

THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Curriculum development is one of the important factors in improving the quality of education in educational institutions. As instructional leaders, principals play a vital role in ensuring that the curriculum is developed, implemented, and evaluated in a planned manner and in accordance with the needs of students. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the role of principals in curriculum development through a literature review of indexed national journals. The results of the study show that principals act as planners, managers, academic supervisors, innovators, and motivators in every phase of curriculum development, from needs analysis to evaluation and follow-up. The successful implementation of the curriculum is largely determined by the quality of the principal's leadership, capacity for academic supervision, resource management, and ability to create a culture of cooperation within the school environment. This study confirms that curriculum development will not be maximized without the leadership of a principal who is visionary and participatory.

Keywords: Principal, Curriculum Developmen, Educational Leadership, Academic Supervision

Introduction

The curriculum is the core of educational activities. The success of an educational institution in achieving learning objectives is highly dependent on the quality of the curriculum that is developed and implemented. Therefore, curriculum development requires strong, broad-minded leadership and good cooperation. As the leader of an educational institution, the principal has a major role in directing, organizing, and ensuring that curriculum development is carried out in a planned, measurable manner that focuses on the needs of students (Erni Agustina Suwartini, 2017).

In the Indonesian context, dynamic curriculum changes, ranging from the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), the 2013 Curriculum, to the Merdeka Curriculum, require school principals to be more adaptive and responsive. The principal's duties are not only as an administrative supervisor but also as an instructional leader who is able to guide teachers, support innovation in learning, and ensure that the teaching and learning process is in accordance with the National Education Standards (Zakiyatur & Kusna, 2022).

Various studies indicate that the level of school principal leadership has a significant relationship with the successful implementation of the curriculum, the quality of the teaching and learning process, and the advancement of teacher professionalism. If school principals carry out their academic supervision duties effectively, teachers will become more professional in planning and implementing the learning process. On the other hand, if the role of the school principal is weak, this can result in stunted curriculum development and a decline in the quality of learning.

Based on this context, this paper aims to explain and examine the contribution of principals in curriculum development through a literature review of relevant scientific journals.

Theoretical Review

1. The Concept of Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is a structured process that includes the stages of planning, implementation, assessment, and refinement of the curriculum. Sukmadinata explains that curriculum development needs to be tailored to the needs of students, national educational goals, and advances in science and technology. This process includes needs analysis, competency determination, development of learning tools, as well as monitoring and evaluation of implementation (Suib & Syukri, 2013).

The crucial stages in the curriculum development process consist of:

- a. Assessment of the social and cultural context and student needs.
- b. Determining competencies and learning objectives.
- c. Content development, teaching methods, and assessment.
- d. Implementation in the classroom environment.
- e. Continuous assessment and updating of the curriculum.

2. The Role of the Principal in Curriculum Management

School principals in Indonesia officially perform the functions of educator, manager, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. In terms of curriculum development, school principals need to:

- a. plan the curriculum
- b. form a curriculum development team
- c. ensure that teachers understand the curriculum documents
- d. support teachers through academic guidance
- e. ensure the involvement of all school members.

Research shows that principals who implement innovative and participatory leadership tend to be more successful in promoting curriculum reform (Kristiyani et al., 2023).

Method

This study applied a literature review approach by examining 10 national journals and scientific articles related to the role of school principals and curriculum development. These sources were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Available in PDF format
2. Accessible through Google Scholar
3. Published between 2017 and 2025
4. Relevant to the topic discussed.

The data were analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify patterns of the principal's role in curriculum development (Sugiyono, 2014).

Results

1. Principals as Curriculum Planners

Planning is the first step in developing a curriculum. School leaders are responsible for identifying student needs, assessing the school's circumstances, and organizing the development of the school-based curriculum (KTSP). Suib's research shows that good planning is highly dependent on the principal's ability to manage the team and resources available at the school. Principals need to ensure that the curriculum design complies with national standards while also being relevant to local needs (Herman et al., 2023).

2. The Principal as Academic Supervisor

Academic supervision is a crucial role for principals in ensuring that the curriculum is implemented properly. Indrayani and Metrizia revealed that effective academic supervision can improve the quality of lesson plans, teacher professionalism, and student learning outcomes.⁸ Principals must observe classrooms, provide constructive feedback, and continue the coaching process (Jonison et al., 2024).

3. School Principals as Curriculum Innovators

In the era of the Merdeka Curriculum, school principals have a crucial role in encouraging innovation in the teaching and learning process, such as project-based learning, differentiated learning, and the use of digital technology. Zaeni argued that school principals need to develop a culture of innovation and provide opportunities for teachers to try out new learning models (Mulyani, 2022).

4. School Principals as Managers and Quality Controllers

School principals are responsible for all elements of curriculum implementation:

- a. Scheduling
- b. Teacher distribution
- c. Provision of facilities
- d. Monitoring the quality of the learning process.

Herman's research emphasizes that principals need to ensure that the curriculum is implemented in accordance with national policies and also develop local character in schools (Damayanti, 2025).

5. School Principals as Curriculum Evaluators

Evaluations are conducted to assess the extent to which the curriculum has been successfully implemented. This evaluation process includes assessment of learning outcomes, assessment by teachers, and updating of teaching materials. A well-planned evaluation system enables educational institutions to make continuous improvements (Hamzah et al., 2022).

6. The principal as a motivator and human resource developer

The responsibilities of a principal are not limited to administrative matters, but also include motivating teachers, improving their professionalism, and creating a good working environment. Development through training, guidance, and rewards are elements of the principal's approach to improving teacher competence (Hamzah et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The principal plays a crucial role in curriculum development in educational institutions. This responsibility includes being a planner, manager, academic supervisor, innovation pioneer, evaluator, and motivator. The curriculum development process will be successful if the principal has visionary leadership, can conduct effective academic supervision, and foster cooperation among teachers. From a review of the literature, it can be concluded that the more active the principal is in their role, the higher the success of curriculum implementation and the quality of learning.

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