisers who were involved in curriculum development. The researchers sought permission from the district office, then went to the schools and obtained permission from the principals and arranged the interview schedules with them.

Procedures

First of all the researchers completed a form from the Faculty of Education after which they got an Ethics Clearance letter from the University of Fort Hare. This was taken to the District office where permission/clearance was obtained to proceed to the schools. To gain entry, the researchers held consultations with the school management and relevant interest groups to apprise them of the proposed study and obtained the necessary clearances.

RESULTS

Teachers serve as the guiding force in a learner's life. They mould learners to become responsible citizens in society. Teachers also transmit knowledge. There are different categories of teachers. Some are experienced, while others are not. Some are trained and certified, while others are not. Some are trained to teach either in the FET or GET sector. No matter to which category a teacher belongs, he/she can be involved in

one or all the phases of curriculum development: designing, implementation or evaluation (OECD 2008).

While trying to identify the categories of teachers and subject advisers who were involved in curriculum development process from the data that were collected, the researchers grouped the findings under different stages of curriculum development process, namely: designing, implementation and evaluation.

Categories of Teachers and Subject Advisers Who Participated in the Designing of the Curriculum

According to Carl (2009), teachers play an important role as agents of curriculum change, and can contribute to the successful and dynamic development of the curriculum if they possess the appropriate knowledge and skills (Carl 2009). Teachers are the executioners of the curriculum. They implement the curriculum in the classroom and school environment. They work directly with the learners and understand them better than any other person.

The teachers who were interviewed felt that they had not been invited to participate in the designing of the curriculum. They felt that designing the curriculum was for very senior teachers, especially the ones in the Gauteng Province, maybe because they felt that those who had been invited to participate in the designing of the curriculum were very close to the headquarters of the Department of Education or are more exposed than the ones in the Eastern Cape. One of the participant teachers also commented that teachers who had been newly trained should not be in designing; neither should all teachers. The researchers asked the teachers which categories of teachers had participated in curriculum designing. They responded as below:

Teachers were not involved in designing. If at all they did, it must have been very senior teachers who teach in Gauteng. A beginner teacher needs to have some experience first before being involved in designing. But there should be representation of teachers in designing and evaluation. I am not sure if there had been representations in the past at the provincial and national levels.

On this same issue, one of the principals, P2 commented that some teachers in his school had been invited to participate. These were the teach-

ers who taught Agriculture, Mathematics, Tourism and Hospitality. He explained that the teacher for Agriculture had participated at the Provincial level in designing work schedules and work plans for other teachers in the Province. The Mathematics teacher had been invited to write a Study Guide for Maths Literacy which was used in the entire Province. While the Tourism and Hospitality teacher was invited to a workshop in Gauteng, where they produced memoranda for use in the marking of the Grade 12 examination. This is what he said:

P2: Teachers teaching these subjects: Mathematics, Agriculture, Tourism and Hospitality have been invited before to participate in one way or the other.

It was imperative that the researchers investigated the category of subject advisers who had taken part in curriculum development, as there are different categories of subject advisers. These are the Chief Education Specialists (CESs), Deputy Chief Education Specialists (DCEs) and the Subject Education Specialists (SESs) (DoE 2007). All these categories of subject advisers, in one way or the other, deal with the curriculum. They have different roles and responsibilities as curriculum personnel and their main vision is to provide leadership and direction for efficient curriculum management and effective curriculum implementation through policies, procedures, systems and structures (Eastern Cape Provincial Curriculum Guide 2007). These subject advisers participate at different stages and on different levels of curriculum development (PCG 2007). On that note, the researcher asked if all the subject advisers had taken part in curriculum designing. The following are some of their responses:

SA4: It is the Chief Education Specialists (CESs) and Provincial planners who are also Deputy Chief Education Specialists (DCEs) that participate in designing the curriculum.

SA6: Deputy Chief Educational Specialists at provincial level are sometimes used at the national level for designing the curriculum.

The study found that usually the CESs and DCEs had been involved at the designing stage, and participated at the national level. They also participated in curriculum design making sure that all the subjects listed in the curriculum were taken care of. They assessed the educational programs, selected textbooks and instructional technology, trained teachers and sometimes devel-

oped work plans and schedules. Participation was based on seniority; those in the top positions of subject advisors were involved in design at provincial and national level.

Categories of Teachers and Subject Advisers Who Participated in Curriculum Implementation

Teachers are curriculum implementers. That is basically what they are trained to do. Implementation is the practical aspect of the design. It entails putting into practice the content of the curriculum. Through implementation teachers seek available answers to the following questions:

- (1) Why is this curriculum needed?
- (2) For whom is it being developed?
- (3) What are we trying to teach or change?
- (4) How will we do it?

It also includes the preparation of materials to be used in teaching, using them and making sure that they suit the content, learners' age and environment. Some teachers employ different styles that suit their learners and environment. This is a task for all teachers. When the participants were asked the categories of teachers who participated in implementation, their responses were the same- *"All of us implement the curriculum."*

One of the teachers reported:

"We all did. I'm not sure of evaluation but we went to the District for training on implementation, there we were taught how to teach."

The principals also confirmed that all the teachers took part in the workshops for implementation. They were all involved in it. The following is the statement from a participant principal:

P1: Teachers do not take part in Curriculum design but when it comes to training for implementation, all the teachers take part.

Apart from the responses from the participants, there were numerous circulars which confirmed that teachers were, on numerous occasions, invited to workshops on the implementation of the curriculum. There were also documents used for these workshops which were made available to the researcher to peruse.

For the implementation of the curriculum, the subject advisers said, *"All the subject advisers are involved in implementation."* This is understandable as this is their core function as curriculum personnel, to ensure the effective implementation of curriculum policies and guide-

lines. They can achieve this by carrying out the following roles:

- ♦ To orientate and train teachers
- ♦ To support teachers in Learning Area/Learning Programme/Subject content
- ♦ To develop and distribute relevant curriculum materials
- ♦ To provide teachers with effective on-site support
- ♦ To assist teachers in curriculum planning and delivery
- ♦ To promote the professional development of teachers
- ♦ To establish and maintain curriculum structure
- ♦ To develop effective communication strategies
- ♦ To establish and maintain relevant statistical databases
- ♦ To monitor and evaluate curriculum programmes
- ♦ To develop and implement Work Plans and Work Plan agreements in accordance with Provincial Curriculum Guidelines (PCG 04/2005)

Categories of Teachers and Subject Advisers Who Participated in Curriculum Evaluation

Curriculum evaluation is the process of evaluating the content of the curriculum, the teaching materials used, and the methodology. This process is used to assess the effectiveness of a programme or curriculum so as to make judgements on whether to change, modify or amend it. It is a process that all teachers should be involved in considering the fact that they are all involved in the implementation. The teachers explained that at the end of the workshops, they were given forms to complete for evaluation. On the evaluation of the curriculum, the teachers' responses are summarized as follows:

FG1: We don't take part in designing. We all take part in workshops where they put us through how to implement the curriculum. At the end of the workshops we are given questionnaires to complete and that is how we are involved in evaluation.

Curriculum evaluation allows the educators to evaluate the programme or courses and examine the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, so as to ensure that it aligns with the stated standards. Also they want to make sure that

the curriculum meets the needs of the learners as well as the country. The researcher was interested in finding out the involvement of subject advisers. When asked about the categories of subject advisers who had been involved in the curriculum evaluation, they responded:

SA1: For evaluation it depends. The evaluation involves a kind of reporting. We report on what is happening on the field. After that we plan on how to handle the problems. There is Subject Improvement Plan given to all the teachers and they use that to evaluate what they are doing after which they submit them to the subject advisers.

SA3: The Senior subject advisers like DCESs and SESs assess how effectively a curriculum meets the students' needs. We evaluate this effectiveness, by visiting schools and often meet with School Management Team (SMT) and teachers to find out what problems they encountered.

On the evaluation aspect, the subject advisers' responses reveal that it is the senior subject advisers who participate. These are mainly those at the top at the national level as well as DCESs and SES's.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the categories of teachers and subject advisers who participated in curriculum development. All the participants said that seniority and position matter in terms of categories of teachers and subject advisers who participate in curriculum development. Another thing is their expertise and affiliation to teacher organisation.

The participants stated that there are different categories of teachers and subject advisers who are involved in curriculum development. A comparison with subject advisers and the teachers revealed that they felt that only colleagues of a certain calibre were invited to help in the curriculum development processes. The study findings further revealed that different categories of teachers were invited to participate at different levels depending on their years of teaching experience and the subjects they taught. The same goes for the subject advisers. There are different categories of subject advisers namely: Chief Education Specialists, who are usually involved in curriculum designing/planning, Deputy Chief Education Specialists who supervise the Senior Education Specialists. The

Senior Education Specialists work with the schools and assist the teachers with the implementation as well as the evaluation of the curriculum. So the involvement of subject advisers in curriculum development depends so much on their position and expertise. These findings confirm the reports by the KZN DoE (2012) and Eastern Cape DoE (2007) that the categories of stakeholders involved in curriculum development depend a lot on their experience and position. Interestingly, the teachers felt that some of their colleagues were invited to take part in curriculum development because they work near the headquarters of the Education department and they ignored those who teach in rural or semi-urban areas.

However, Handler (2010) refutes the above and says that some of the stakeholders lack the requisite knowledge to be truly effective designers of a comprehensive curriculum and that is why they were not invited to be involved in the curriculum design and planning at the District, Provincial nor National level but they may be involved at school level. The development of a curriculum is a special field in education and only those who are qualified and experienced should be involved in it. The educational literature draws attention to the important role of stakeholder participation in program success (Taylor 2000; Sharma 2008). Where an educational program embodies the expertise of the teacher and a skills-enhancement element on the part of the learner, the literature points to the pre-eminent role of participation (Posner 1992; Mokhaba 2005; Humphreys 2010).

Alsubaie (2016) adds that because teachers have to be involved in curriculum development, teachers should be provided with appropriate knowledge and skills that help them contribute more effectively to the curriculum development operation. These findings are similar to reports by DoE (2003) which states that curriculum development should be left to the stakeholders who are qualified, competent, dedicated and have an excellent grasp and knowledge of the subject matter. As a result, information from the study reveals that it is not all teachers or subject advisers who embrace the idea of taking part in curriculum design at higher levels.

According to Rakona and Matshe (2014), the curriculum must be protected and given the respect it deserves. However, the situation has changed. The process has been invaded by a

diversified group of people including politicians and the private sector; whereas, previously the curriculum was left to professionals. There are issues of politics and power in curriculum development. Most often stakeholders who take part in curriculum development are those at the top. This is because participation in curriculum development is viewed as something that is related to power and position.

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2004), a curriculum is characterised as what is to be taught, in what order, in what way and by whom. With the training that teachers get, they are in a position to handle these during the curriculum development process. They are familiar with the subject matter, instructional materials to use, the method of delivery as well as the evaluation. Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) recognise the importance of the role of classroom teachers in curricular development at the building stage. These researchers also recognise that limited engagement of teachers in meaningful decision making is a major flaw in an educational organisation. They suggest further that this limited engagement of teachers in curriculum development has been instrumental in what can only be seen as the failure of meaningful educational reform efforts.

In view of the foregoing, it is important that teachers and stakeholders view curriculum development as a continuous process characterised by orderliness and systematic planning. Curriculum development moves in different phases, namely design, implementation and evaluation (Carl 1995: 48-49), in which they can all be involved at different levels and at different stages as supported by the theoretical frameworks of Taylor (2003), Arnstein (1969) and Wilcox (1994) discussed in this study. Therefore, it may be inferred that teachers, regardless of years of experience or knowledge of curriculum and standards, participate to some degree in curriculum development in each lesson they teach. There are some elements of thinking, planning, teaching and assessing that go on around a teacher before, during and after teaching a lesson or topic. So teachers are involved in curriculum development in one way or another.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, when the department of Education wanted to develop the curriculum, it invited experienced teachers and those who were

experts in their teaching subjects. What also came out from this study was that some teachers were neither trained nor qualified to teach. There were also different categories of subject advisers. There were Chief Education Specialists (CESs), Deputy Chief Education Specialists (DCESS) and Subject Education Specialists (SESs). Their participation in curriculum development activities varied and this was attributed to their position and seniority. The findings also show that the participants were involved in different capacities at different levels and stages. They participated as curriculum designers/developers, curriculum implementers and curriculum evaluators at the district, provincial and national levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that a mechanism need to be put in place to train teachers, subject advisers and principals. In that way there will be more teachers and subject advisers qualified enough to participate in the curriculum development processes. Effective teaching and learning can only take place if the teachers, subject advisers and principals have good knowledge of the content of the curriculum. They will feel empowered and equipped to handle the curriculum if they are properly trained. This is the only way that they can implement the curriculum effectively and with confidence.

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