REFLECTIVE ACT IN IMPLEMENTING A CURRICULUM
[TINDAKAN REFLEKTIF DALAM MELAKSANAKAN KURIKULUM]

1 W. ILMIWATI W. ADNAN
wanilmiwati@gmail.com

2 NAJIHAH ABD WAHID
anajihah@unisza.edu.my

1 NORADILAH ABDUL WAHAB
adilahphd@yahoo.com

1 NOR ASMAWATI ISMAIL
asmawati730122@gmail.com

3 NORLIANA ABD. MAJID
nurliana.unisza@gmail.com

1 Fakulti Pengajian Kontemporari Islam, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kampus Gong Badak, 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, MALAYSIA
2 Institute of Product and Civilization Research, UniSZA,
3 Faculty Business and Management

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The failure to implement a curriculum will cause detrimental impact to any curriculum reform. However, implementing a curriculum may not come as a smooth sailing for many teachers. Thus, by engaging in a reflective act, it can assist teachers in implementing a curriculum. The aim of this paper is to identify three facets of reflective act which can be employed in implementing a curriculum. The discussion commences by signifying teachers’ role as curriculum implementer in enacting a curriculum. A document analysis method is adopted which navigates the discussion to the findings. Accordingly, this study finds reflective act serves teachers in three areas identified as; (1) reflective act enhances professional development, (2) provides direction and guidance and (3) develops competency. By identifying these three areas in teachers’ reflection, this paper suggests that further refinement of teacher reflection practice should be incorporated in regard to in-service teachers’ education in order to further accentuate teachers’ skills in implementing a curriculum.

Key Words: curriculum; curriculum implementation; reflection, reflective act

ABSTRAK

Kegagalan untuk melaksanakan kurikulum akan menyebabkan kesan yang merugikan kepada pembaharuan kurikulum. Walau bagaimanapun, pelaksanaan kurikulum mungkin tidak selancar yang diharapkan oleh kebanyakan guru. Oleh itu, dengan mengambil tindakan refleksi, ianya dapat ...membantu guru dalam melaksanakan kurikulum. Tujuan kertas kerja ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti tiga aspek tindakan refleksi yang boleh digunakan dalam melaksanakan kurikulum.
Perbincangan bermula dengan mengenal pasti peranan guru sebagai pelaksana kurikulum. Untuk memperkukuhkan kurikulum, Kaedah analisis dokumen diaplikasikan yang menavigasi perbincangan kepada penemuan. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini mendapat tundakan refleksi guru dikenal pasti untuk (1) meningkatkan pembangunan profesional, (2) memberikan arahan dan bimbingan (3) mengembangkan kecekapan. Dengan mengenal pasti tiga bidang ini dalam refleksi guru, kertas kerja ini menunjukkan bahawa penambahbaikan lanjut tentang amalan refleksi guru perlu dimasukkan ke dalam perkhidmatan pendidikan guru untuk meningkatkan kemahiran guru-guru dalam melaksanakan kurikulum.

*Kata kunci:* kurikulum; pelaksanaan kurikulum; refleksi, tindakan refleksi

**INTRODUCTION**

Teachers and curriculum are the determinants of an education success. Remillard & Heck (2014) have postulated that each individual teacher plays significant role to interpret “curriculum guidelines and designing curriculum” in implementing a curriculum. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Diletti (2017) analyses the complex and intricate relationship between the intended curriculum, teachers’ perceived curriculum, and the enacted/assessed curriculum. Accordingly, Morales (2017) suggests that the intended curriculum incorporates interpretations and “teachers’ decisions” to project and plan for instruction which are initiated in the process of translating the designated curriculum as part of curriculum implementation.

Simultaneously, the significant role of teachers as curriculum implementers is clearly illuminated by Fives and Buehl (2016) who describe that teachers are one of the key dominators in enacting policy decisions, whose beliefs can support or undermine how learners earn optimum benefit from the decisions. In the realm of Mathematics curriculum, Remillard & Heck (2014), suggest that implementing a curriculum is associated with inspecting, scrutinizing and probing various elements in which curricular components are “translated and transformed”. Meanwhile, teachers’ reflection is considered crucial as described by (Buatip, 2019; Navrátilová, 2017). Thus, in implementing a curriculum, this conceptual paper identifies the feasibility of reflective acts to enhance professional development, provide direction and guidance develop competency.

**REFLECTION DEFINITION**

Reflection is a metacognitive process that creates greater understanding of an individual self and situation. There is an emergence of associating reflection in various areas of teachers’ professional development as well as education. By establishing profound understanding on the beneficial implications of reflection, an appreciation of both theoretical and practical aspects will be derived (Sandars, 2009). In its Latin origin, reflection means ‘to bend’ or ‘to turn back’. Other than that, reflection in education is contemplated as a process which involves ‘thoughts are turned back’ in order to be interpreted and analysed.

In advocating reflective act, Dewey in (Farrell, 2012) scrutinizes ‘routine thinking’ where actions are abode by “impulse, authority and tradition”. As such, reflective inquiry is viewed as “active, persistent and careful consideration” that permeates both belief and knowledge. Dewey
further connotes that “learning how to think intelligently” will deter a teacher from” becoming slaves to routine”. Therefore, continuous engagement in reflective thoughts and practices can develop not only teachers’ thinking faculty, it also can develop a teacher to become better in delivering their instructional strategies. Therefore, this conceptual paper believes that reflection deficiency may thwart teachers from successful curriculum implementation.

i. Reflective Act Enhances Professional Development

Continuous and carefully designed reflection practices and execution can promote the “benefit of stimulating an inquiry stance” which can improvise on existing practices (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Similarly, by integrating actual teaching experience as Dewey initially suggests with systematic reflection, we are governing towards administering professional development in enhancing teachers’ growth (Farrell, 2012). Meanwhile, in a study to investigate the effects of material development on the pedagogical beliefs of geosciences instructors, Pelch and McConnell (2016) have advocated participants’ reflections on their experience in a quest to characterize pedagogical beliefs at various phases of the participants’ professional development. In implementing a curriculum, a United States study has established how the structure of professional development influenced the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in regard to districts mandated lesson study implementation (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016).

Next, in a professional development project to train teacher mentor by Navrátilová (2017), research has shown that reflective act shapes teachers professional development focus. Apart from that, teachers tend to better adopt reform-oriented practices such as curriculum implementation when classroom and teaching related areas become the pivot in their professional development as proposed by Cohen & Hill C. (1998). They further analyze that, in regard to education and curriculum reform, the failure to embrace new exercises is due to the inadequate teaching reflection practice integrated in the professional development approach. In addition, the finding in a study by Camburn and Won (2015) suggest that teachers’ engagement in reflective practice is powerfully affiliated with teachers’ social interactions. This is in accordance with what Fullan as one of the distinguished proponents of curriculum implementation describes in Fullan and Pomfret (1977) that curriculum implementation involves the changes in various roles pertaining to school organization which also reflects teachers’ social interactions.

ii. Reflective Act Provides Direction and Guidance

The complexity of attaining a curriculum intention intensifies the role of reflection in the curriculum implementation spectrum. A study by Ogar and Awhen (2015) highlight troubles and complications in implementing the prescribed curriculum in Nigerian educational system. Problem areas have been identified in Myanmar as well, suggesting contextually injudicious and/or excessively ambitious educational reform may hinder effective curriculum implementation (Borg, Clifford, & Htut, 2018). On the other hand, curriculum change may
encounter teachers’ resistance because they are accustomed to the former curriculum (Ittner, Hagenauer, & Hascher, 2019; Smith, 2017; Tajularipin, Ahmad Fauzi, & Suriati, 2015).

Literature studies have provided prodigious numbers of reflection forms and functions. For example, medical profession has incorporated personal reflection as part of its multi-professional collaborations which command for “skillful behavior”, refined clinical reasoning and both scientific and personal reflections. As such, adapting to professional functioning in attending the patients’ needs or accommodating new conditions in the absence of pertinent solution, reflection is propounded. Other than that, new knowledge and practice conversion also accentuate the role of reflective act (Aukes, Geertsma, Cohen-Schotanus, Zwierstra, & Slaets, 2007). Obviously, all of these remarkable functions of reflective act serve as a guide for medical practitioners in meeting the demand of professional medical practices can be adapted by education domain due to its strong emphasis on the attainment of skills.

Other than that, Kilborn, Lorusso and Francis (2016) who study Canadian physical education curricula have suggested the practice of reflective act and thought to be adopted in solving problematic regions within the curricula. Simultaneously, a study to gather empirical evidence in determining English as a foreign language teacher characteristics’ correlate with positive student learning outcomes, teacher reflective act is found significant in exerting direct influence on students’ achievement (Akbari & Allvar 2010).

Apparently when teachers engage in a constructed and systematic act of reflecting, evidences and data collected from their work guide them in making informed decisions. Apart from that, reflective is capable of directing teachers to attest their current practices or mobilize them to change. Therefore, any affirmation or change especially in regard to curriculum implementation is executed based on the analysis of concrete evidence (Farrell, 2012; Olteanu, 2016). Thus, accentuates its appropriateness in implementing a curriculum a curriculum.

iii. Reflective Act Develops Competency

Teachers act as the most influential and powerful agent of change. Thus, in implementing a curriculum, teachers’ competency is tested due to the curriculum nature which adorns change as one of its viable characteristics in accommodating a country’s vision and aspiration.

Concurrently, effective teachers are defined by Sellars (2012) as teachers who are capable of executing effective and positive action at classroom level in a quest to improve students’ educational outcomes. As such, the study relates teachers’ “cognitive capacities” to identify any prevalent, hidden or obvious ethical dilemmas with conceptualizing their own viewpoint in a critical and analytical method. Thus, these combinations of socio-cultural, personal and professional complexities command for “authentic” reflective act which are found significant in influencing teachers’ to implement a curriculum. For instance, teachers' decision reverting to traditional approach and blend it with the inquiry based instruction have improved the performance of the programme (Karam et al. 2017). This shows that after reflecting on both practices, the teachers’ decision to create a balance between the old and new practices have indicated the feasibility of reflective act.

Apart from that, teachers’ competency expands beyond the horizon of transferring the knowledge alone, it synchronizes with “teaching initiates” which synchronizes with teachers’
ability to reflect on their classroom practices (Safarie & Tarlani-aliabadi 2014). Meanwhile, Steeg (2016) reveals in a study which attempts to manipulate professional learning communities (PLC)’s space, the study finds out that video-based reflection provides a perfect avenue for teachers to reflect on and revise their teaching practices. This further accentuates this study’s affiliation with reflective act in developing teachers’ competency.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this conceptual paper attempts to establish the role of reflection is vital in curriculum implementation domain. Thus, three facets of reflective acts identified in this study are; reflective act enhances teachers’ professional development, provides direction and guidance as well as develops competency. Therefore, even though reflective act is not a new practice in teacher education, but its importance in assisting teachers to implement a curriculum requires further emphasis. Thus, teachers’ education should systematically and continuously develop teachers’ reflective skills.

REFERENCES

from the *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3(1), 114–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732215623554


