Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Education Innovation and Philosophical Insights
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.37359

Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development: Toward Responsive and Adaptive Education

Huiyu Liu

Faculty of Education, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
huiyu.liu@mail.mcgill.ca

Abstract. Curriculum development is often organised through top-down processes in which teachers are treated primarily as implementers rather than contributors to curriculum design. This article reviews the literature on teacher participation in curriculum development and examines why stronger teacher involvement is important for curriculum relevance, implementation, and responsiveness. Drawing on scholarship concerning curriculum leadership, collaborative design, needs assessment, culturally responsive teaching, and educational change, the review identifies teachers as key sources of knowledge about learners, classroom conditions, subject content, assessment, technology, and changing social and workplace demands. The literature further indicates that participation can strengthen teacher ownership, improve alignment between curriculum objectives and learner needs, and support more flexible and context-sensitive implementation. Conversely, excluding teachers may create misalignment between policy intentions and classroom realities, reduce teacher commitment, and limit the curriculum's capacity to respond to diverse learners and emerging technologies. Existing research, however, relies heavily on case studies, cross-sectional designs, self-reported data, and locally developed measures, which restrict causal inference and generalisability. Future research should employ longitudinal and comparative designs with stronger measurement approaches to examine how different forms of teacher participation affect curriculum quality and student outcomes.

Keywords: teacher involvement, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, teacher leadership, responsive curriculum

1. Introduction

Curriculum development is treated as a matter of top-down authority, with educational policymakers and specialist developers deciding on the content of the curriculum and teachers receiving it and putting it into practice. In this model, the curriculum is seen as a fixed series, one that is not flexible enough to respond to learners, schools, communities, and the evolving social context. Teachers have a pivotal position in the realization of curriculum policy in the classroom; therefore, their professional knowledge is closely related to the design, implementation and assessment of curriculum.

This demand for participation is especially vital during times of rapid technological, economic and social change. Formal education can leave learners with knowledge or skills that are unaligned

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.37359

with current workplace and societal requirements. So a responsive curriculum must constantly be assessed in terms of curriculum objectives, materials, pedagogy, assessment, and resources. Teacher involvement can be used to connect these elements with learners' real-life needs and contexts of learning.

The author has brought together literature on teacher involvement in curriculum development, the educational value of teacher involvement, and the possible dangers in not involving teachers. It sets teachers as practitioners, researchers, and curriculum leaders whose classroom experiences can improve curriculum relevance and adaptability, as well as identify methodological gaps for future research.

2. Results

2.1. Teachers as curriculum developers and implementers

Teachers are involved in the curriculum design, implementation and evaluation process, making their involvement relevant throughout the curriculum cycle [1]. Stenhouse emphasises the dual role of the teacher as an independent implementer and curriculum developer [2], and Handler suggests that classroom practitioners can exercise curriculum leadership [3]. Since teachers translate curriculum into learning experiences, they need to understand the goals of the curriculum and the reasons behind them. Consequently, having an active role in goal identification is likely to enhance implementation success [4].

Multiple stakeholders, including teachers, learners, parents, administrators and inspectors, also play a role in collaborative curriculum development, with teachers especially important because they have ongoing contact with learners and are responsible for enactment [5]. They can assess the feasibility and educational value of proposed content and activities because of their knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and understanding of various learning styles [6]. Teachers can also make suggestions regarding the shortcomings of an existing curriculum and its changes [7].

More teacher participation leads to more consistency in instruction with curriculum. The significance of establishing a relationship between the curriculum design and the desired competencies is pointed out by Kouwenhoven [8], while the importance of the role of the teacher in aligning learning activities, learning resources, and assessment with the learning goals is stressed by Ramparsad [6]. Participation also makes the curriculum intentions immediately available for implementation and can warn teachers of the need for flexibility and innovation [9, 5].

2.2. Why teacher involvement matters

The inclusion of teachers is one of the reasons for this because teachers have firsthand information about learners. Once this is taken into account, teachers' knowledge of the diversity and constraints within their context will be more likely to be useful to them when making decisions about curriculum and instructional methods [10]. Teacher perspectives are necessary to make curriculum objectives relevant to the needs of their students; this is needed for effective implementation. There is a close connection between curriculum development and inquiry, too, in Carl's opinion: formal research may help inform decisions about curriculum, but practitioner knowledge is required to understand the implications in the context of a real school.

The contribution of teachers, in particular within the field of needs assessment, is of great importance. Teachers engage with students daily and can see changes and differences in readiness, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs. These observations can then be used to

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.37359

give feedback for the learning goals and what should (not) be covered in the content [1, 12]. Also, a culturally responsive curriculum, which is encouraged by Villegas and Lucas [13], can be used to make learning meaningful and to motivate a student. It can also assist in enhancing learning outcome awareness, and it can make the teacher make the right choice [4].

School partnership and teacher ownership are also enhanced. Kimpston and Rogers [14] highlight the collaboration between teachers and learners in the development of the curriculum. Involving teachers in the curriculum decision also creates a link between policy and practice, which helps reduce the policy and practice gap and places the teacher as a professional, rather than as one waiting to be told.

2.3. Risks of excluding teachers

If teachers are not part of the process of curriculum development, policy incongruence can arise. Ramparsad refers to issues of implementation in relation to the interface between the curriculum expectations, assessment by the teacher, and the needs of the learner [6]. If there is a mismatch between the content area, approaches, and classroom context, it can be hard to maintain teacher motivation, especially when the teacher has limited opportunities to learn about the content or be influential in decisions around curriculum.

Participation has the potential to build teacher buy-in to curriculum goals as well. Bates proposes how interacting with curriculum planning can facilitate the matching of educational programs to real-world contexts [15], and Kirk and MacDonald link teacher voice to ownership of curriculum change [4]. Teachers need to have an understanding of curriculum principles to arrange resources, activities, and instructional strategies in a more effective way [3, 8]. Bertram further emphasizes that the nexus of curriculum knowledge, pedagogy, and assessment must all be reflected in teacher preparation and professional learning if it is to serve a purposeful role in participation's design and evaluation [16].

Some systems have formal requirements for teacher involvement; sometimes teacher involvement is limited to consultation. But as Alsubaie [9] points out, teacher participation does not necessarily ensure teacher voice in curriculum planning. Decisions made at the center can lead to teachers feeling the decision-making is symbolic and not substantive. It is imperative to remember that teachers need opportunities to influence goal setting, content, pedagogy, assessment, and revision.

2.4. Responsiveness to technology and social change

Teacher participation is increasingly important as curricula respond to technological change. Ho highlights curriculum leadership that looks forward [10], and Lumpe sees the teacher as a key player in curriculum and professional development in technology-enriched environments [17]. Teachers can determine whether proposed technology products are accessible and instructionally suitable and whether they meet learning goals. When new materials or technologies are introduced, teacher perceptions and beliefs are also important, as noted by Shriner et al. [7] in the case of curriculum integration.

A responsive curriculum also needs to make links to the broader social and employment contexts. Handler [3] and Stenhouse [2] advocate a perspective of curriculum not as fixed. Knowledge of the school, subject areas, and learners by teachers would be beneficial to the curriculum developers in selecting realistic materials and activities [11, 18]. The teachers are also confronted by the social and

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.37359

political context of schools, and their experiences can be utilized to enhance the content relevance to individual needs and community needs [19, 20].

This responsiveness is closely related to the concept of 'curriculum as an ongoing process of reconstruction.' Stenhouse argues that educational experiences need to be continually rethought in new contexts, which he calls a 'progressive view' [2]. Furthermore, Blignaut distinguishes between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum [20], and this can indicate the potential gap between the policy and the classroom experience. Differential teacher involvement may be a component of an approach that will bridge this gap as evidence of implementation is incorporated into the process of curriculum revision.

3. Conclusion

According to the literature, teacher involvement can help ensure curriculum quality by connecting the curriculum to policy intentions, learner needs, classroom conditions, pedagogy, assessment, and social change. School staff involvement enhances needs assessment, allows for alignment between goals and instruction, assists with responsive teaching, and influences curriculum ownership. However, centralised strategies may result in curricula that are difficult to enact, insensitive to diversity or misaligned with local contexts.

The literature also has significant methodological issues. Cross-sectional studies that use questionnaires or interviews make causal inference difficult. Case-study designs offer important "thick description" but may not be generalisable to schools, systems, and countries. Local measures may not be valid, and social desirability and other response biases can impact self-reported data. These limitations indicate that the positive case for teacher participation requires more rigorous empirical examination rather than being assumed.

Further studies should therefore use comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-methods approaches to analyse changes in teacher participation and their impact on curriculum implementation and learner outcomes over time. Research should differentiate nominal consultation from substantive decision-making, employ more explicit participation measures and make comparisons between institutional and national settings. An adaptive approach to curriculum, which sees teachers as partners in educational improvement, should have structured mechanisms in place for teacher input in needs assessment, objective setting, content selection, implementation and revision.

References

[1] Henderson, J. (2001). Deepening democratic curriculum work. *Educ. Res., 30*(9), 18–21.
[2] Stenhouse, L. (2006). Defining the curriculum problem. *Cambridge J. Educ., 5*(2), 104–108.
[3] Handler, B. (2010). Teacher as curriculum leader: A consideration of the appropriateness of that role assignment to classroom-based practitioners. *Int. J. Teach. Leadersh., 3*(3), 32–42.
[4] Kirk, D., & MacDonald, D. (2001). Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change. *J. Curric. Stud., 33*(5), 551–567.
[5] Voogt, J., Pieters, J., & Handelzalts, A. (2016). Teacher collaboration in curriculum design teams: Effects, mechanisms, and conditions. *Educ. Res. Eval., 22*(3–4), 121–140.
[6] Ramparsad, R. (2001). A strategy for teacher involvement in curriculum development. *S. Afr. J. Educ., 21*(4), 287–291.
[7] Shriner, M., Schlee, B., & Libler, R. (2010). Teachers' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs regarding curriculum integration. *Aust. Educ. Res., 37*(1), 51–62.
[8] Kouwenhoven, W. (2009). Competence-based curriculum development in higher education: A globalised concept? *Technol. Educ. Dev., 8*(2), 1–22.
[9] Alsubaie, M. (2016). Curriculum development: Teacher involvement in curriculum development. *J. Educ. Pract., 7*(9), 106–107.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.37359

[10] Ho, D. (2010). Teacher participation in curriculum and pedagogical decisions: Insights into curriculum leadership. *Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh., 38*(5), 613–624.
[11] Carl, A. (2005). The "voice of the teacher" in curriculum development: A voice crying in the wilderness. *S. Afr. J. Educ., 25*(4), 223–228.
[12] Oloruntegbe, K., Duyilemi, A., Agbayewa, J., Oluwatelure, T., Dele, A., & Omoniyi, M. (2010). Teachers' involvement, commitment and innovativeness in curriculum development and implementation. *Educ. Res., 1*(12), 706–712.
[13] Villegas, A., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *J. Teach. Educ., 53*(1), 20–32.
[14] Kimpston, R., & Rogers, K. (1988). Predispositions, participatory roles and perceptions of teachers, principals and community leaders in a collaborative curriculum planning process. *J. Curric. Stud., 20*(4), 351–367.
[15] Bates, M. (2008). Work-integrated curricula in university programs. *High. Educ. Res. Dev., 27*(4), 305–317.
[16] Bertram, C. (2006). Knowledge, pedagogy and assessment in the old and new further education and training history curriculum documents. *Educ. Change, 10*(2), 33–51.
[17] Lumpe, A. (2004). Letter from the editor: The role of science educators in curriculum development and teacher professional development. *J. Sci. Teach. Educ., 15*(3), 173.
[18] Young, E. (2010). Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant pedagogy: How viable is the theory in classroom practice. *J. Teach. Educ., 61*(3), 248–260.
[19] Elliott, J. (1994). The teachers' role in curriculum development: An unresolved issue in English attempts at curriculum reform. *Curric. Stud., 2*(1), 43–69.
[20] Blignaut, S. (2009). Intended and enacted curricula: Tracing the trajectory of an enduring problem. *Acta Acad., 41*(3), 86–106.