

Challenges of Curriculum Implementation in Junior Secondary Schools (A Case Study of Four Selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District)

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Abstract

Since the inception of Western Education in Sierra Leone, frantic efforts have been made to formulate policies in order to improve the quality of education. It has been acknowledged by various educationists that curriculum implementation is instrumental in improving the quality of education in any society. Therefore, it is seen as an approach which improves students' academic achievements, equipping graduates with sufficient knowledge and skills for them to survive academically and socially in this modern world.

On that note, the development of school curriculum is very significant in the life of a nation. The National School Curriculum as a program of learning is supposed to be a highly

sensitive document as it contains the aspiration of the nation, preparing its citizens to face future challenges. It is supposed to be a document of hope.

Notwithstanding the wide recognition and acceptance accorded the roles of curriculum as a career of national philosophy in Sierra Leonean Educational system, there seems to be challenges in the implementation of this important blue print. This could not be disassociated with inadequate trained and qualified teachers in the field/classroom; community/volunteer teachers unpaid; ill-trained and sometimes confused graduates and inadequate Teaching Learning Materials; lack of guidelines for the implementation of curriculum and the complexity of managing the curriculum coupled with inadequate training regarding curriculum implementation. Capacitation of teachers is essential in the successful implementation of any curriculum as they are the main role-players in promoting quality education. This and other related problems should be a cause for concern.

By and large, the researcher is optimistic that although people are different and despite the negativity and inadequacies surrounding the curriculum, there is hope that with time and effort and given the total commitment of all stakeholders to implement the curriculum, success can be attained. Especially with the President's (Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio's) New Direction Agenda on education in Sierra Leone. Therefore, it can be concluded that the aim of the study and primary research questions which were explored, namely the Challenges towards Curriculum Implementation in Four Selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District, were adequately addressed and answered.

Introduction

Various scholars have viewed curriculum as follows; Nichols, Shidaker, Johnson, & Singer (2006), that Curriculum is an area of education that is characterized by a lack of agreement about its definition and nature; Wortham (2006), that Curriculum is a planned set of course that is presented to teachers to arrange teaching and learning in certain level of ages; Nation & Macalister (2010) defined Curriculum as a guidance in designing courses that consist of outer circle namely Principles, Environment and needs that involve practical and theoretical considerations that will have a major effect in guiding the actual process of course production. Inner circle that consists of goals and its centre, contents and sequences, format and presentation, monitoring and assessment; Cattington (2010), curriculum (or curriculum standards) to refer to the standards, benchmarks, and outcomes that delineate the content to be taught and learned in science classrooms.

According to Lake and Winterbottom in Kattington (2010), Curriculum is a set of rule that benefits students by providing them with practice in both content and social curriculum through the use of active learning, exploration of interests, civic responsibility, character building, and recognizing and helping the community.

According to Bao, Dat (no year) in Tomlinson (2008 Ed) ‘curriculum requires too much to be accomplished within a unit and that the students want a more manageable and realistic learning goal. The process of putting the curriculum into work for the achievement of educational goals for which the curriculum is designed; the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice’. Hence in a nutshell, curriculum implementation can be seen as the translation of “theory into practice”.

Subsequently, the concept of curriculum implementation can be seen as the actual engagement of learners with planned learning opportunities. Furthermore, the word implementation connotes operationalization of a well-articulated and well intentioned ideas packed as theory. Hence, it is the actual carrying out of societal culture and government spelt expectation put in the curriculum.

In consonant with the above, some curriculum proposals or conceived curriculum may remain virtually inert in the sense that they may not be functional. Of course, a curriculum may be beautifully planned but will be of no relevance if it is not effectively implemented. This is so because, no matter how well developed a curriculum may be, if it is not effectively implemented, achievement of educational goals would be impossible. This is so because; the challenges of most programs arise at the implementation stage. Acknowledging this, it is at the implementation level that many well planned curriculum and other educational policies are marred. Hence, objective of any level of education cannot be achieved if the planned programme for that level of education is not well implemented.

Consequently, the school is like a manufacturing organization where plants and machinery or equipment must be assembled and in a top operational shape to produce the intended result. In spite of the historical trends in Sierra Leonean curriculum and reviews at various times, implementation practices are faced with challenges. For instance, teachers' inability to apply Information Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching school subjects is one of those challenges militating against effective implementation of the curriculum. Most teachers do not know how to operate a computer not to talk of teaching it in the teaching and learning process. Some of them neither forecast nor plan their lessons for teaching. Observing the importance of curriculum implementation, the teacher serves as a pivot around which the

success of education revolves. It is important that they have wealth of knowledge on the above and be involved in the decision making and planning process of curriculum as no government policy on education can be realized if it does not first of all perceive the problems of and opportunities before initiating decision making process. In this regard, the challenges of curriculum implementation must be looked into for necessary and appropriate actions to be taken in order to improve the quality of secondary school education in Sierra Leone in general and Pujehun District particularly Kpanga chiefdom.

Description of Study Area

This study was conducted in Kpanga chiefdom where the targeted schools are located in Pujehun District, Southern Province; Sierra Leone. The study area comprises diversity of ethnic groups. These include Mende, Fullah, Temne and Limba. But Mende is the dominant ethnic group as 80% of the population speaks Mende. Pujehun District comprises fourteen (14) chiefdoms. Kpanga is divided into eight (8) sections.

Source:

1. A poverty profile for Sierra Leone, the World Bank and Statistic Sierra Leone, June 2013 (calculations based on Sierra Leone integrated household survey 2011).
2. Projected population figures for 2014 from the Republic of Sierra Leone Population and housing census, Statistics Sierra Leone.

Targeted schools in the chiefdom include Holy Rosary Junior Secondary School and St. Paul's Junior Secondary School situated in Pujehun Town, being the Head quarter town of the district; Sierra Leone Youth Muslim Movement Junior Secondary School situated at Gbondapi

and National Islamic Mission Junior Secondary School situated at Dandabu Bakoi. Agriculture and trading are the dominant economic activities in the study areas.

Sample Selection:

Four Junior Secondary schools were selected from Kpanga chiefdom in the Pujehun District. In effect, forty four (44) questionnaires were administered to administrators and teachers; four (4) to administrators (principals) and forty (40) to teachers giving a sample total of forty four (44) participants or interviewees. The four schools were,

1. Holy Rosary Junior Secondary School
2. St. Paul's Junior Secondary School
3. National Islamic Mission Junior Secondary School
4. Youth Muslim Movement Junior Secondary School.

Forty teachers, ten from each school were purposefully selected to participate in this study.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To determine administrators' and teachers' perceived knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation in the selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District.
2. To outline the causes mitigating against curriculum implementation in the selected Junior and senior secondary schools in Kpanga chiefdom - Pujehun District
3. To establish possible solutions to the challenges mitigating against implementation of curriculum in the selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom in Pujehun District.

Main Research Questions

1. What are the administrators perceived knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation?
2. What are the teachers perceived knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation?
3. What are the causes militating against curriculum implementation in the selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom in Pujehun District?
4. What are solutions to the challenges faced in curriculum implementation in the selected Junior Secondary schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District?

Significance of the Study.

1. The significance of this study shall be broadly expected to have both theoretical and practical influence on all stake holders of education that shall have access to the final product of this study.
2. Theoretically, the results would confirm whether teachers are knowledgeable and conscious of the problems militating against curriculum implementation.
3. It shall further help to solicit the challenges faced in curriculum implementation.
4. Practically, the outcomes of this study shall be useful to the District Education Office, administrators, teachers and school counselors as they would make appreciable recommendations in executing daily educational activities that will gear towards successful curriculum implementation to ensure quality education.
5. *Furthermore, findings and recommendations shall be useful to researchers, policy makers especially the Inspectorate/Quality Assurance Division in the Ministry of Basic*

and Senior Secondary Education (MBSS), government and other agencies interested in education.

6. The information generated from the study will help add value to the lives of children by making frantic efforts to formulate policies in order to improve on the learning activities for learners.

Rationale/Justification of Study

This research work would be important as it brings about awareness and knowledge of proper curriculum implementation process in the education system. It will help to strengthen the capacity of the District Education Office, administrators, teachers and education policy makers to improve learners' educational achievement through proper implementation of the curriculum as curriculum implementation is instrumental in improving the quality of education in any society.

Research Instrument

For this study, a qualitative research design was adopted. Structured and unstructured interview questions that were divided into categories for subject teachers and Administrators were administered to all the participants. All the participants responded to all the questions asked. The information attained through the responses of the interview questions is reflected in the abstract. Understanding of the challenges faced in curriculum implementation was obtained through the perception of the subject teachers and Administrators. Detailed discussions of the findings from these interviews are presented below. The findings are presented according to the aim and the research questions which guided the study. The information collected from personal interviews was studied, analysed and the findings are presented in the sections below. Findings from the interviews with Administrators and teachers are presented separately, where 'A' represents Administration and 'T' represents Teachers. In the process of this research, it was

understood that Administrators are also teachers, but because of the major different roles played by these teachers she deemed it necessary to separate the findings. Knowing the teaching experience of teachers was important in the study so that the researcher can understand the challenges that are experienced with curriculum implementation in the study area.

Research questions and generated themes for administrators and teachers.

Sir/madam, how long have you served as principal in this school?

What is your educational qualification?

Based on your knowledge over the years which I believe you must have been involved in implementing curriculum in this institution. Please tell me what you believe can be the problems you have encountered in implementing curriculum in this institution.

It is indicated that for curriculum to be implemented successfully, there are certain parameters to be adhered to. What do you think are these parameters?

Could you please elaborate on the issues you have highlighted?

It is stipulated that, for curriculum to be successfully implemented, administrators and teachers are supposed to be knowledgeable about the design, were you a party to the design?

Time is important in implementation. How much time have you allocated to the implementation of this curriculum?

Mr Principal Sir, do you think the teachers are knowledgeable enough to implement the curriculum?

How about other organizations?

For curriculum to be successfully implemented, there is need for financial support.

How much support have you been receiving and from what/which sources?

For curriculum to be successfully implemented there is need for materials and equipment support. Do you receive any support and from which sources?

Research Findings and Analysis

Research Generated Categories and Themes

Theme 1. Biographical information of the participants.

Theme 2. What are administrators knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation?

Theme 3: What are teachers knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation?

Theme 4: What are the causes of the problems militating against curriculum implementation?

Theme 5. What are the Challenges faced by teachers in curriculum implementation?

Theme 6. Roles of administrators in curriculum management.

Theme 7. Professional development for teachers.

Theme 8. Supports needed for effective curriculum implementation.

Theme 9: Solutions necessary for effective curriculum implementation

A discussion of the identified themes is presented below. Each is supported with direct quotes gathered from the interviews.

Theme 1. Biographical information of the participants

Biographical information of selected participants. Information which included qualifications and years of teaching experience.

Participants are adequately qualified with the combination of three years Bachelor of Education degree and Higher Teachers Certificate ‘‘Secondary’’ qualifications.

Their teaching experiences range between five to ten years. Three schools (Holy Rosary Junior Secondary School, St. Paul’s Junior Secondary School and National Islamic Mission Junior Secondary School) were qualified to have school administrators consisting of the

principal, vice principal and head of departments. The other, Youth Muslim Movement Junior Secondary School, does not qualify to have school administrators because of its size in terms of learner enrolment.

Forty teachers, ten from each school were purposefully selected to participate in this study. All of them have been teaching for the past five years. Notwithstanding, the administrator and teachers of Youth Muslim Movement Junior Secondary School participated in the study.

Theme 2 A1: Administrators perceived knowledge of problems in curriculum implementation

Administrators in targeted schools expressed that curriculum implementation is giving instruction in the classroom setting or the actual teaching and learning that happen in the classroom. Two administrators from targeted schools in Pujehun town viewed curriculum implementation as an engagement of learners with the curriculum and the planned learning opportunities. ‘‘It is the implementation of the content of the curriculum designed for teaching and learning’’. Administrators further stated that curriculum implementation is where the teacher deliberates on the curriculum documents, and adapts or translates them into classroom activities appropriate to the students. The two administrators outside of Pujehun town also said, ‘‘Curriculum implementation is where teachers link their understanding of the curriculum to their practice, transforming curriculum plan into instruction’’. Given the above, administrators and teachers clearly manifested their perceived knowledge of curriculum implementation. By and large, in the process of translating curriculum into effective classroom instruction, teachers have been found to consciously consider factors such as; teacher-administrator relationship, teacher-teacher relationship and teacher-learner relationship. In consonant of the above statement, Fortune S. B in her article opined thus; ‘‘equally important is the role that teachers play in the life of the institutions; the role of the teacher is crucial in the life of the school

because the success and failure of school depend upon the quality and strength of the staff. Whether or not pupils are successful learners depend largely upon the quality of the personal interaction between the pupils and their teachers. Also professional relationship between the teachers, put the teacher in better position to give guidance and specialized help to the child'. She further noted 'change that involves re-socialization and interaction between and among teachers is the primary basics for social learning. New methodologies, new meanings, new behaviour and new innovations depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals or exchanging ideas and extending support and positive feeling towards their work. Teachers therefore are urged to engage in more positive ways of thinking and doing. Thus the teacher has to be role model to his learners'.

Theme 3 – T1- Teachers perceived knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation

Teachers perceived that one of the problems in curriculum implementation is staff shortage which forces them to teach subjects that they are not competent to teach, others being inadequate financial motivation and poor learning facilities. As a result, there is problem as teachers state the above when asked to account for poor results in their subjects. From the responses indicated by the participants, it would seem trained and qualified teachers do not have the spirit to teach in district schools especially in villages. Therefore, schools in these areas appear to have more challenges, which relate to human, material and financial challenges that sometimes impact on delivery of effective teaching and learning. However, regardless of the availability of resources, all schools including those in rural areas that have limited resources are expected to have good results in specific skills, knowledge, attitudes and values by learners. The teachers have to teach at the same level with adequately-resourced schools in the urban settings.

Theme 4 – A2: Administrators response to Causes of the problems militating against curriculum implementation

According to administrators in Pujehun town (schools), the biggest challenge is leaving them (administrators and teachers) out of the curriculum planning process; Less effective training and workshops for administrators and teachers; lack of support from stake holders; demotivation and sometimes not well trained teachers and limited resources to meet school needs are just but a few challenges that were mentioned. All administrators of targeted schools mentioned that the biggest challenge is ensuring that teachers are involved in the planning process and motivated to implement the curriculum. They further indicated that there are issues of lack of resources, lack of information, too much administrative work and inadequate in-service training of teachers.

Consequently, administrators mentioned a number of challenges they face in implementing the curriculum, emphasizing inadequate training hence lack of knowledge, lack of resources, heavy workload and lack of teacher motivation. The challenges facing school principals in curriculum management may be easily stated, but they may not be easily eradicated. Resources like human, material and finances are important but are also scarce in most schools in Sierra Leone, especially those which are located in townships and rural areas. Honestly enough, they may never be enough. However, measures must be put in place to improve the situation if the curriculum has to be successfully implemented. The participants noted that the administrative workload is still too much. It is understandable that this may be putting school principals under pressure, hence affecting their performance, but managing a curriculum involves juggling many key tasks. Even though the ideal situation may be to reduce the workload for principals, it may take time to see that happen. Principals have to know that the future of their schools depends on

how well they strategize curriculum management challenges to keep with national requirements. Other challenges encountered specifically by both schools outside Pujehun related to shortage of teaching staff. Administrators of these two schools mentioned that there are vacant posts that are still yet to be advertised and filled. Though one of the schools is not qualified to have more teachers due to the number of learners enrolled.

Teachers in schools (township) and (village) are overloaded in this part of the country, having to teach more than one subject in different classes.

Even though administrators know the guidelines on the subject policy which states what to teach, understaffing makes it hard to demand too much from teachers as they “know” the situation at their schools. One administrator from targeted schools in Pujehun (township) explained as follows: “At times I feel guilty for pushing the teachers to the edge because I know the situation, but because there is work to be done, there is nothing I can do but to demand teachers to work effectively even under the situation. Ultimately you see yourself accepting what teachers managed to do. Some teachers, though, are abusing the staff shortage issue as a reason of underperformance all the time, it is a tough situation.”

The situation in the two schools makes the curriculum managers to be lenient as they are overloaded themselves and thus in a way “understand” the plight of teachers and accept what teachers are doing under the circumstances. According to targeted administrators, the teachers are trying hard to cover the work that is supposed to be done in each class.

Managing a subject that an administrator is not convenient with is another problem that was raised by all four administrators. This makes it difficult to properly manage and control that specific subject.

One administrator pointed out: “In some instances I just append my signature because I have no idea of what the subject deals with; so I do not know the specifics of the subject. I have teaching overload; so I just do not have time to attend workshops of all the subjects I supervise. This leads to me not doing justice to my work.”

Administrators in all four schools are full time classroom teachers. Each administrator teaches more than one subject in more than one class. One of the administrators lamented that,

“The workload that administrators have leaves little time for focusing on supervising teachers work”. They also stated that frequent absence from school as a result of management meetings that they have to attend affect the time they spend at school.

Theme 5 – T2 Challenges teachers face in curriculum implementation

Teachers indicated that they worked under terrible conditions, without the necessary resources for teaching and learning. “Some of us are not on payroll and the monthly stipend that we are given does not match the economic trend of the country. Above all, we are not given remote allowances. These conditions, however, cannot dissuade us from teaching because there is no alternative”. A teacher from a school outside Pujehun Township said:

“Though I am committed to teach, yet I don’t come to school on days that I don’t have money to feed my family. I am not always happy with the situation”.

According to the teacher, the situation in the school (village) is slightly different from that in Pujehun town.

Participants further indicated that even though there was shortage of resources, teachers improvised to ensure effective teaching even under the horrendous situations in which they worked. Unannounced visits that were made by school inspectors made teachers to always be up-to-date with school work so as to avoid confrontation with the inspectors. However, they agreed

that these visits at times were used for harassing teachers. According to the participants, completion of prescribed work was possible because teacher union activities, workshops and courses for teacher development were held mostly during holidays.

One teacher from (Village) commenting on curriculum implementation said:

During the interviews, it became apparent that teachers were willing to be monitored and supervised by the administrators for effective implementation of teaching and learning. The participants agreed that monitoring and supervision assist teachers in ensuring that they do not divert from the curriculum policy that they have to implement. Most importantly, they all have no problem with administrators for supervising and monitoring their work and the learners' work as a way of ensuring that curriculum is implemented as per subject policy guidelines. One teacher from targeted schools in Pujehun town articulated her eagerness to be supervised and said: "How supervision and monitoring is perceived by teachers is determined by the relationship that the administrator has with the teachers, the aim of the supervision should be clear and not be used to target certain individuals and be a fault finding mission".

Sharing the same view, another teacher in Pujehun (Township) states:

"At first I was one of the teachers who were sceptical about monitoring and supervision as in my opinion I thought that I am more qualified than the person who wants to supervise my work. I was difficult. But through communication in the subject committee meetings, I understood the rationale behind supervision, there are topics for example I do not like in my subjects, I do not know the second subject that I teach very well. If I was not monitored and supervised the learners will be suffering and go to the next class with an information gap."

Another teacher from the Pujehun (Township) school echoed the same sentiment:

“I am a friend of the principal in the school, but when my work has to be supervised and monitored, I receive no preferential treatment. This has helped me to grow in my work.”

Teachers from targeted schools outside of Pujehun (Village) raised an issue on allocation of subjects to teachers. When allocating subjects to teachers, the administrator should consider specialization of teachers. Another teacher from the same school (village) said:

“I am not personate about the subject I am teaching in this school. I have even decided to look for another school somewhere else where maybe I would be allocated the subject I am passionate about.” It is unarguably true that in cases where teachers do not have love and experience in the subject, it is difficult for them to recognize gaps or areas that might need attention. The result might be that teachers will not cover the scope of work that is prescribed for the year which will lead to poor performance in the subject.

Generally, teachers expressed a few concerns which must be attended to by the administrators to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum. Some of the concerns included, provision of resources for teaching and learning, sharing of departmental circulars on curriculum-related issues with teachers, in-house training and development. The lack of resources is a primary factor that hinders effective curriculum management and is widely experienced in targeted schools. Successful curriculum implementation requires resources such as material, human and financial resources as these determine how much can be done at any given time.

Theme 6: A3. Role of administrators in managing the curriculum.

During the interviews, three administrators indicated that it is important to know the curriculum and understand it in order to lead others. They reported that they make effort to study

the curriculum statement, attend all workshops, lead the planning process, conduct meetings every week and monitor progress with the Heads of Departments.

Sharing the same view, one administrator outside of Pujehun reported that they do planning for the term and year with teachers. They also arrange regular meetings with teachers. Through monitoring, teachers get to know what is expected of them, especially in terms of teaching and learning processes. They indicated that they are not involved in curriculum planning activities except for monitoring the progress of their teachers in the teaching/learning process. This can be annoying as knowledge of a process makes a difference.

A Principal in one of the targeted schools in Pujehun had this to say; “The roles and responsibilities of the principals are mainly focused on attending Professional Development workshops monitoring and supervising teachers to ensure that the curriculum is successfully implemented. This is done with the help of teachers who are responsible for what goes on in the classroom. The principal must ensure effective teaching and learning takes place by monitoring teachers’ performance. Getting information about the new developments in the curriculum and disseminating it to teachers is very important.”

From the responses it was clear that administrators from the four cases viewed their roles as curriculum managers who carry the responsibility to improve academic performance in serious light. All the four principals theoretically seem to know their role and responsibility in managing the curriculum in their schools. These findings concur as it affirmed that effective curriculum implementation becomes possible especially in a school where the principal is present at planning stage and remains visible throughout the implementation and evaluation. The principal has a responsibility for the effective management of curriculum to ensure excellent performance in a school. The administrators in any school should be visionaries and, be able to

translate the vision into practical action by setting examples. Similarly, Dimba (2011) argues that the curriculum manager's role is to question, modify and adapt the prescribed curriculum within the set of values espoused by the school in order to meet the needs of learners.

Theme 7 T3 Professional development for teachers

All targeted schools had similar answers to the question of capacitation of teachers on curriculum implementation. They indicated that they rely on the workshops that are organized for teacher professional development. Administrators indicated that they have to ensure that teachers do attend these workshops and, share what they have learnt when they return from the workshops. However, what gives schools in town leverage above schools in the villages is that, it has an internet facility which makes it easier for teachers to access information that is useful in their daily teaching activities and the teachers can download material that they can use to enhance their lessons.

From the responses given by the participants, it seems that they mostly rely on workshops and teacher development trainings, which are formal in nature. Professional development should be standards-based, results-driven, and job embedded. It should extend beyond traditional workshops. It is good that principals are encouraging teachers to participate in these programmes. Creating a school culture conducive for educators to learn is important because the knowledge enquired is of great help for both the educator and the learner. However, professional development programmes that are imposed by the department have little regard for the individual needs and goals of the schools; they also lack consistent follow-up and coaching. It is therefore advisable that school principals embark on site-based personal and professional development to help their staff. Workplace learning is possible if the principal is proactive and their work should

begin with spending time with teachers, in and out of classrooms. This provides an opportunity for principals to engage in dialogue with teachers about teaching and learning.

Theme 8 – A4: Support structures needed for curriculum implementation

The following support as indicated were identified by the participants for effective implementation of curriculum

From the responses given, administrators indicated that support structures are needed for implementation of curriculum in schools. They affirmed that no effective implementation of curriculum can take place without relevant support structures being put in place. It became apparent that the participants regard support structures as an important instrument to curriculum success. Administrators know that it is crucial to have the knowledge but help is still lacking; so, their knowledge is limited. The performance of curriculum management roles requires that each administrator is well versed with skills, expertise, and knowledge of the curriculum. The administrators identified knowledge, resources, on-going training, planning and information as important structures necessary for effective implementation of curriculum. Administrators and teachers in targeted schools in Pujehun identified resources, training and workshops, meetings, information and cluster meetings as important support structures.

Conversely, the administrators in targeted schools outside Pujehun (Village) identified induction of teachers, resources, workshops, continuous meetings as crucial support structures for effective implementation of curriculum change. Participants are convinced that once these structures are in place there is no doubt that managing the curriculum would be much easier, better and effective. These findings on the resources needed for effective implementation of curriculum are in line with literature reported in Chapter Two.

Theme 9:A5 Solutions/skills necessary for effective curriculum implementation

During the interviews, various skills that are necessary for effective curriculum management were mentioned by administrators ‘‘It is important when we get information which relates to curriculum issues we immediately pass it onto the staff’’. They also indicated that they need to treat teachers with respect otherwise they would not manage them. They need to serve as good examples to their staff and have the spirit of long life learning. Administrators went on to say that training on leadership and management skills, with time management are key skills that are necessary for effective curriculum management. And one administrator stated: ‘‘If administrators can be encouraged to attend workshops that are done by certain private agencies that usually hold workshops for administrators in the area during holidays, the effort of these agencies could assist as they have accredited trainers, but we are not sometimes chosen to participate in such trainings’’

They also stated that induction programmes have to be made for new principals; this would assist the principal in knowing where to start in his/her new role. The principal in one of the schools (Village) was in a teaching post that was not dealing with management issues before becoming a principal. However, serving on management is not a prerequisite to be a principal, and was nevertheless appointed to the post. The skills that she had have been acquired on the job. However, the principal indicated that ability to work as a team is a skill that is necessary for effective curriculum management.

Theme 9: T4 Solutions/skills necessary for effective curriculum implementation

Teachers indicated that clear communication channel between the levels of management and the staffs are important. All participant Teachers opined that they should be part of decision

making, have to be consulted on issues that are discussed by the administrators before a final decision is taken, which will later affect them. Teachers felt that they should be given chance to discuss and suggest how they wish things should be done about curriculum issues. Moreover, the duty of the administrator during these meetings is to ensure that decisions taken do not deviate from the educational policies. Teachers will then have to own up to their decisions.

The Government through the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, supplies government assisted schools with subject policies. The Policy Statement has clear guidelines as to what to teach in each and every week in each subject. All four Junior Secondary schools have subject policies for all the subjects that are taught in the schools.

Completed and signed form of class visits was available in all four schools. Each teacher had a Developmental Support Group which includes an immediate head and a subject teacher who also teaches the same subject or who does not teach the subject but has expertise on the subject. Findings of the visit are discussed with the teacher and if he/she agrees with the contents of the findings sign the observation sheets. All the observation sheets were signed by the teachers who have been visited.

Templates that are used for school based moderation were available in each of the four participating schools. Moderation of "teachers" and "learners" work is done termly in all the schools. The researcher also discovered a curriculum coverage tracking tool in the schools that assist the administrators and the teachers to see how quick or slow is the progress of the teacher on work coverage.

The study revealed that all four targeted schools have subject committees. These committees are formed by teachers teaching the same subject. These committees are a platform where specific curriculum issues that relate to certain subjects are discussed. Subject head is the

chairperson of these meetings. Teachers share experiences, challenges, highlights and good practices. At the beginning of each term, staff meetings are held in all four schools to analyse results of the previous term, the minutes of these meetings are recorded by the staff secretary. At one of the schools (village) general curriculum issues are discussed at staffroom level where all teachers participate as subject committees cannot be formed due to the limited number of teachers.

It became apparent from the findings that there are major curriculum challenges facing administrators in managing the curriculum implementation in their schools. However, the attitude that administrators display towards curriculum management will determine how they deal with these challenges. As school leaders, they must act as agents for good curriculum management practices and they should be empowered with the necessary skills, knowledge and values to have better understanding of curriculum management practices. If not, their schools will decline and there will be no direction or vision that the school will follow.

The study revealed that the leadership roles and responsibilities of the administrators as curriculum managers are filled with overwhelming responsibilities. Therefore, they experience the nature and extent of their curriculum duties as a very complex and demanding situation. Apart from the curriculum management and implementation roles and responsibilities, they are also responsible for managing, monitoring and evaluating the curriculum as an on-going process for effective implementation by the teachers. At the same time, teachers have their own challenges in executing their responsibilities. Administrators as instructional leaders should contribute to generating a creative climate where effective curriculum delivery can flourish. The ideal management style displayed by school leaders will contribute to strong teamwork among teachers to solve problems experienced around curriculum management.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges towards curriculum implementation in Four Selected Junior secondary Schools in Kanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District. The conclusions presented in this chapter are based on information obtained from the participants in selected schools. The study explored challenges towards curriculum implementation and the impact it had on learners in Pujehun District. A voice recorder was used to capture the exact words for better interpretation.

Three elements of qualitative research were introduced. Qualitative methodology was chosen as the most appropriate methodology because of the exploratory nature of the study. In selecting participants for the study, the researcher chose Junior Secondary schools from different geographical details and socio-economic backgrounds. Participants included school administrators and teachers.

The research findings and analysis were explored in terms of generated themes. The purpose of this study was to investigate challenges towards curriculum implementation in four selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District. Information was gathered during the semi-structured interviews with participants from the four selected Secondary Schools in Pujehun District. Documents, such as minutes of meetings, schedules for monitoring teachers work and reports of moderation were obtained from the Administrators and teachers. The information was discussed in terms of the aims of the study and the research questions.

Main_research_questions were

1. What is administrator's perceived knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation?
2. What are the teachers perceived knowledge of the problems in curriculum implementation?
3. What are the causes mitigating against curriculum implementation in the selected Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District?
4. Proffer solutions to the challenges faced in curriculum implementation in the selected Secondary schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District?

The participants shared mixed feelings about their teaching experiences. The administrators believed that teaching was a respected profession and thus teachers treated it as such. They further alluded that principals were in control of their schools and there was a good competition among schools which yielded good results. Conversely, teachers expressed different opinions. They believed that teachers worked under terrible conditions. Some taught under the trees, some taught in mud classrooms. And there were serious shortage of classrooms which led to overcrowded classrooms. They further indicated that principals were seen as authoritarian and teachers as subordinates. However, they agreed that even though the teachers worked under those terrible conditions, teaching and learning were a key priority. Teaching time was effectively utilized. Teacher development workshops and courses were mostly done during school holidays; this resulted in teachers spending more time in classes.

The current educational curriculum document includes more work that should be covered in each term. This resulted in teachers teaching to cover quantity of work instead of doing quality teaching.

Administrators viewed their roles as curriculum managers who carry the responsibility to improve academic performance in serious light. All the four administrators theoretically seemed to know their role and responsibility in managing the curriculum in their schools. They understood that they were the key role players at school level as they were responsible for the execution of government policies and had a duty to improve the academic performance in their schools. They make effort to acquaint themselves with curriculum changes so that they may be able to offer support to teachers, monitor their work and lead the planning sessions. They believed that getting information about the new developments in the curriculum and disseminating it to teachers is very important.

The findings revealed that teachers were willing to have their work monitored by the administrators. Teachers unanimously agreed that monitoring and supervision of their work ensured that they do not divert from implementing curriculum policy as expected. Teachers viewed administrators as the people who are supposed to make resources for effective teaching and learning available. For effective teaching to occur, administrators have to align a teacher with a subject that she or he is qualified to teach. Due to staff shortage, this is not possible. In that case, the administrator has to offer constant support and seek expertise from outside the school to assist such teachers.

From the responses given by the participants, it emerged that most schools rely solemnly on workshops organized by the Ministry of Education and other Agencies for their professional development.

Lack of adequate financial, material and human resources in schools is one of the biggest challenges faced by schools especially targeted schools. Administrators have the task of utilizing limited resources available with lots of constraints at the school. Administrators are also full time

class teachers, who at times teach more than one subject in more than one grade. The overload experienced leaves little time for focusing on monitoring teachers work effectively. Low morale among teachers was another challenge faced by administrators. They have to encourage teachers who are also demotivated. Teachers are overloaded and at times have to teach subjects that they are not competent on. As a result of this, principals have to be considerate and lenient when dealing with such teachers, and, in the process compromise effective curriculum implementation.

Managing a subject that a principal is not conversant with is another factor that hinders effective curriculum management. Quality of training in workshop does not fully prepare and equip administrators for managing the curriculum.

Various support structures that are needed for curriculum implementation include knowledge of curriculum. Resources have to be made available for effective teaching and learning to occur. Training of teachers and administrators should be on-going and support structures are available so that teachers do not have to wait for a workshop to get an advice. School subject committees should be functional so that teachers can assist each other with planning. Compulsory and regulated induction of new teachers and administrators could assist so that each person knows what is expected of him or her.

Curriculum implementation requires certain level of competency from administrators as they play a leading role in curriculum implementation. Treating teachers with respect and making them part of decision making is necessary. This would limit resistance that could be met as they will own the decision. They will feel part of the team that has a responsibility to take the school forward. At times teachers can be difficult therefore a principal has to have good leadership and management skills. Communicating the vision to teachers is important and also

allowing them to have their inputs. It is of no use for the principal to run with a well-documented vision if the teachers do not own it.

The study focused on four Junior Secondary schools; two in Pujehun town and two outside of Pujehun town. The results of this study therefore cannot be generally compared to all Junior Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District. Although the research was conducted in four Secondary Schools in Kpanga Chiefdom, Pujehun District.

Conclusions

The study concluded that,

All education stakeholders in the district must be involved in the education process for curriculum implementation to be effective. Principals as change agents working together with their teachers are responsible for ensuring that effective curriculum implementation is taking place in their schools. For the principal to manage the curriculum well, he needs to be well grounded in curriculum implementation since he has to offer support and guidance.

The findings of the study revealed that there are some principals and teachers who have limited knowledge on the understanding of team work strategies. This might be due to the huge workload that they are experiencing in their schools. Notwithstanding, they know and understand the roles they have to play in curriculum implementation.

This then pose a challenge to the administrator that has to deal with teachers who resist change.

Teamwork and shared vision are important in any achievement of a goal. The goal that has to be attained in schools is effective curriculum implementation. The administrators cannot achieve this without the support of the teachers, and the teachers cannot achieve without the

support of the principal. It is therefore important for the two to work together towards the attainment of the goal. What the principal aims to achieve should be shared with teachers so that everybody in the school know what is expected of him/her and the role that he/she has to play towards the fulfilment of that vision.

If successful curriculum implementation is to occur, Good implementation plan is necessary so as to guide the implementation process and be used as a compass by the administrators to guide the process to the right direction. Capacitation of teachers in preparation for curriculum implementation is significant for successful curriculum implementation

Clearly, teacher trainings in some tertiary institutions in Sierra Leone comprises more theory and does not adequately prepare teachers for classroom activities. Appointment to a principal position post is determined by five years teaching experience, matric and a teaching qualification, no experience in management post is necessary, this might be impacting on performance of schools as new principal gains experience on the job. Proper training should be offered to principals first before a curriculum is introduced so that they can be able to deal with curriculum implementation. Theoretically principals know their roles in managing the curriculum, and challenges that they experience in schools inhibit them in effectively executing them. Workload facing teachers in schools affect curriculum implementation.

Human resources shortage which results in administrators having to teach various classes inhibit them in effectively doing their job. On the other hand, teachers cite the poor quality of training offered when a new curriculum is introduced. As a result of poor training received by teachers, standard of education is compromised. There are a large number of learners in secondary schools who cannot read, write and solve simple mathematical problems. Thereafter,

support by district official is minimal. Lack of resources in schools also affects curriculum implementation.

Performance of pupils in examinations necessitates that the challenges faced by teachers towards curriculum implementation be considered since Performance of districts determines the performance of the province and the country at large.

Recommendations

- Teachers' inputs in curriculum implementation are very important. Therefore, they should be placed at the centre of national curriculum processes. (Participation in curriculum development and implementation).
- Teachers' willingness to participate should not be taken for granted; teachers need to be motivated for effective curriculum implementation. Teachers' motivation is also another major component in curriculum implementation
- The study revealed that 'working with children is the main determinant of teacher's job satisfaction'. Generally, teachers feel motivated when what they do benefits society, and they are able to spend a sufficient proportion of their time working with children. In other words, to motivate teachers to adapt to curriculum change, they need to be convinced that they are contributing towards education at large, and that their contribution will make a difference in the lives of their students. Teachers interpret the curriculum: they are designers as well as decision makers in executing the curriculum. They should write lesson plans or lesson notes daily, weekly and yearly. They should prepare activities for students to do and modify the curriculum to suit the learner's characteristics. Teachers need to be motivated for successful curriculum implementation.

- School Principals are curriculum managers. They play important roles in shaping the school curriculum. They are responsible for the formulation of the schools' vision and mission which must be aligned with the curriculum change. They need to ensure there is continuity, relevance, and balance in the implementation of the curriculum.

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