

ASSESSMENT OF EXPERTISE FOR TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN ENGLISH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Teacher expertise, provided during pre-service and in-service training, consists of knowledge and skills vital to teacher participation in curriculum development. Both trainings are aimed at updating teachers' knowledge and skills for participation in the curriculum development process. However, teacher representation on curriculum development panel in Kenya is limited which prompted the researcher to assess teacher expertise for curriculum development. Guided by two objectives: establish teachers' knowledge of curriculum development and determine skills for teacher participation in curriculum development, the study was conducted among 184 teachers and 57 Principals of secondary schools. Teacher of English questionnaire and interviews were used for data collection. Qualitative data analysis revealed that teachers had inadequate knowledge of curriculum development designs, assessment methods, curriculum development process and inadequate skills to develop curriculum, make curriculum decisions and select curriculum materials. The study concludes that relevant pre-service and in-service trainings be conducted for teacher participation in curriculum development.

Key words: expertise, knowledge, skills, curriculum development

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Curriculum expertise refers to the knowledge and skills required to enact curriculum development. Huizinga, Handelzalts, Nieveen and Voogt (2014) consider teacher expertise as critical to teacher participation in curriculum development as most teachers are novice designers who need to enhance their expertise in curriculum development. Huizinga (2009) identifies six types of knowledge and skills as relevant for teacher participation in curriculum development. These are: knowledge to formulate objectives, knowledge of ideal generational skills, systematic curriculum design skills, formative and evaluation skills, curriculum decision making skills and curriculum implementation management skills. Although these skills and knowledge are taught in teacher education training

institutions, coverage of content on curriculum development expertise is shallow given the little time to cover the pre-service course. This has made teachers graduate with inadequate expertise to effectively participate in curriculum development. Further, lack of application of skills learnt denies practicing teachers the opportunity to enhance their curriculum development skills.

Preparation of teachers for teaching English at the secondary school level starts at the teacher training institutions. Teachers who teach English in secondary schools in Kenya are required to have a minimum Bachelor's Degree qualification, with English and Literature as the teaching subjects. The minimum requirement for this training is for a candidate to have scored a mean Grade of C+ and above, and also a C+ in English in the KCSE examination (MOE, 2019). Training at this level mainly focuses on the teachers' acquisition of subject matter. For instance, for a teacher to be employed by the Teachers Service Commission to teach English, it is required that the graduate should have a minimum of eight content courses. This ensures that teacher trainees acquire adequate content knowledge at the time of completing studies.

On the contrary, universities that train teachers to teach in secondary schools offer only one course in curriculum studies during the second year of undergraduate training. This course covers a topic on curriculum development that includes sub-topics such as curriculum concepts, theories and models, curriculum development process, implementation and evaluation. Although the aim of this course is to introduce student teachers to the theory and practice of curriculum development, the time allocated to its study is not sufficient for grasp of curriculum development expertise. At the same time, the curriculum studies course covers a lot of content which learners find difficult to comprehend theoretically. In this respect, the curriculum studies course fails to prepare student teachers for their future professional role in the entire curriculum development process.

Subject matter courses are taught from first to fourth year which ensures that the teacher is well grounded in content delivery, while curriculum development is only offered in one course of the four-year study. This training is not sufficient in equipping the teacher trainee with curriculum development expertise, thus teacher in-service training needs should be geared towards continuous improvement in the quality of education services for continuous skills upgrading of teachers (MOE, 2004). Even though in-service training has been undertaken to build capacity of teachers, less attention has been given to teacher expertise in curriculum development, leaving the practicing teachers with inadequate skills to participate in curriculum development.

In-service training for teachers in Kenya is the responsibility of Quality Assurance, a department of the Ministry of Education (MOE) which is headed by the Director Quality Assurance (ROK, 2012). The directorate is responsible for initiating appropriate in-service programs to make up for the shortcomings detected in the education system. However, these programs have been criticized since they do not fully address the needs of the majority of Kenyan teachers who have very little input into the selection of the content organized by the various agents involved in in-service training programs (Nyarigoti, 2013). In-service training programs conducted between 2021-2023 has revealed that rarely have teachers been trained on skills and expertise of curriculum development as curriculum development is assumed to be the responsibility of the central curriculum developers, KICD.

Relevant in-service programs will equip teachers with curriculum development expertise necessary for developing the curriculum at school level. However, this has not been done as lack of adequate and relevant opportunities for in-service training has denied most of the practicing teachers the chance to enhance their knowledge beyond that acquired during the pre-service training. All professions require a continuous update of knowledge and skills. The teaching profession is no exception. The current situation therefore calls for a collaborative development of a comprehensive in-service training programme, with relevant training needs, to empower teachers to contribute to

the curriculum development process. While teacher professional development programs have been undertaken to build capacity of teachers, little training has been done in relation to teacher expertise in curriculum development matters.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess expertise for teacher participation in English curriculum development. The study was guided by two objectives:

1. Establish teachers' knowledge of curriculum development
2. Determine teachers' skills for curriculum development

The theoretical framework for this study was anchored on Taba's (1962) theory of curriculum development. In this theory, Taba (1962) places teachers at the centre of the curriculum development process for two reasons: one is that teachers are aware of learners' needs and thus better placed to identify needs of the learners for whom the curriculum is to be planned. Secondly, that teachers are the people who will use the curriculum thus should practice developing the curriculum from the level of the school. For effective participation of teachers in the curriculum development process, teacher expertise has to be considered as a pre-requisite.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on teacher expertise was reviewed in two areas: teachers' knowledge of curriculum and teachers' skills of curriculum development. Appropriate and specific teacher training at both pre-service and in-service remain the best way of equipping teachers with knowledge and skills for participation in the curriculum development process.

2.1 Knowledge for teacher participation in curriculum development

Mohd (2014) in a study on the need for in-service training for teachers and its effectiveness in schools asserts that in-service training plays an essential role in successful education reforms. The training serves as a bridge between prospective and experienced educators to meet the new challenges of guiding students towards higher standards of learning and achievement. Training also makes student teachers acquire specific knowledge which empowers them to have capacity to participate in curriculum decisions (Baraka & Ndiku, 2014).

According to Kyahurwa (2013), changes in education with regard to curriculum at all levels require teachers to expand their level of knowledge. Okoth (2016) in her study on challenges of implementing a top-down curriculum innovation in English Language teaching identified inappropriate in-service training and inadequate teacher professional development as factors that affected curriculum development efforts in Kenya. The study recommended involvement of teachers in development of curriculum innovations and frequent continuous teacher professional development programs. This is supported by Alsubaie (2016) who recommends that since teachers have to be involved in curriculum development, the teacher should be provided with appropriate knowledge and skills that will help them effectively contribute to curriculum design and development.

Although it has been established that continuous training and staff development are necessary if teachers are to participate effectively in curriculum development, relevant training needs that are responsive to current curriculum requirements have to be established prior to the training programmes (Kirui, 2015). For successful curriculum development in schools, the intention of current in-service training programmes on the education system has to be clearly identified so as to reflect curriculum development needs. Huizinga (2009) states that subject matter knowledge should be accurate, relevant and up to date. In addition, regular follow-up activities need to be outlined in order to support the skills acquired to sustain the practical aspects of the strategies solicited by the trainings (Ramatlapanana, 2009).

2.2 Skills for teacher participation in curriculum development

For a country to benefit from the teachers' influence in curriculum development, it should also invest in development of teacher expertise on curriculum development (Gichohi, 2015). In Kenya, the directorate of quality assurance in the Ministry of Education is responsible for initiating appropriate in-service programs to make up for the shortcomings detected in teachers during training. However, these programs have been criticized since they do not fully address the needs of the majority of Kenyan teachers who have very little input into the selection of the content organized by the various agents involved in in-service training programs (Nyarigoti, 2013). For instance, Gathumbi et al., (2014) have pointed out shallow coverage of content as a major challenge facing in-service education programs, particularly those that use the cascade model. Cascade model involves training of few teachers at higher levels who in turn train others at lower levels up to the school level.

Alsubaie (2016) recommends that since teachers have to be involved in curriculum development, the teacher should be provided with appropriate skills that will help them effectively contribute to curriculum design and development. For a country to benefit from the teachers' influence in curriculum development, it should also invest in development of teacher expertise on curriculum development (Gichohi, 2015). Therefore, in order to effectively participate in the curriculum development process, teachers need specific workshops or training sessions to foster subject matter knowledge as well as expertise in curriculum development (Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012). This study focused on teacher expertise in curriculum development in order to establish whether teachers had adequate expertise for curriculum development. This calls for KICD as central curriculum developers to widen the scope of its curriculum expertise recruitments and include strategies to involve many teachers in acquiring curriculum development expertise.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The study employed descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey design is a type of qualitative approach that focuses on the natural setting and seeks to gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivation of human behaviour towards an issue (Goddard & Melville, 2004). This study sought to assess teachers' views of the English curriculum therefore used qualitative approach.

3.2 Population Size

The study population consisted of 412 teachers of English in secondary schools. These are teachers who had been trained and qualified to teach English in secondary schools. School Principals, the CQASO and chairperson of KICD English subject panel were also involved..

3.3 Sample size and Sampling technique

Teachers of English who had taught for more than four years were purposively chosen since they were knowledgeable and experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Purposive sampling also allows the researcher to focus on specific areas of information and gather in-depth data on the topic of study. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers of English for the study. Actual sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula which yielded a sample of 180 teachers of English, 57 Principals, the CQASO and the chairperson of KICD English subject panel for the study.

3.4 Research instruments

The study employed questionnaire for teachers of English as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of Likert type statements and open ended questions to probe respondents to give reasons and suggestions for ensuring relevance of the curriculum. Interviews were conducted for Principals, QASO and chairperson of KICD English subject panel.

3.5 Data collection procedure

The researcher first developed a proposal under the guidance of supervisors. After approval by School of Graduate Studies, the researcher sought clearance from the Maseno University Ethics and Review Committee, before proceeding to NACOSTI for the research permit. Upon receiving the permit, the researcher proceeded to sampled schools and sought permission from the Principals who gave access to the teachers of English. Arrangements were made on the time and date of data collection using questionnaires to avoid disrupting lessons. On the agreed dates, the researcher visited each sampled school, talked to the teachers sampled to explain the ethics, nature and purpose of the research in order to gain informed consent to fill in the questionnaire. Once consent forms had been signed, the researcher proceeded to actual data collection. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and collected as soon as they were filled in. The researcher then booked appointments with respective Principals of the sampled schools to conduct interviews on scheduled dates. Thereafter, the interview for CQASO and chairperson of KICD English subject panel was done.

3.6 Validity of the research instruments

Validity was determined by experts in the Department of Educational Communication, Technology and Curriculum Studies of Maseno University who studied the questionnaire items and provided feedback that was incorporated in the final instruments before the actual study.

3.7 Reliability of the research instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency and replicability of instruments over time and over groups of respondents (Cohen, Manion & Morrison., 2018). To achieve this, the study adopted Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency. A pilot survey was carried out in five schools. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .7589 was obtained from the questionnaires indicating an acceptable level of reliability.

3.8 Data analysis

Bogdan and Bicklen (2007) explain data analysis as a process of making sense out of collected materials by systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials accumulated to enable the researcher come up with findings. Responses from the questionnaire Likert scale were scored and the subject total score on each scale of the questionnaire computed by generating descriptive statistics. In addition, all responses to open-ended questionnaire items were arranged by identifying words and phrases that helped generate preliminary coding categories that were used for analysis. Data from the interviews was analysed qualitatively. The data was first transcribed and themes identified. This data was then categorized and reported according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged. Deductions from the qualitative data was made using descriptive statistics and interpretations made in relation to the objectives of the study.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Teachers' knowledge of curriculum development.

Knowledge of curriculum is acquired by teachers during the pre-service training period. To ascertain this, the study gathered data on the level of academic qualification of the teachers. This was aimed at establishing education levels of the teachers of English in secondary schools. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' academic qualification

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	33	18.3
Degree (B.E.D. or Arts)	129	71.7
Masters	18	10.0
Total	180	100.0

Source: (Field data, 2023)

The results in Table 1 indicate that 33 (18.3%) of the teachers were diploma holders, 129 (71.7%) of the teachers were Bachelor's degree holders either education or arts degree, while 18 (10.0%) were Master's Degree holders. This implies that all teachers were professionally trained and qualified and therefore were well versed in content of English and basic knowledge of curriculum development as this is offered during pre-service training. This shows that teachers in secondary schools were qualified to participate in curriculum development.

The study also sought to establish knowledge required for teachers to participate in curriculum development at school. A five-point Likert scale was used to extract answers from the respondents as shown in Table 2 using the scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Somewhat Agree (SW), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) on a rating scale of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement in the following areas of knowledge which was further broken and its results presented and discussed below.

Table 2: Teachers' knowledge of curriculum development

Teachers have knowledge of:	SA	A	SW	D	SD	Mean	Std
Objectives of English curriculum	115 (63.9)	65 (36.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.64	0.483
Updated subject matter	98 (54.4)	82 (45.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.54	0.499
Methods of teaching	115 (63.9)	48 (26.7)	17 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.54	0.499
Assessment methods	48 (26.7)	98 (54.4)	34 (18.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.08	0.663
Curriculum evaluation	115 (63.9)	65 (36.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.64	0.672
Curriculum development process	48 (26.7)	115 (63.9)	17 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.17	0.677
Curriculum development designs	65 (36.1)	50 (27.8)	48 (26.7)	17 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	3.91	1.001
Composite Mean and Std						4.36	0.642

These results in Table 2 show that teachers of English have knowledge of objectives of the English curriculum and knowledge of curriculum evaluation had the highest means of 4.64 each. Teachers also had sufficient knowledge of subject matter (M=4.54) and knowledge of methods of teaching (M=4.54) that could enable them participate in curriculum development. However, whereas teachers had knowledge of the curriculum development process (M=4.17), there were disparities in teachers knowledge of curriculum development designs. The low mean in views of curriculum development designs was an indication of a gap in teachers' knowledge of curriculum designs which the MOE could take note of and invite KICD to sensitize teachers during capacity building workshops for teachers. This was the reason in-service programs should be tailored towards teachers' knowledge of curriculum development process and designs. Such a strategy would ensure teachers understand the curriculum development designs for their effective participation in the curriculum development process. According to Kyahurwa (2013), changes in education with regard to curriculum at all levels required teachers to expand the level of subject knowledge to facilitate their active participation.

The study also collected data aimed at establishing experience of teachers of English. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Teaching experience

	Frequency	Percent
4- 8 years	68	37.8
9-12 years	75	41.7
13-16 years	21	11.7
17+ years	16	8.9
Total	180	100.0

Source: (Field data, 2023)

Results in Table 3 show that 68 (37.8%) of the teachers had teaching experience of 4-8 years, 75 (41.7%) had teaching experience of 9-12 years, 21 (11.7%) had teaching experience of 13-16 years while 16 (8.9%) had teaching experience of 17 years and above. The high number of teachers with more than 9 years teaching experience shows that the teachers had a deep understanding of the curriculum and were able to participate in curriculum development.

4.2 Teachers' skills of curriculum development

The researcher also sought to find out the skills required for teachers to participate in curriculum development. A five-point Likert scale was used to extract answers from the respondents as shown in Table 4.4 using scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Somewhat Agree (SW), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) on a rating scale of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement about skills required for teachers to participate in curriculum development in the following areas of curriculum development. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Teachers' skills of curriculum development.

Teachers have skills to:	SA	A	SW	D	SD	Mean	Std
Formulate curriculum objectives	66 (36.7)	82 (45.6)	32 (17.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.18	0.715
Select materials for curriculum	49 (27.2)	82 (45.6)	49 (27.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.00	0.740
Develop curriculum	48 (26.7)	67 (37.2)	65 (36.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.91	0.789
Conduct formative and summative evaluation	82 (45.6)	65 (36.1)	16 (8.9)	17 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	4.18	0.663
Make curriculum decisions	32 (17.8)	99 (55.0)	32 (17.8)	17 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	3.81	0.838
Composite Mean and Std						4.02	0.789

The results in Table 4 show that teachers had skills in two areas of curriculum development: skills to formulate objectives (M=4.18) and skills to conduct formative and summative evaluation (M=4.18). This could be attributed to the fact that teachers conduct school based evaluation as a way of preparing students for national evaluation. However, teachers had inadequate skills to make curriculum decisions (M=3.81) and skills to develop curriculum (M=3.91). Even though curriculum development and evaluation are stages of the curriculum development process, KICD works closely with the evaluation body Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) to ensure quality assessment and evaluation is done. This is the reason teachers indicated having knowledge of curriculum evaluation. On the other hand, making final curriculum decisions is a responsibility of the central curriculum developers KICD. This does not mean teachers should not participate in making curriculum decisions. Teachers can make suggestions to KICD with regard to improving the objectives, curriculum materials or alternative assessment methods as a way of participating in curriculum development.

The researcher sought to establish whether teachers of English had participated in developing specific areas of the English curriculum at KICD. Findings indicated that none of the teachers sampled had participated in developing the identified areas of the English curriculum. When asked the reason for not participating, the respondents indicated that the opportunity to participate had not been available to them, as curriculum development was still centralized at KICD. The interview with chairperson of the English subject panel at KICD however, gave a contrary response to the teachers view. With regard to the procedure for teacher participation in curriculum development, the chairperson of KICD English panel said:

“Teachers are to write directly to the director to be minuted to the curriculum developers. Teachers can also use other KICD communication channels like Facebook, email and twitter. Teachers may not be participating as expected due to feigning ignorance. I am wondering why teachers are not utilizing the mechanisms to enable them participate in curriculum development. Maybe it could be due to lack of confidence in themselves, or they may not even be aware they can go an extra mile.”

This response shows that there could be lack of clear communication to teachers with regard to participation in curriculum development. The researcher probed the chairperson further to establish the criteria used for consideration to be a member of the KICD English subject panel. This is because teachers did not know the qualifications for being considered. The response given by the chairperson was:

“To be considered to participate, a teacher is required to apply on their own. Such a teacher should have established knowledge in the discipline, conversant with English, someone who can interrogate curriculum issues, and one who has had extra ordinary contribution to education in Kenya. Some of the participants have been identified when in the field and they have ended up enriching the panel.”

This clarification confirms that teachers in schools may not be aware of how to participate in curriculum development. Lack of this critical information to teachers may be the reason why teacher participation in curriculum development is low. KICD should therefore seize the opportunity to sensitize teachers so as to motivate teachers who are interested to participate in curriculum development in specific subjects.

Apart from this requirement, the chairperson also clarified that there were other considerations which either made a selected teacher to remain with the panel or failed to be invited again. Thus, it was important that any teacher interested in participating in curriculum development was required to be highly competent in the area he wished to participate in alongside showing commitment and determination towards curriculum development. The chairperson further explained:

“Depends on what a person has to offer to curriculum and education system and is highly competent in the area he wants to participate in, the reason why some are never invited a second time. Other panel dynamics like team work, commitment and determination also count.”

Respondents were asked whether they had attended any in-service training on curriculum development in the last five years. 91% indicated they had not attended any in-service on curriculum development in the last five years while the few who had attended were represented by only 9% of the teachers. The CQASO confirmed this by indicating that the last time the county conducted a capacity building for teachers of English was in 2021. When asked the criteria used to select subjects that required capacity building, the CQASO indicated that he identifies subjects with dismal performance or subjects that had dropped sharply or been tailing for a long time. In this study, performance of English was dismal and teachers needed a lot of in-service training aimed at improving the performance. The mean performance in the English KCSE examination had not recorded an average mean of 6.00 points and above.

These interview responses confirm that knowledge of curriculum is key to teacher participation in curriculum development, and that the skills displayed by a participant determined the length of stay on the curriculum development panel. This emphasized that knowledge and skills of curriculum development were an important consideration for being selected to participate in curriculum development.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS ON POLICY, PRACTICE AND THEORY

5.1 Conclusions

This study purposed to assess teacher expertise for participation in curriculum development. Knowledge of curriculum development and skills of curriculum development were assessed. On knowledge, findings revealed that teachers had inadequate knowledge of curriculum development designs, curriculum development process and assessment methods. Only 9% of the teachers sampled had attended in-service training on curriculum development and none of the teachers in the study was a member of the English subject panel at KICD. The results of this study faulted the in-service trainings for being biased in selecting topics for training that did not address current needs on curriculum development. With regard to skills of curriculum development, the study established that teachers had inadequate skills to develop curriculum, make curriculum decisions and select materials for curriculum. The inadequacies indicated that teachers had not been involved in the curriculum development process thus the need for in-service training that would equip teachers with adequate knowledge and skills for participation in curriculum development.

5.2 Implications on Policy, Practice and Theory

This study was based on Taba's (1962) theory of curriculum development. In this theory, teachers are central to the process of curriculum development for two reasons: that teachers are aware of learners' needs and thus better placed to identify needs of the learners for whom the curriculum is to be planned, that teachers are users of the curriculum thus should practice developing the curriculum. This study recognizes that knowledge and skills of curriculum are central for teacher participation in the curriculum development process. In view of this, the MOE and KICD should conduct appropriate in-service programs that address teacher expertise in curriculum development. Further, MOE should put emphasis on the policy on education and training, so as to equip teachers with adequate knowledge and skills for curriculum development. This will enable teachers acquire expertise for participation in the curriculum development process.

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