



Decentralization Impacts on English Language Curriculum Development and Implementation of Lower secondary Teachers in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between decentralization and curriculum development for lower secondary teachers. The perception of teachers involves the extent to which decentralization has impacted curriculum development and at lower secondary schools in Cambodia. The research design was based on quantitative by using survey design to collect and analyze data. Data from 138 teachers was collected using questionnaires. This study found a moderate positive correlation between decentralization and curriculum development in their schooling. There is a significant positive correlation between decentralization and curriculum development. Therefore, the researcher concluded that teachers often show resistance and lack of commitment to the implementation of curriculum reforms because they are seldom involved in their development. In the conclusions, the researcher equally recommended the adoption of a grass-roots approach to curriculum development involving all stakeholders, including teachers who would implement the curriculum in the long run.

Keyword: decentralization, curriculum, development, implementation, curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum decentralization refers to the transfer of fiscal and decision-making authority from higher to lower levels of government which impacts the way school systems make policies about resource generation and spending. It also affects the organization of instruction such as curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, and schedules. The term "decentralization" generally implies a shift of policies, resources, and powers from the national central to a lower administrative level. Decisions about the curriculum include topics, materials, textbooks, textbook provision, language policy, instructional methods, and teacher assessment (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Ziba, 2011).

Cambodia's aim is to decentralize authority and responsibilities to the provincial, district, commune, and school levels, with the central ministry's role centered on policy and strategy creation. The government has recently implemented policies to increase the relevance of education through institutional development and capacity building for decentralization (Rattanak, 2011). Decentralization of education authority is a global trend observed in most countries' education reform policies. Its main goals include democratization, productivity, and improved quality of education for stakeholders (Masuku, 2010).

The curriculum development process is now recognized as not only within the central level of national education but also at the school teachers' level. Bhusal (2015) demonstrated that teachers should be familiar

with the curricula and should be involved in the development process (Null, 2011). Teachers are interested in various curricula at the classroom level, including the collection of relevant materials, teaching methods, the use of educative content, and others, which are the core of their daily teaching work.

The role of teachers as implementers is to apply the curriculum elsewhere and has minimal liability and participation in the curriculum development and implementation stage (Print, 2007). However, teachers also have a crucial role as researchers since they participate in decision-making at the school level and need to grasp curriculum principles and processes well (Kelly, 2004). Ornstein and Hunkins (2013) clarified that teachers should take part in the curriculum development process and not just implement the final product. Teachers have expressed that the administrative model is incorrect, and the curriculum should be drawn up by the user of a teaching program, requiring active participation by teachers. Moreover, teachers are the most relevant people for curriculum design and improvement since they are critical agents for changing their classrooms. Therefore, the focus of the analysis and evidence of the introduction of English curriculum development should be on the teachers themselves (Doyle & Ponder, 1977; Anthony, 2008).

2. METHOD

The present research work utilized primary data collected from a questionnaire prepared in the light of the study's objectives. A quantitative approach was taken for data analysis as it accurately shows the relationship between participants' attributes such as behavior, opinions, talents, beliefs, and knowledge of a certain individual, circumstance with curriculum development. The questionnaires were the main research instruments used in the participant survey, which captured information on the impacts of decentralization on curriculum development. Personal administration of the questionnaires was deemed most appropriate for data collection. All data collected were analyzed using predictive statistics and the correlation tool of SPSS 24.0 program. The study was conducted in five public secondary schools in the Por Sen Chey district, Phnom Penh, with a total of 500 teachers. The sample size of 138 teachers of English was determined using Slovin's Formula, $n = N / [1 + (N * e^2)]$ (Stephanie, 2003).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic Data

Table.1 presents the demographic data of the sample of 138 teachers who participated in the survey through the distribution of questionnaires. The majority of the participants were male (51.4%) compared to females (48.6%). The data showed that male secondary teachers outnumbered female teachers. The age distribution revealed that most secondary teachers were aged between 25 and 35 (56.5%), followed by teachers aged between 36 and 46 (34.8%), and those aged between 47 and 50 (8.7%). In terms of teaching experience, 72.5% of the respondents had more than 5 years of experience, while 27.5% had less than 5 years of experience. Regarding educational qualifications, 1.4% had a PhD degree, 13.8% had an MA, 70.3% had a BA, and only 14.5% had a diploma level.

Personal Characteristics	Categories	Respondent (N=138)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	71	51.4 %
	Female	68	48.6 %
Overall		138	100 %
Age	25- 35	78	56.5
	36- 46	48	34.8
	47-50	12	8.7
Teaching experiences	Less than 5 years	38	27.5
	More than 5 years	100	72.5
Overall		138	100%
Educational Qualification	Ph.D.	2	1.4
	MA	19	13.8
	BA	97	70.3
	Diploma	20	14.5
Overall		138	100%

Table 1. Descriptions of demographic data

3.2. Research Findings

This study was intended to investigate the teachers' factors that could promote decentralization of curriculum development at the school level. The findings are based on discussion related to the formulated research hypotheses.

3.2.1 Decentralization and curriculum development

The research findings were analyzed using Pearson's Correlation, which is a statistical test used to determine the existence of a relationship between two variables.

Hypothesis Ho: There is no relationship between **decentralization and** curriculum development.

Table. 2 Relationship between the decentralization and curriculum development

Variables	Decentralization	Curriculum development
Decentralization	-	.624**
Curriculum development	.624**	-

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation result shows a correlation value of $r = 0.624$ between the frequency of decentralization and curriculum implementation. This indicates a moderate correlation between the two variables, as the correlation coefficient falls within the range of 0.50 to 0.70 (Mukaka, 2012). The positive Pearson correlation value suggests a positive or directional correlation, meaning that when one variable is high, the other is low. The significance of the correlation is measured by the Sig. (2-tailed), which will be discussed in the next part. The table also shows that the sample size involved in this study was 138 respondents.

3.3. Discussion

Based on the objective stated in section 1, this research aimed to determine the correlation between decentralization and curriculum development. As shown in table 2, the computed correlation value is 0.624, indicating a moderate positive correlation (Mukaka, 2012). The positive correlation coefficient suggests that higher levels of decentralization are associated with higher levels of curriculum development implementation. The P-value of 0.00 is less than the level of significance of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and that there is indeed a relationship between decentralization and curriculum development. Previous studies have also found positive correlations between curriculum development inputs and outcome-based curriculum development decision-making processes (Kusumawathie, Mohamad & Azam, 2017), teachers' attention to curriculum guides and student contexts (Paik, 2011), and educational decentralization and improved performance of institutions (Kambilombilo & Banda, 2015). However, this study specifically focused on the correlation between decentralization and curriculum development for lower secondary English teachers in Cambodia. The significant correlation found ($r=0.624$) suggests that involving teachers in the decentralization process is crucial for successful implementation of curriculum development reforms. It also implies that teachers' perceptions and mastery of decentralization contribute to their ability to develop curricula. Thus, there is a significant positive relationship between decentralization and curriculum development for lower secondary English teachers in Cambodia.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.624$) between decentralization and curriculum development for lower secondary English teachers in Cambodia. Although the correlation is not significant, involving teachers in the curriculum development process is crucial for successful implementation of reforms. The study recommends a grassroots approach that includes all stakeholders. The results suggest that teachers have a role in improving teaching and learning processes, and their mastery of decentralization contributes to their ability to develop curricula. The significant positive relationship between decentralization and curriculum development implies that teachers' perceptions and involvement in mastering decentralization contribute to the expansion of their curriculum development process, in turn improving their comprehensive knowledge of the process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses gratitude to the blind reviewers and editors of the PROJECT, as well as the president of a prestigious private university in Cambodia, for their support in conducting the study. The author also acknowledges the participants for their valuable contribution to the research. Lastly, the author extends well wishes to all for a prosperous and fulfilling future.

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