Original Article

Teachers' Lived Experiences of Communication in Curriculum Planning and Implementation in a Centralized Educational System

Majid Dadmehr[1], Morteza Karami[2] (iD) **,**
Behrouz Mahram[2], and Samad Izadi[3]

Abstract

The purpose of the research was to investigate teachers' lived experiences of communication with the curriculum planning system in curriculum development and implementation processes. The research was performed by qualitative approach and phenomenology method. The sample of the research included 20 experienced teachers of elementary schools in Birjand, Mashhad, and Tehran who were selected in a purposive method. To collect data, semi-structured interviews were applicated. These interviews were recorded and made into written form with the permission of the participants. The deep analysis of teachers' viewpoints was carried out by the Colaizzi pattern and content analysis, which entailed identifying three main categories and 10 subordinate categories. In this research, data validity was determined through the following techniques: the self-monitoring of the researcher (verifiability), the accurate direction of the interview and collecting data processes (reliability), and deploying multiple researchers to provide confirming evidence. Teachers' experiences

[1]Curriculum Studies, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran
[2]Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Department of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran
[3]Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Department of Educational Silences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Iran

Corresponding Author:
Morteza Karami, Department of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.
Email: m.karami@um.ac.ir

of communication with the curriculum planning system in curriculum development and implementation processes were recognized and classified according to three categories: "communicative channels between teachers and curriculum planning system," "human communication factors," and "curriculum planning system status." Analyzing teachers' experiences explains that taking into account the subject of communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system can lead to the realization of effective implementation of curricula by teachers. The relation between teachers and curriculum planning systems through various interactive communication networks in curriculum development and implementation processes is one of the suggestions of this study.

Keywords

Teachers' lived experiences, curriculum planning, curriculum development, curriculum implementation

Introduction

Curriculum change is a permanent and at the same time complicated process (Miles, 2021). Participation and contribution of teachers in this process are much crucial, and no change simply comes into reality without their understanding and participation (Wang, 2006; quoted from Butt et al., 2021). By approving the Fundamental Reform Document of Education of Iran and after that the National Curriculum of Iran, this curriculum as a road map has provided the groundwork for many changes in the elementary schools' curriculum. In the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2010, p. 47), the role of the teacher has been named as the most effective element in the realization of the missions for the curriculum planning system, and on the hand, establishing some mechanisms for raising capabilities of teachers to effectively participate in the curriculum planning process has been demanded (2010, p. 49). Besides, in the Fundamental Reform Document of Education, it has been mentioned that the curriculum planning process should provide the groundwork for effective participation and interaction between teachers and other beneficiary groups in designing, development, implementation, and evaluation of curricula.

Based on 6–8 and 6–11 solutions mentioned in paragraphs 5–2–4 of the National Curriculum of Iran, to increase the participation of teachers in the curriculum planning process, some proceedings have been recommended at the national level, for example, informing teachers about the expectations of upper-hand documents from them, indirect participation of teachers in need assessment of curricula, participation of teachers in accreditation and development curricula, and participation of teachers in producing educational kits (The National Curriculum of Iran, 2010).

Because of the high importance of communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system, the purpose of our research was to investigate teachers' lived

experiences of communication with curriculum planning systems in curriculum development and implementation processes in Iran.

Literature Review

Some researchers believe that teachers should be the main beneficiaries in the processes of development and implementation, as this will strengthen their commitment and attitude toward the changes in the curriculum (Janík et al., 2018). Hall and Hord (2015), through accepting the concerns-based adoption model, which proved that a teacher has an important position in the change process. This model places teachers and their concerns at the center of the change process and in this way practically confirms the personal and evolutionary essence of any kind of learning and change acceptance by a teacher. According to Sinnema et al. (2020), if the voice of teachers is heard in the process of changing curriculum and teachers are appreciated, they will probably change their conventional methods. As Wang (2006) says, at least three main actors play a role in the curriculum change process: policymakers, middle-level managers, and teachers. If these actors have no communication or one of the main actors does not participate in this process, curriculum implementation may face difficulty. So, the lack of knowledge about new plans and no participation in curriculum planning among teachers somewhat decreases the effectiveness of plans (Chimbunde & Kgari-Masondo, 2020; Ngussa et al., 2017). Totally, the communication of teachers and curriculum planning system is originated from this basic fact that curriculum planning activities will result in favorable outcomes only when they are performed in the classroom. On the other hand, a teacher is the most important person in implementing the curriculum (Iskandar, 2020; Alsubaie, 2016). When a new curriculum is developed, implementation occurs as an interactive process between the curriculum planners and teachers. Despite the importance of the teacher's role in curriculum implementation, researches imply ignorance of teachers and their interests, capabilities, and viewpoints in the curricula change process (Goldring et al., 2015; Saracaloğlu et al., 2010).

Communication is a dynamic process that is carried out to meet others and transmission of messages in an effective manner (Khan et al., 2017). Although different features have been mentioned for an "effective teacher," communicative skills that should be trained in teachers have been ignored (Okoli, 2017). Gillies (2004) believes that as much as teachers are more trained to use communicative skills, they are more engaged in interactive learning. Problems such as the lack of enough support by planners, resistance against change, and/or weak professional development on the part of teachers can be removed through communication (Carson, 2010). Kirkpatrick (2001) has confirmed the role of communication in implementing change and believes that it is necessary to consider the details of change first and then we can contribute to the efficient implementation of change through communicating with the people who will be affected by the change and building their trust. Generally, several methods can be used to establish communication. These methods include mass and interpersonal media (Rogers, 2010), oral and written communication, web-based

communication, video conference, E-mail, face-to-face sessions (Jain, 2012), and websites and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram (Singhal, 2016; Leonardi et al., 2013). According to Kauffmann & Carmi (2014) and Huang et al. (2004), the appearance and development of modern technologies such as E-mail and video conferences have changed the methods of communication due to the lack of time and place limitation, exchangeability, secrecy, and the possibility of using multimedia messages. Sousa et al. (2014), in their research, also found out that the Internet can play a key role in communication between the teachers union and educational organizations. Although Kupritz and Cowell (2011) and Men (2014) emphasize that face-to-face presenting of information is more efficient than the usage of E-mail, short messaging, and/or phone contact as a communicative appliance. Stryker and Santoro (2012) have also stated that face-to-face communication causes enhanced productivity and job satisfaction of personnel and managers, and it more efficiently provides data for personnel and managers better than any other communication, too.

Studies show that few innovative plans or designs, which most experts consider successful, can be found in the education system of Iran. Nevertheless, studies found in Tourani et al. (2010) suggest that most innovative plans have failed, and or have not wrapped up because of incorrect propagation and implementation.

One of the reasons for the failure of the implementation of new curricula in centralized educational systems, including the educational system of Iran, is that the suggestion of change has been propounded by high-level managers, and curricula are suddenly imparted to implement by the head of the organization and are expanded to the educational system of the country. This causes misunderstandings about the change among teachers. At the same time, appropriate communication with teachers has not been established in order for them to correctly understand, be justified, and be informed of the new curricula, and in most cases, teachers begin to implement these curricula without correct understanding and even without accepting them (Hosseini, 2015; Marsh & Willis, 2007).

Method

The purpose of this study which has been performed in the framework of a qualitative approach and based on the phenomenological method was a phenomenological description of the existing status of the communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system in Iran, considering the elementary school teachers' lived experiences. In this research, the concept "communication between teachers and curriculum planning system" refers to the actions taken to raise teachers' knowledge and empower them regarding new curricula, from development to implementation, as well as during implementation. In other words, this research seeks the meaning appertained to the considered phenomenon from the viewpoint of elementary school teachers to find out and discover the essence of learners' experiences. The researchers provided and developed protocols or written forms (protocols of interview) for recording information to perform interviews and collect data. A total of 20 teachers in

Birjand, Mashhad, and Tehran were selected. The logic of this selection was the consideration of teachers' experiences in the different regions of Iran.

Specific and structured methods for analysis have been presented in phenomenology, especially by Moustakas. Moustakas' revision of the method of Stock-Colaizzi-Kane is the most practical and useful approach. So, the central elements of qualitative data analysis are data codification (including reducing the data to significant parts and nominating the parts), data synthesis in the cast of more comprehensive classes or themes, and the presentation and comparison of data in the cast of figures, tables, and diagrams. To investigate teachers' lived experiences regarding the under-study phenomenon, the data achieved from interviews was accurately studied at first. In the next stage, the important phrases and statements related to the phenomenon were extracted. In the third stage, the extracted statements were conceptualized. Then the joint concepts were placed in specific clusters. In the fifth stage, an exhaustive description of the extracted concepts was carried out, and at the end, an exhaustive description of the phenomenon was presented briefly and was verified for the last time.

In this research, the validity of data was determined through the self-revision of the researcher (verifiability), the accurate direction of the interview and collecting data processes (reliability), and deploying multiple researchers to provide confirming evidence. To use this validation strategy, a focus group consisting of study participants virtually got together, and they were requested to remark and reflect on the accuracy of the presented descriptions and themes. According to the adaptive-oriented approach, the final approval was retained on the extracted categories, and at last, a deep expression of the communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system in the processes of development and implementation was obtained. To raise the reliability of the research, the interviews were sound-recorded with the permission of the participants. The data were then transcribed into hand-written form, and detailed notes got obtained. Besides this, MAX QDA software was used for the recodifying and analyzing of the data. The method of adaptation among codifiers was applicated, and several codifiers were deployed for analyzing the hand-written data. The stability of the codifiers' responses to the set of data showed the reliability of the data in this research.

Results

After analyzing the data, three main categories and 10 subordinate categories were extracted, which show the existing status of communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system in the processes of curriculum development and implementation in Iran. In the following, each of the categories is presented in detail.

Question 1. What are teachers' lived experiences of their own communicative channels and curriculum planning system in the processes of curriculum development and implementation?

To respond to this question and based on the performed interviews with teachers, 18 codes were obtained, and all of them were placed under a general category titled "Communicative channels of teachers and curriculum planning system."

Main Category 1: Teachers' Communicative Channels and Curriculum Planning System

A part of teachers' lived experiences regarding communication with the curriculum planning system was connected with ways and methods which are used for giving knowledge to teachers and raising their skills and as well as receiving their ideas and suggestions about new curricula. This category included two subcategories, namely "real communicative channels" and "virtual communicative channels." Each of these subcategories also includes "one-sided communication" and "interactive communication."

Real Communicative Channels.   Communication through the real space is the most important channel between teachers and the curriculum planning system. One teacher says:

> Ministerial circulars and instructions are the only legal way of informing about imparted plans including necessities for schools, principals, and students. Of course, rigidity, inflexibility, and one-sidedness are challenges for the issued circulars and instructions. (Participant no. 10)

These communications include issuing circulars and instructions (printed), delivering educational kits (book, CD, journal, poster, etc.), training the lecturers of on-the-job courses, holding educational workshops and on-the-job courses, establishing the secretariat of designs and plans, etc. Circulars are the most important and the most formal communicative channel through which teachers are informed of new plans. However, some critiques regarding circulars have been discussed by teachers. One of the teachers says:

> The heads of educational groups in provincial and regional offices are one channel (among the other channels) for receiving information about new curriculum; that is why those are the first people who are informed of changes and are responsible for teachers' educational missions. Thus they should be dominant on the plans so that they can present needed instructions to teachers. (Participant no. 18)

Some circulars generally are imparted to provincial offices by the Ministry (center) so that the offices develop instructions based on their conditions and environmental possibilities and then deliver them under their control regional offices for performing. Educational group heads play an important role in this case.

Nowadays, no organization is needless of on-the-job education for its personnel. On-the-job education is one of the most basic needs of the education system in each society and can contribute to teachers' professional growth and development. One teacher says:

> Informing teachers of plans through on-the-job courses and educational workshops is carried out. Unfortunately, due to budget deficits, on-the-job courses are performed less. Besides, there are sometimes contradictions in the remarks of the lecturers of these courses and this confuses teachers. The weak points of these courses which makes them inefficient are the lack of balance between the content of courses with devoted time, concentration on theoretical content instead of practical content, and the lack of motivation for participating in these courses. (Participants no. 3 and 8)

Evidence shows the inappropriateness and insufficiency of these courses.

Virtual Communicative Channels. In recent years, after the day-to-day expansion of communication in cyberspace, there has been an attempt to also use the capacities of this space to develop communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system. Although communication through cyberspace has not been recognized as a formal channel yet, it can play an important role to give knowledge to teachers about curriculum change. One teacher says:

> Today, communication is done very rapidly due to cyberspace, websites, and social media. Opinion polls are performed easily and the officials can see the results. (Participant no. 11)

Teachers have also welcomed this communicative channel due to rapid access to the space and more comfortable communication with officials. A teacher remarks:

> The human resources movement has appeared so strong in cyberspace. Though economical and subsistent problems may be more discussed in cyberspace, it is totally helpful and raises the courage of teachers to establish communication. (Participant no. 18)

It is too difficult to control and manage communication in cyberspace because of its expansion, and this needs careful and purposeful planning. Right now, teachers are facing different issues in cyberspace and more discuss the problems and subjects which are out of their profession with other teachers.

In recent years, it seems that communication in cyberspace has had more expansion and development than communication in real space, so most of the communications (e.g., informing through circulars, holding educational courses and workshops, sessions, seminars), which in the past would happen in a face-to-face manner and the real space, have gravitated to use the capacities of the cyberspace. Nonetheless, communication through cyberspace has not been recognized as a formal channel yet, and

the content of this space cannot be accepted decisively and be adduced because of the penetrating of some incorrect news and announcements in this space. A group of teachers believes that achieving knowledge and skills through face-to-face communication is still more efficient despite the development of technology.

> **Question 2.** What are teachers' lived experiences of human communication in the processes of curriculum development and implementation?

To respond to this question and based on the performed interviews with teachers, 30 codes were obtained. Among these codes, three subcategories were extracted, and all of them were placed under a general category titled "Factors of human communications."

Main Category 2: Factors of Human Communication

One type of communication is human communication. The most important human factors engaged in the subject curriculum implementation are teachers, principals, students, and their parents. These people had been pointed out in teachers' lived experiences. This category included the factors related to the teacher, the role of the principal, and the position of families and parents.

Factors Related to Teachers.   A teacher is the most important element in implementing a curriculum. Taking into account the demands and needs of teachers and developing their professional skills entails the effective implementation of curricula. This subcategory included: (1) resumés and work experiences of teachers; (2) teachers' professional competencies; and (3) teachers' motives.
(1) Resumés and work experiences of teachers

> It is an ordinary thing to resist change and the rejection of new plans at the beginning of an activity. Over time, it is expected that the resistance of people reduces and necessary acceptance toward change occurs. One of teachers mentioned:

> The motiveless teachers who are in the last years of their service, especially in the scope of elementary education are one of the challenges we are facing. These teachers do not communicate with new plans due to tiredness, ignorance, and low motivation. (Participant no. 12)

Accordingly, another teacher maintained:

> They do not want to see young personnel beside themselves. The disposition to the young is so weak and there is no acceptance of their plans. Of course, we are slogging in the education system step by step and we are leaving our footprint there. Building distance between generations is one of the factors which entails resistance and not performing the changes well. We hope this distance to be reduced as soon as possible. (Participant no. 18)

The teachers in the last years of their service accept new plans and communicate with them much later than young teachers. Changing the teachers' attitudes with a history of service is more difficult than young teachers' ones.

On the other hand, young teachers may suggest designs and plans due to having modern knowledge and high motives, but they are not accepted because of different reasons. This will also entail the reduction of their motivation. The remarks of a teacher:

(2) Teachers' professional competencies

Curriculum change without changing teachers comes to naught. Teachers should also achieve the necessary knowledge and skills coinciding with the change. One of the teachers says:

> At present, there are two models for the enhancement of teachers' professional competencies: lesson study and action research. A colleague supervising another colleague and having a dialogue with a group of colleagues are placed among the measures of lesson study; of course, self-direction can be effective too. Some teachers seek learning and attempt to raise the level of their knowledge through studying and establishing communication with knowledgeable people; of course, some others are also disinterested. (Participant no. 7)

According to most teachers, they will be able to perform changes accurately provided that they have achieved the needed professional competencies. In recent years, good actions have been carried out for developing teachers' professional competencies. Holding the festivals of action research and lesson study for teachers is one of these actions. These festivals alongside the educational workshops and courses which are held for teachers can entail the professional development of teachers.

One teacher about teachers' competencies in elementary education says:

> The most important challenge in the education system and the elementary courses is the problem of efficient and capable personnel. Unfortunately, we have to employ some of the teachers because of urgency and based on needs. Due to the lack of specialized knowledge and weakness in the profession, these unofficial teachers cause us to face difficulty in implementing plans. (Participants no. 10 and 12)

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has begun to deploy unofficial and non-expert teachers, especially in the elementary course, due to the shortage of human resources on one hand and the high costs of employing official and expert teachers on the other hand. This has entailed the reduction of teachers' professional competencies

A teacher about participating in curriculum development says:

> Teachers would like to create change, but their changes are according to their lived experiences and are not originated from professional knowledge. Many teachers have not

carried out curriculum planning yet and are only waiting for imparting plans from up. Holding educational courses is necessary for raising the knowledge and skill of curriculum planning. (Participant no. 14).

Without holding specialized curriculum planning courses for teachers, they should not be expected to begin to develop a curriculum or cooperate with the planning group in the process of curriculum planning. Teachers without this specialized knowledge should not also claim that they can carry out such a thing.

(3) Teachers' motives

Having a motive is so important to successfully do things. Teachers should have enough motives to be able to afford the assigned heavy responsibility and well perform plans. A teacher remarks:

> Teachers are usually taken opinion polls in the earlier stages of the implementation of any plan, but they are motiveless and inattentive. Our teachers are practically silent and say nothing and don't participate seriously and this idea is common that if we don't remark on our ideas, other teachers will remark on their ideas. One of the reasons which entail low motives in teachers is the fact that many of their viewpoints and ideas are not considered in the change process, and teachers become disappointed. Even some teachers with high experience avoid participating in sessions and committees, and don't present themselves. (Participant no. 4).

Not only the necessary actions are not done to raise teachers' motives, but also due to some behaviors, their motives reduce day by day.

One teacher tells:

> The problem we have in implementing plans and designs is the low motives of teachers. They have no motivation for performing plans. The need of some teachers for achieving job advances concludes that they perform plans well, and the teachers who don't need job advances do not perform plans well. The cause of participating in some festivals is only achieving advances and letters of commendation; there is no inner motive for the implementation of plans. (Participant no. 15)

Some teachers have no inner motive for implementing new plans, and they begin to perform plans only due to outer motives and in the hope of receiving letters of commendation and advances.

The Role of Principals.   Schools are the ultimate destination of all the curricula. Two instances of teachers' remarks about principals role have come in the following:

> The principal, despite having a high position, doesn't almost have any authority. Besides, principals are engaged in such problems and challenges that they can't concentrate on the main problems of the education system. (Participant no. 2)

Often, a principal has had the role of an encourager for implementing plans, as a factor of motivation. The schools which have had a capable principal and have been able to coordinate teachers and families with themselves and to justify them regarding the plans both have been successful and have had fewer problems. On the contrary, dictatorial management doesn't establish appropriate communication with teachers and effectiveness doesn't occur. (Participant no. 4)

Principals play a key and important role in both justifying and giving knowledge to teachers and the parents of students regarding plans and supporting and providing the needed resources and possibilities, and also in accurately controlling the performance of plans. So, this key component should be regarded, and there should be necessary accuracy in appointing principals

The Position of Families and Parents. Students spend most of their own time at home and with their parents. The parents of students have good capacities to cooperate with teachers in the successful implementation of plans. Two instances of teachers' remarks:

Although some steps are taken regarding the justification and instruction of teachers in all the plans which are performed, the subject of instructing families is not regarded. After passing several years of implementation of some plans such as Qualitative-Descriptive Evaluation, we still see that families are not justified. (Participant no. 4)

I try to communicate and coordinate with the parents in implementing designs and plans and get their help. Giving knowledge to the parents about the designs and plans will affect the effective implementation of the plans. (Participant no. 19)

So, parents and teachers must keep in contact so that the parents of students have enough knowledge about plans. Holding the sessions of "parents and teachers association" in schools is one of the most important ways for communicating with parents and giving knowledge to them. At the same time, communicative channels should be expanded and a variety of training should be presented to families.

It seems that teachers' motivation is the most important component for successfully implementing plans. Teachers would like to be seen and their ideas and suggestions to be regarded. If teachers are not considered as the only implementer of plans and at the same time, they are communicated in the process of curriculum development, they will not show much resistance against change. Principals as the representatives and mediators of the educational system in schools can play an important role in the effective implementation of plans as well. The importance of this role will more appear in the case of appropriately appointing principals and giving more authority to them. Besides, the parents of students are the lost ring in education. If the officials of the education system would like the endeavors of planners not to be wasted and the developed

plans to be performed successfully, they should pay special attention to the triangle of teachers, principals, and the parents of students.

> **Question 3**. What are teachers' lived experiences of curriculum planning system status in the processes of curriculum development and implementation?

To respond to this question and based on the performed interviews with teachers, 38 codes were obtained. Among these codes, five subcategories were extracted, and all of them were placed under a general category titled "curriculum planning system status."

Main Category 3: Curriculum Planning System Status

The curriculum planning system contains the stages of development, implementation, and evaluation. Curriculum development shows who and during which stages a curriculum has been formed. Curriculum implementation includes the process of preparing teachers, students, and society, providing necessary possibilities, controlling actions, and supporting predicted proceedings. This category included the support of the curriculum, the supervision of curriculum implementation, the multiplicity of plans and curricula, information about the curriculum, and a centralized educational system.

The Support of the Curriculum.   Any plan needs support to be implemented accurately. If new curricula and their implementers are not supported and the necessary possibilities are not provided for implementation, performing these curricula will face difficulty. The remarks of one teacher:

> The designs and plans of the elementary courses don't have the necessary support. On-the-job educational courses aren't enough and are not performed by teachers at the proper time. Besides, the shortage of resources and possibilities creates restrictions for teachers which this problem prevents reaching educational goals. (Participant no. 1)

The Supervision of Curriculum Implementation.   Uninterrupted control by officials and experts is needed and necessary during the process of curriculum implementation. One of the teachers expresses the following about this point:

> This is a defect that our plans are not measured and logical from the beginning to the end, and they aren't monitored. The evaluation of plans is not made after performing for two or three years to see whether teachers have accepted these plans or not. (Participant no. 14)

After passing several months of implementing a curriculum, teachers may have met challenges and problems, or have not accurately performed the procedure of implementation. Even in the case of accurately performing a curriculum, it needs feedback as well. Thus, without control, you can't expect the accurate implementation of a curriculum.

The Multiplicity of Plans and Curricula. Many formal and informal plans are performed in the educational system of Iran. All of these plans originated from the Fundamental Reform Document of Education and also the National Curriculum. Formal curricula include contents and subjects which have been developed in the cast of textbooks and are presented to all students. The examples of the participants' remarks have come in the following:

> The number of designs and plans in the elementary course is high. Some of the plans are greatened and some not. When a plan loses its importance, it is not taken into consideration by teachers. Some plans are hasty, and they haven't corresponded with the existing realities in schools. Most of these plans aren't also performed well because they have been the complement of curriculum and haven't been placed in the formal curriculum directly. (Participants no. 7, 12, and 18)

Due to the wide range of subjects and issues related to students, all of them can't be contained in textbooks. So, these subjects are educated to students in the cast of some plans and designs. This has resulted in the multiplicity of plans and designs in the elementary course.

Informing About Curriculum. Teachers as the main implementers of curricula should have enough information about the logic and goals of the plans they perform and the manner of performing them. Some teachers have remarked on this issue:

> The lecturers of the Ministry discussed a set of subjects and methods in an on-the-job course of instructor training, and in another course with a new team and lecturers, much of the presented materials by previous lecturers were rejected. This happening resulted in contradiction in the contents of different courses. (Participant no. 3)

> Some failure factors of some plans are the way and time of informing about changing the plans, not careful justifying the implementers of change and their distrust in change plans. The time of informing about plans is usually in the middle of the school year when teachers are engaged in many other problems. (Participants no. 1, 3, 8, and 17)

Thus, correct and on-time information in this case will play a key role in accepting curriculum change and the successful performance of the curricula. On the contrary, weak information will entail the failure of change.

Centralized Educational System. The type of educational system affects the method of teachers' communication. In centralized educational systems, all decisions are made in the center and the developed curricula are imparted from up to down. These curricula usually do not have the necessary flexibility, and teachers are obligated to completely implement these curricula while in non-centralized educational systems, making

decisions are assigned to provinces so that they make a decision for students according to their possibilities, conditions, and culture and develop curricula and contents. The following are some teachers' remarks about this item:

> At the level of province, down-to-up communication can be established easily, but at a higher level (the level of the Ministry), down-to-up communication is not possible, or it is difficult due to the wideness of the country and the high number of schools and teachers. When a Deputy Minister came to our city (Birjand), we could communicate with her easily, but when she is in Tehran, communicating with her is hard. (Participant no. 19)

> Since the structure of making the decision is centralized, the suggestions of teachers are not often penetrative. Sometimes, contradictory ideas and suggestions by the teachers across the country are delivered to the Ministry and decision makers also are not able to conclude due to systemic limitations. (Participants no. 4 and 12)

It seems that the centralized curriculum planning system in Iran has affected the other components such as the support of the curriculum, the supervision of curriculum implementation, the multiplicity of plans and curricula and also informing about curricula. Due to the shortage of credits and financial resources in the educational system in Iran, consequently, the issue of the shortage of educational per capita share and also the shortage of educational tools and materials are exposed to the discussion. The spread and dispersal of schools on one hand and the shortage of expert human resources on the other hand have caused the reduction of controls. Besides, the endeavors of the educational system for reducing centralism and giving some authority to provinces have entailed the creation of new plans outside of formal school programs. Above all, despite its importance in giving knowledge and justifying teachers as the main implementers of curricula, the subject of informing about plans and curricula has not been carried out well. All of these items have concurred together so that the changes in curricula are not performed successfully and teachers are not satisfied with the status quo.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to investigate the elementary school teachers' lived experiences of communication with the curriculum planning system in curriculum development and implementation processes in Iran. The results of the research show that creating motive and a sense of possession in teachers and their professional development is necessary for the effective implementation of curricula (Priestley & Drew, 2019). On the other hand, Rahman (2014) believes that communication between teachers and the curriculum planning system can increase teachers' professional competencies and their understanding of the intended change and subsequently develop their commitment and motivation for implementing change. The results of this research can be classified according to three categories: "communicative channels between teachers and curriculum planning system," "human communication factors," and

"curriculum planning system status." Communicative channels refer to the ways and methods which are applicated to inform teachers and develop their skills regarding new curricula and also receive their ideas and suggestions; this happens in both the real and the virtual spaces. Instances of these communicative channels have been stated in the research such as Jain (2012), Leonardi et al. (2013), Kauffmann and Carmi (2014), and Singhal (2016). One of the communicative channels that have had many applications in skill development and the informativeness of teachers regarding changes in curricula is holding on-the-job educational courses in recent years. According to the findings of this research, these courses have not had the necessary efficiency for elementary school teachers in Iran. Based on the World Bank report (2012; quoted from Al Shabibi & Silvennoinen, 2018), the main critiques of teachers of on-the-job educational courses are the instances including impracticability, not discussing important subjects, teachers' lack of knowledge of the presented contents and also being short-term and having little effectiveness on teachers.

Human communication factors include the persons engaged in the process of curriculum implementation. It is necessary to maintain the communication between these persons and the curriculum planning system during the processes of curriculum development and implementation to effectively perform plans. These people include teachers, managers, and families. Caspe (2003) argues that programs of skill development and training for teachers should actively support the improvement of teachers' communicative skills. Teachers not only should be skillful in the art of pedagogy but also enhance their knowledge and competencies toward sufficient communication with managers, society, parents, and so on (Quoted from Ozmen et al., 2016). The relationship of teachers with managers and the other personnel of schools had been researched for several decades. These studies show that teachers are often isolated from their colleagues in school; so creating opportunities for interaction and empathy for teachers has been the aim of recent endeavors to raise the professionalism of teachers (Wang & Haertel, 2017). Communication not only with principals and teachers but also with the parents of students plays a very important role in effectively implementing curricula, and the efficiency of curricula is guaranteed by the realization of informing, giving knowledge, and training parents (quoted in Ozmen et al., 2016).

There are few opportunities in schools for participating parents in the implementation of the curriculum. The teachers and school management do not stimulate the active engagement of parents in addressing the issues of a more general character associated with the school curriculum and achievement of curricular and educational activities.

While research shows very clear about the benefits, indeed the necessity, of parent engagement, parents are their children's very first educators. They have a knowledge regarding their children that is not available to anyone else. They have a vested and committed interest in their children's success, and they also have valuable knowledge and skills to contribute that spring from their interests, hobbies, occupations, and place in the community. Almost all teachers express strong, positive attitudes about parent involvement in general. However, the strength of school programs and teachers' actual practice vary considerably (Fullan, 2007).

One another of the findings in this research points out the low motivation of teachers for implementing the curriculum. Saracaloğlu et al. (2010) have mentioned that the reasons for the lack of teachers' motives include excluding their viewpoints and ignoring their needs in the curriculum development process.

In the third category, the existing status of the curriculum planning system in Iran has been investigated based on these subordinate categories: "supporting curriculum," "supervising the implementation of the curriculum," "the multiplicity of plans and curricula," "informing about curriculum," and "centralized educational system." According to Fullan (2007, p. 87), change in curriculum is a complex process that can be affected by some factors such as the support of change plans and also teachers. Donald Elly (quoted from Myers, 2017) believes that some environmental conditions exist, which can help promote change. One of these conditions is supporting teachers by the leaders of change. Schermerhorn et al. (2007, p. 9) have mentioned six common approaches for overcoming resistance against change including material and spiritual support for teachers. Based on the findings of the research, the necessary support is not accomplished for the change plans in Iran. On the other hand, one of the effective actions before implementing a new curriculum is rapid and on-time informing teachers of changes. Informing and giving knowledge to teachers is so helpful for linking their thoughts with the new thoughts about specialized and thematic areas and also regarding the improvement and modification of teachers' attitudes toward change and new curricula. According to the findings of the research, the method of informing about the changes in curricula in Iran is at a weak level. Generally speaking, the curriculum planning system in Iran is centralized, and the biggest problem in centralized curriculum planning systems which are managed from up to down is that supporting the low levels of change in these systems is very difficult. Teachers may bear this sort of communication in critical situations, but they do not accept it as a common procedure and an everyday reality (Rowley & Sherman, 2004). Besides, the messages coming from the opposite side may not be noticed in centralized curriculum planning systems (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). Gad (2015), of course, believes that communication from up to down entails the raising of efficiency for the control process; however, the findings of this study show that sufficient control on implementing curricula does not take place in Iran.

Our findings can improve the trend of change in curricula and prevent their failure of them. According to the research literature and the remarks of the research participants, the following actions for solving the existing problems are suggested:

1. Communicative channels should be established and reinforced in organizations and offices and these channels should be open so that teachers can communicate with high-level officials in the process of change and present their questions, ideas, and suggestions.
2. It is necessary to be careful about appointing managers of different organizational levels, especially principals, and managers with high communicative skills and strong public relations should be deployed.

3. On-the-job education should be reviewed, revised, and innovated, and the existing weak points in this area should be eliminated.
4. It is necessary to inform teachers of the goals and results of new curricula before implementing them through holding conventions, seminars, and educational workshops.
5. It is suggested that the following actions are accomplished to empower the relationship between teachers and the curriculum planning system in the processes of curriculum development and implementation:
    Preparing conditions for teachers' professional growth
    Giving counseling services to teachers
    Providing Scientific support for teachers and freeing up their time to study
    Letting them participate in the sessions of curriculum planning councils

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

ORCID iD

Morteza Karami https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7161-9500

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

References

Al Shabibi, A. S., & Silvennoinen, H. (2018). Challenges in education system affecting teacher professional development in Oman. *Athens Journal of Education*, *5*(3), 261–282. https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.5-3-3

Alsubaie, M. A. (2016). Curriculum development: Teacher involvement in curriculum development. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *7*(9), 106–107.

Butt, M., Mahmood, S., & Urooj, T. (2021). Curriculum change in Pakistan: Lessons learned from the past and the way forward. *Gomal University Journal of Research*, *37*(1), 55–70. https://doi.org/10.51380/gujr-37-01-06

Carson, T. R. (2010). Curriculum implementation. In K. Crige (Ed.), *In encyclopedia of curriculum studies* (pp. 212–213). Sage Publication.

Caspe, M. S. (2003). How teachers come to understand families. *School Community Journal*, *13*(1), 115.

Chimbunde, P., & Kgari-Masondo, M. (2020). Representation of the Zimbabwean 2015-2022 social studies curriculum: Teacher's perspectives about 'Ubuntulising' curriculum change and implementation. *Perspectives in Education*, *38*(1), 269–282. https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v38i1.19

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th Edition). Teachers College.

Fundamental Reform Document of Education of Iran (2010). The Supreme Council of Education. [In Persian].

Gad, J. (2015). The relationship between supervisory board and management and their communication processes in publicly listed companies in Poland. *Comparative Economic Research*, *18*(2), 139–160.

Gillies, R. M. (2004). The effects of communication training on teachers' and students' verbal behaviors during cooperative learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *41*(3), 257–279. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2005.07.004

Goldring, E., Grissom, J. A., Rubin, M., Neumerski, C. M., Cannata, M., Drake, T., & Schuermann, P. (2015). Make room value added: Principals' human capital decisions and the emergence of teacher observation data. *Educational Researcher*, *44*(2), 96–104. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X15575031

Hall, G., & Hord, S. (2015). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

Hosseini, S. M. H. (2015). The voices of silent fundamental reform of education: Principals. *Journal of School Management (Roshd)*, *15*(3), 26–29. [In Persian].

Huang, S. C., Chen, C. H., & Chen, H. L. (2004). A case study of communication channels in a graduate program. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *41*(1), 147–155. https://doi.org/10.1002/meet.1450410117

Iskandar, I. (2020). Teachers' fidelity to curriculum: An insight from teachers' implementation of the Indonesian EFL curriculum policy. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)*, *3*(2), 50–55. https://doi.org/10.33750/ijhi.v3i2.79

Jain, M. (2012). Business communication and its strategy. *Journal of Social Welfare & Management*, *4*(2), 109–112.

Janík, T., Janko, T., Pešková, K., Knecht, P., & Spurná, M. (2018). Czech Teachers' attitudes towards curriculum reform implementation. *Human Affairs*, *28*(1), 54–70. https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2018-0006

Kauffmann, D., & Carmi, G. (2014). How team leaders can use ICT to improve trust among virtual teams to increase collaboration. *International Journal of Engineering and Innovative Technology [IJEIT]*, *3*(9), 204–221.

Khan, A., Khan, S., Zia-Ul-Islam, S., & Khan, M. (2017). Communication skills of a teacher and its role in the development of the Students' academic success. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *8*(1), 18–21.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (2001). *Managing change effectively*. Butterworth.

Kupritz, V. W., & Cowell, E. (2011). Productive management communication: Online and face-to-face. *The Journal of Business Communication (1973)*, *48*(1), 54–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943610385656

Leonardi, P. M., Huysman, M., & Steinfield, C. (2013). Enterprise social media: Definition, history, and prospects for the study of social technologies in organizations. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *19*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12029

Marsh, C. J., & Willis, G. (2007). *Curriculum: Alternative approaches, ongoing issues* (4th edition). Pearson.

Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic internal communication: Transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *28*(2), 264–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318914524536

Miles, J. (2021). Curriculum reform in a culture of redress: How social and political pressures are shaping social studies curriculum in Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *53*(1), 47–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1822920

Myers, C. E. (2017). Elements of Change. *Perspectives in Learning*, *16*(1),15-18 Retrieved from https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/pil/vol16/iss1/4.

National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2010). The Supreme Council of Education. [In Persian].

Ngussa, B. M., Waiswa, M. M., & Makewa, L. N. (2017). Curriculum change and teacher participation: A comparative study in adventist secondary schools in Uganda and Tanzania. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education (JRIIE)*, *1*(1), 18–31.

Okoli, A. C. (2017). Relating communication competence to teaching effectiveness: Implication for teacher education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *8*(3), 150–154.

Ornstein, A. C., & Hunkins, F. P. (2017). *Curriculum: Foundation, principles and issues* (7th ed). In Pearson Education.

Ozmen, F., Akuzum, C., Zincirli, M., & Selcuk, G. (2016). The communication barriers between teachers and parents in primary schools. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *66*, 26–46.

Priestley, M., & Drew, V. (2019). Professional enquiry: An ecological approach to developing teacher agency. In D. Godfrey & C. Brown (Eds.), *An ecosystem for research-engaged schools: Reforming education through research* (pp. 154–170). Routledge.

Rahman, A. N. H. (2014). *From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia*. The University of York.

Rogers, E. M. (2010). *Diffusion of innovations*. Simon and Schuster.

Rowley, D. J., & Sherman, H. (2004). *From strategy to change: Implementing the plan in higher education*. John Wiley & Sons.

Saracaloğlu, S., Yılmaz, S., Çengel, M., Çöğmen, S., Karademir, C. A., & Kanmaz, A. (2010). Elementary teachers' views about their roles in curriculum development and evaluation process: The case of Denizli. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *2*(2), 2427–2434. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.349

Schermerhorn, J. R., James, G. H., & Richard, N. O. (2007). *Organizational behavior* (7th edition). John wiley and sons.

Singhal, A. (2016). Contributions of Everett M. Rogers to the development of communication and social change. *Journal of Development Communication*, *27*(1), 57–68.

Sinnema, C., Nieveen, N., & Priestley, M. (2020). Successful futures, successful curriculum: What can Wales learn from international curriculum reforms? *The Curriculum Journal*, *31*(2), 181–201. https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.17

Sousa, A. A., Agante, P., Quental, C., & Gouveia, L. B. (2014). Model of digital mediation to support communication between teachers unions and the education community. In *International conference on electronic government and the information systems perspective* (pp. 187–200). Springer.

Stryker, J. B., & Santoro, M. D. (2012). Facilitating face-to-face communication in high-tech teams. *Research-Technology Management*, *55*(1), 51–56. https://doi.org/10.5437/08956308X5501013

Tourani, H., Aghayee, A., & Manteghi, M. (2010). The world experiences regarding the educational innovations from the viewpoint of production method, acceptance and implementation of innovation in public education of Iran. *Journal of Educational Innovations*, *11*(43), 7–41. [In Persian].

Wang, H. (2006). *An implementation study of English as a foreign language curriculum policies in the Chinese tertiary context (pp. 2043-2043)*. Queen's University.

Wang, M. C., & Haertel, G. D. (2017). Teacher relationships. *A digest of research from the Laboratory for Student Success*.

Author Biographies

Majid Dadmehr, PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

Morteza Karami, Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Department of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

Behrouz Mahram, Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Department of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

Samad Izadi, Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Department of Educational Silences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Iran.