

## They seem to be Left Out: The Curriculum Development Process in Mansa District

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**Abstract:** This study sought to interrogate the teacher involvement in the curriculum development process in secondary schools of Mansa urban of Luapula province and focusing much on their knowledge and importance of teacher involvement in the curriculum development process. For curriculum development to be effective and schools to be successful, teachers must be involved in the development process. Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) is the main institution placed with the responsibility of developing a curriculum. The mixed methods approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data with the qualitative approach dominating the study. Questionnaires were used on Secondary school teachers to collect data; the interview guides were also used on the Secondary school head teachers and the document analysis was used on the curriculum specialists to collect the data needed for the study. The study utilized descriptive research design.

The study findings concluded that teachers were very much aware of their importance in the curriculum development process. The study recommended that Curriculum developers must consider teachers in curriculum development process as a crucial thing for a well-balanced and flexible curriculum. And this can only be seen by effectively and highly involving them in the process at all stages of the development and not only at the implementation stage.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum development refers to the preparation of an educational plan, program, or document to be implemented in schools. It involves the selection and organization of content and learning experiences, development of curriculum packages, guides, and basic resources, identification of evaluation criteria, trial out of materials in sample schools and review of the tried-out materials ready for implementation. Tyler (2013:16) argued that the curriculum development is “a technical production procedure”. Stenhouse (2012) defines curriculum development as a process that is socially constructed. Taba argued, in curriculum development: theory and practice (1962), that there is a definite order of creating a curriculum and teachers should participate in curriculum development. Hence, with this, the curriculum development team must consider the teacher as part of the environment that affects the curriculum.

To develop the curriculum is a dynamic process involving different procedures hence, it can be challenging, therefore, the involvement of all stakeholders like teachers is important. Their involvement in the curriculum development process is important for successful and meaningful curriculum development. The teacher is not just a receiver of the curriculum but a modifier and transmitter of it and they are the most important factors in the curriculum building. Hence, with this, the curriculum development team must consider the teacher as part of the environment that affects the curriculum. A teacher should participate in the curriculum from the beginning to the end of the curriculum development process. But is this the case?

In Zambia, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), is an academic Centre, under the Ministry of Education, which is established with an aim to develop curricula, textbooks along with other instructional materials for school education to achieve the national goals of education. Are teachers incorporated in the development of the curriculum? Is teacher importance seen in the curriculum development process at all stages?

### 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ramparsad, in Alsubaie (2019: 106) mentioned that “the approach of participation in the process is not well defined and very difficult on teachers, so they face many challenges regarding their involvement in the curriculum development process. Designing a curriculum is not only for the expertise of

curriculum specialists but also the full input of various stakeholders such as teachers. Their engagement and importance in the curriculum must be seen and felt in the process. Tebogo Mogashoa (1982) in South Africa, wrote on teacher involvement specifically looking at ways in which teachers could be equipped with knowledge they need to ensure successful curriculum development of history education.

Mwanza (2017) in Zambia, also wrote on how teachers perceive their involvement and their roles they would play in the Curriculum development process and Kirk and McDonald (2001) in Australia, also wrote that teachers were actively involved in the curriculum development processes and were involved in the planning and production of new syllabuses and curriculum guides at all stages. With such studies, it clearly appears that there has been less if not, none of a study undertaken on the knowledge and importance of teacher involvement in the development of the curriculum in Zambia. Therefore, this study intends to establish their knowledge and importance of teacher involvement in the Curriculum development process in Secondary schools of Mansa district.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the idea behind the curriculum development theory of how a teacher should be involved in the curriculum development process. This theory is that of Taba (1962), the Grassroot approach curriculum model theory that says, teachers should participate in developing a curriculum, they should take up the role in developing it and it being that they are aware of the learners' needs hence their involvement and that that they not only to teach and implement the developed curriculum, no, but should participate in developing it, they should have a major input, they are crucial to the development of the curriculum. Teachers play a prominent role in developing a curriculum.

Taba argued, in curriculum development: theory and practice (1962), that there is a definite order of creating curriculum and teachers should participate in curriculum development; this is called as grass-root approach, teachers are the most important factor in the curriculum building. No curriculum will be perfect, or a finished product cast a stone, to be effective, it must be accepted by the teachers who are the end users of it and hence with this, they must be highly recognized to be important factors in the curriculum development process.

Handler (2010) also concluded that there is a need for teacher involvement in the development of the curriculum. Teachers can contribute by collaboratively and effectively work with curriculum development teams and specialist in the development of the curriculum in such a way that they can arrange and compose the learning and teaching materials such as textbooks and the content, for they align content of curriculum with the learners needs in the classroom. A teacher should participate in the curriculum from the beginning to the end.

Fullan (1991) found that the level of teacher involvement as a center of curriculum development leads to effective achievement of educational reform. Therefore, the teacher is an important factor in the success of curriculum development including the steps of implication and evaluation. It is therefore, on this basis that this study will be guided by the said theory by looking at the secondary school teachers being the direct implementers of the secondary school curriculum and should be regarded important in the formulation team of the curriculum development process.

### 4. RELATED LITERATURE

#### 4.1. Understanding the concept of Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development Process

Curriculum development is an on-going process which involves different stakeholders such as parents, learners, curriculum specialists, policy- makers, teachers, the society, and academic institutions. The involvement of all these stakeholders is essential for the success of any curriculum. The curriculum development process is usually carried out by educators in committees working together. Experiences and perspectives of teachers should be considered in the development of the curriculum (Doll, 1996; McNeil, 2002). Since the curriculum is implemented by teachers, it is reasonable to benefit from their classroom experiences (Marsh & Willis, 2003). In this respect, the effective participation of teachers in the curriculum development process is of crucial importance for the success of educational reform efforts (Fullan, 2001).

The most basic group in the curriculum development process is teachers. That is why teachers should be involved in every step of the curriculum development process. According to Oliva (2008: 128), who has a broad perspective on the role of teachers in the curriculum development process states that

“teachers work in curriculum boards to initiate recommendations, collect data, do research, connect with parents and other stakeholders, write and create educational curriculum materials, receive feedback, and evaluate the curriculum.”

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2012:21), the teacher sees “the curriculum as a whole and serves as a resource and agent: developing the curriculum in committees, implementing it in classrooms, and evaluating it as part of a technical team. As a result, while the field experts had a great deal of influence on the curriculum development process in the past, the role and prominence of the teacher in curriculum development has increased steadily (Oliver, 1977).

#### **4.2. Preparation for Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development**

Knowing that teachers must be involved in curriculum development process, they should be provided with appropriate knowledge and skills that would help them to effectively contribute to curriculum development operation. With this, teachers would need training and workshops that would make be geared towards professional development and be able to contribute to curriculum development. Teachers have a significant role that cannot be ignored during the curriculum development process.

Teachers can incorporate innovative solutions for schools in the curriculum to improve the quality of overall education process. (Oliva, 2008). Getting to prepare a teacher to get involved in the process is important for successful and meaningful for a better curriculum. Therefore, to create a strong curriculum, they must be involved in every step of the curriculum development process. (Messick & Reynolds, 1991). In other words, teachers, by understanding the psychology of their students, are aware about the most suitable teaching methods, learning environments, and assessment techniques in the classroom (Jadhav & Patankar, 2013).

### **5. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a mixed method approach where the researchers mixed or combined qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study, however, the qualitative approach dominated in the study. The mixed methods approach was used in this study because it enriched the data collected and it enabled triangulation to take place hence, increasing the validity of the study.

The researchers collected both numeric data and text data in a sequence and choose variables and units of analysis which were the most appropriate for addressing the study’s purpose and finding answers to research questions. Qualitative approach was applied in this study because the study was exploratory in nature. The researchers collected descriptive or explanatory data using interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, for the respondents gave rich and valuable information for the research.

#### **5.1. Data Collection**

The study employed more than one method to collect data because triangulating of methods increases validity and reliability of the data collected. Hence, the researchers therefore used questionnaires, interviews (one to one) and document analysis (related literature) as methods to collect data to be used in the research.

Questionnaires, document analysis and interview schedules were the main research instruments used in this study. The researchers used semi- structured, both open and closed ended questionnaires because by using both approaches, the researchers got a complete and detailed understanding of the issue under research. Questionnaires were used on all the teachers in the selected urban secondary schools of Mansa district to get their views on their importance in the curriculum development process.

The interview schedule was used to all head teachers of the sampled urban Secondary schools, the researchers used such instrument on them because they had rich data pertaining to the study on teacher importance in curriculum development in Zambia and knowing that they had been in the education system for some time now, hence they would bring out valid data needed for the study. The interview schedule questions were general and broad but were based on the study at hand.

Document analysis was used on the Curriculum specialist from Curriculum Development Center (CDC). This instrument facilitated the collection of a large amount of reliable information on teacher importance in curriculum development process. Knowing that this Curriculum specialist came from

CDC, the researchers felt that the Specialist was in possession of having relevant, rich, and wealthy literature of information.

## 5.2. Data Analysis

Data was qualitatively and quantitatively gathered. It was analyzed by using a mixed method design. A qualitative approach was used because the researchers interpreted the analyzed data from what was seen, read, and heard on teacher importance in curriculum development process and all the data was summed up thematically. On the other hand, the percentages on teachers' awareness on their importance to be involved in the process of developing a curriculum was analyzed using the quantitative data approach.

## 6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 6.1. Teachers' views on the involvement in curriculum development process.

The researchers noted through this study that majority of the teachers were adequately aware on whether they were important stake holders to be involved in the curriculum development process. However, some showed ignorance to whether they are important stakeholders in the curriculum development process.

With the findings, the figure 1 showed that 97.67% respondents showed much awareness of their importance to be involved in curriculum development process. A very minimal percentage of 2.32% showed ignorance to the awareness of their importance of being involved because they have never been involved in the process ever since they joined the teaching service in the Ministry.

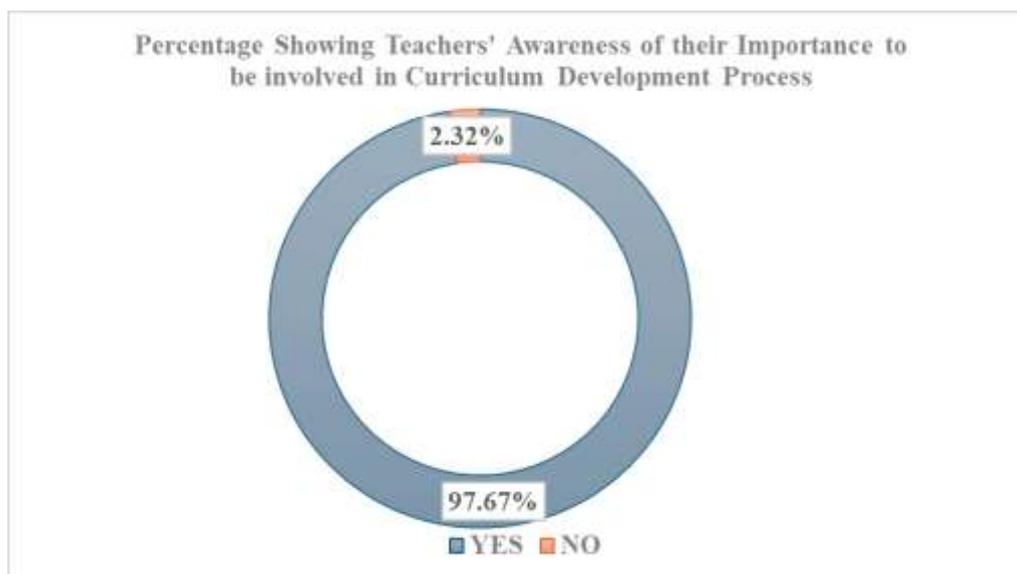


Figure 1

### 6.2. Teachers' views on their importance in the development of the curriculum.

The study revealed reasons as to why they think they are important stakeholders in the designing of the curriculum, and that they are not to be left out in any way or another when such times comes by. The percentage 97.67% of teachers were in line with what one teacher indicated: *"We are important in the process of developing a curriculum because we strive to incorporate our knowledge of effective teaching practices and teaching and learning approaches to design meaningful learning experiences. During the process we teachers can make amendments to the curriculum being reviewed or designed curriculum, and this would enhance its effectiveness. Our other importance in the curriculum development process is to ensure that the curriculum is well designed to meet the unique requirements of our learners and bring out excellent learning outcomes."*

Whilst 2.32% was supported by what one teacher attested that: *"Sometimes the curriculum developers think we the teachers are less important in the developing of the curriculum especially at the initial stage were mostly no consultation from teachers is done but we are only considered important at the implementation stage. So, if we are left out at the initial stage where our great input is needed, then it is as good as not considered important."*

### 6.3. Views of Secondary School Headteachers on Teacher importance in curriculum development process

*The headteacher A explained that " Teachers are important to be involved in the curriculum development process because they help build lessons that would include lifetime experiences, dramas, poems, and activities for an exciting learning environment because these teaching methodologies help a learner participate fully during the teaching and learning process and this help learners connect the content in the curriculum to their experiences. Teachers know the needs of their learners better than others involved in curriculum process because of their daily interaction with the learners. Hence, their involvement in curriculum development process is important."*

*A headteacher C retorted that "The teacher is an important person in the curriculum because of their knowledge, experiences, and competencies they portray as they interact with the curriculum in a classroom and with this, they would surely design an effective curriculum for use. So, teachers should be involved in curriculum development. For example, their views and ideas should be incorporated into the curriculum for development hence making the curriculum designed flexible for the learners to consume. The curriculum development team must consider that the teacher comes from the society that affects the curriculum hence, teacher involvement is important for successful and meaningful curriculum development. Teachers must be seen to be important at every stage of the curriculum and not only at the implementing stage till to the last stage of the curriculum development process."*

### 6.4. Views of the Curriculum Specialist on Teacher importance in curriculum development process

On the other hand, the curriculum specialist provided the literature from the document analysis that revealed the 2013 Zambian Curriculum (page 59) and the 2023 National Curriculum framework (page 40) both outlined the importance of involving teachers in the curriculum development process. These documents outlined that: *"Sharing new teaching methodologies in the teaching and learning process; conducting research on specific subjects with a view to generating new knowledge in the area; evaluating the curriculum content in terms of its relevance to the societal needs; suggesting means and ways of teaching specific subjects and contribute by determining the best type of evaluation procedures to employ in assessment of learner performance in different subject areas. And influencing effective implantation of the curriculum at different levels."*

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study provided an overview picture that the Secondary school teachers themselves felt that they should be given an opportunity to get involved in the process at all stages of curriculum development and not only at the implementation stage because they know how important they are during and after the process. Teacher importance in curriculum development is what will drive curriculum experts to always consider a teacher to have an important space in the development of the curriculum. So, curriculum experts should always recognize the importance of having a teacher to participate in curriculum development process.

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Nalondwa Fridah Monga is an upcoming scholar who is entirely interested in developing her research skills in the field of Education and Curriculum Studies. She is currently serving in the Ministry of Education; she started as a Secondary School Teacher at Don Bosco Secondary School in Mansa District of the Luapula Province-Zambia and now she's Head of department in the Social Sciences department at Fibale Secondary School right in Mansa District. Her interest and passion of study lies in the study of Curriculum as well as in the well-being of a learner in the school.

Nalondwa Fridah Monga earned her master's degree in Curriculum Studies from Mulungushi University and a Bachelor of Arts with Education from Kwame Nkrumah University in Kabwe- Zambia. Her aim is to leave a remarkable contribution to the world of Education.

In her journey of acquiring more knowledge in the field of research, she has worked so closely with Professor Martin Banda, PhD and Doctor Rachel Kabeta, DR. The collaboration with such scholars in the related fields of studies has indeed yield into positive educational feedback that has greatly contributed to her journey of the quest of knowledge in the field of Education.

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Professor Martin Banda, PhD, is a distinguished scholar in the field of Education and Curriculum Studies, currently serving as a Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Edenberg. His academic journey is rooted in a deep commitment to understanding the intersections of education, society, and curriculum development.

Professor Banda earned his PhD and MA:Ed in Sociology of Education from the University of Zambia, complemented by a Bachelor of Arts with Education from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. His educational background underscores his comprehensive grasp of educational theory and practice, preparing him to make significant contributions to the field.

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