Teachers' Perception of The School Level Curriculum Development in the Context of Improving the Quality of Education

Presented by
Wachyu Sundayana

The Department of English Education, Faculty of Language and Arts Education, Indonesia University of Education

Background

In the year of 2005, The Department of National Education of The Republic of Indonesia released Government Regulation No. 19 on National Education Standard (NES) as mandated in the Law No. 20, 2003, Chapter IX on National Education System. The standards consist of the content, process, graduate outcomes, educational personnel, facilities and equipments, management, funding, and educational assessment. As it is stated in the Chapter X that curriculum development of both the primary and secondary education levels must be based on the national standards. In the standard frameworks, the Ministry of National Education issued Ministry Decree no 24, in the year of 2005 on the implementation Content and Graduate Outcomes Standard in School Level Curriculum. As it is explicitly mentioned in this decree, one of the goals of school curriculum development is to improve quality education.

In practice, the development of the curriculum does not go smoothly. As learned from the past practices of curriculum development in 1994 and 2004, one of the drawback factors in developing the curriculum was at the stage of socialization. As result of this, teachers' knowledge and perception of school level curriculum development does not really support the implementation of this curriculum. This study will address teachers' perception and knowledge of school level curriculum development and its implication to its implementation in schools.

School Level Curriculum Development in Indonesia; An Overview

School Level Curriculum Development (SLCD) adopted in Indonesia is different from the practice of School Based-Curriculum Development (SBCD) in other countries like Australia. The approach used in SLCD is the combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The Department of National Education through the Board of National Education Standard (BNES) provides the frameworks for SLCD in the forms of Content Standard and Graduate Competence Standard. The two standards are used as the foundation for developing school level curriculum. As it is mandated in the Law No. 20/2003, Chapter X, Articles 36 , point (1) asserts that curriculum development is conducted on the basis of National Education Standards. Point (2) of the same Chapter says that Curriculum at all levels and types of education is developed with the principles of diversifications, adjusted to the units of education, local and learners potentials. In Chapter 38, point (1) says that framework and curriculum structures of elementary and secondary education are determined by the government. The frameworks as stated in Chapter 1, Article 1, point (1) Government Regulation No. 19 on NES must be used as of the basis for developing both school level curriculum and syllabus of each school. In point 2 of that article is also emphasized that school level curriculum is defined as operational curriculum. This term, in my opinion, is equal to syllabus.

Whereas, SBCD in other countries like Australia adopts bottom-up approach in the sense that activities and processes of curriculum development occur from and within the school. In this connection, Skilbeck (1991) says "that SBD is a process when some or all members of a school take part on planning, implementation, and evaluation on the aspects or elements of the curriculum." This statement indicates that SBC is developed from within the school that involves stake holders of school beginning from the stage of planning up to evaluation stage of curriculum development.

Based upon Ministry of National Education regulation No 24, 2005 on the implementation of content and graduate competence standards, schools have only the authority to develop or adjust the two standards to the existing school condition. The adjustment is reflected in syllabus of the subjects recommended in the

curriculum structure for both primary and secondary levels of education. In this connection, the BNES has set some guidelines for SLCD covering the following:

(1) address students' needs, potentials, and their existing environment;

(2) consider integration and variation;

(3) consider or be responsive to the development of science, technology, and arts;

(4) relate to life skills;

(5) keep the balance of national and local interests; and

(6) reflect continuity and wholeness.

The underlying spirit of using combined approach in SLCD is that to balance the national and local interests as stated in one of the principles above. This is actualized in accordance with the philosophy underlying the national constitution known as "unity in diversity" which is further adopted as one of the principles of education provision as mandated in the Law No. 20, 2003 on National Education System, Chapter II, Article 4, point (1) which states that " education is conducted democratically, equally and non-discriminatorily based on human rights, religious values, and national pluralism."

Theoretically, if the first principle is put into a practice, curriculum developers including teachers should follow the stages suggested by some experts in curriculum development (Print,1993 ; Brown, 1995):
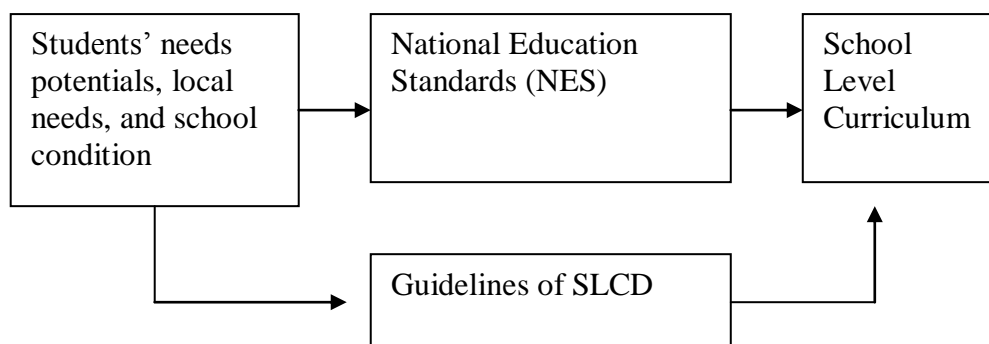

Figure 1: The Stages of SLCD

In the context of systematic or rationale approach of curriculum development, the SLCD should go through the following steps:

1. Need Analysis

As it is indicated in the guidelines, school level curriculum should be developed by considering students' needs and potentials. In order to get information on students' needs and potentials, a team of curriculum development appointed by school principal has to conduct need assessment. Here, they also identify school capacity building, in terms of facilities, teacher's competence, financial capacity and other's school condition. The result of this analysis serves as input for developing components of school curriculum, such as goals or objectives and contents.

2. Document Analysis

The purpose of document analysis is to identify standard competences and basic competences mandated in the content standard. As it is instructed in Government Regulation No. 19, 2005, Content and Graduate Competence Standards must be used as the foundation for developing school level curriculum. The two analyses, need and documents analyses are combined as the basis for developing the curriculum.

3. Developing School Level Curriculum includes the following:

3.1 Objective Formulation
The job of teachers in developing school level curriculum is to identify standard and basic competences. In objective formulation, teachers have to do the following:
(1) select and organize the competences by considering students' prior knowledge, potentials, and background, (2) formulate statements of

competences into more specific indicators that covers three learning domains, intellectual and cognitive learning domains, motor skills, and affective learning domain. Although, this taxonomy seems outdated, the guidelines of the curriculum still recommend the learning taxonomy to be adopted in formulating indicators of competences attainment and objectives.

3.2 Selection and organization of instructional contents as recommended in the content standard

In this step, teachers have to select and organize the instructional contents which are mandated in the content standard by taken into consideration the formulated indicators and students' prior knowledge. So, a teacher, for example, can reorganize the mandated contents for a particular subject if they are not really congruence with students' prior knowledge.

3.3 Selecting and sequencing of teaching and learning experiences

The organization of learning experiences in terms of students' learning activities must be done by considering indicators. The indicators serve as guides in this step. Other factors taken into consideration are method and strategy for presenting materials that can help students attain the indicators.

3.4 Selecting and developing assessment tools

In selecting assessments tools, teachers have to use the indicators as guides so that the assessments they develop can function to assess the indicators of competence attainment which are mandated in the content standard. The assessments they select and develop is aimed at evaluating both learning process and outcomes. The function of the assessment (especially formative assessment) is as feedback for revising school level curriculum or syllabus, and instruction.

In practice, what the guidelines of school level curriculum indicate is not always implemented or followed by teachers due to some problems. The problems they encounter in developing the curriculum are identified in this study. The study will discuss their perception and knowledge of school level curriculum and their

implication to the implementation of the operational curriculum or syllabus in schools.

Research Methodology

The descriptive method was used in this study. The research aims at obtaining information on teachers' perception and knowledge of SLCD and the its implementation in schools. The data were colleted using questionnaire. The interview was also used to get in-depth information on school level curriculum implementation. The colleted data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the forms of percentage, frequency, and tabulation.

Subjects

There were 60 teachers of SMP (Junior High Schools) and Madrasah Tsanawayah (Islamic Junior High Schools) selected as subjects of the research coming from 24 regencies in West Java Province. Almost all of the teachers selected as respondents had joined the training on school level curriculum development.

Results of the Study

Based upon the collected data through the questionnaire, the study indicates that most of the teachers (74%) know SLCD including its stages. They got this knowledge from the training held by regional office of education. In developing of the curriculum, they ranked the following steps to be taken by schools.

Table 1: Stages of SLCD favored and ranked by teachers

Stages	%	Rank
Planning	42	1
Implementation	24	2
Evaluation	22	3
Dissemination	12	4

Table 1 shows that teachers ranked of the activities of school level curriculum development starting from planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination. They thought that dissemination was not crucial step in developing curriculum. Regarding with the planning stage, they thought that the activities in the table below must be conducted by a team of curriculum development.

Table 3: Activities conducted at Planning Stage

Activities	%
Discussion with other teachers, headmaster, and related experts	35
Analyzing content standard	27
Analyzing textbooks and other curriculum documents	20
Need assessment and self evaluation	18

The table shows that discussion with other teachers, headmaster, experts, analyzing content standard, textbooks and other curriculum documents should be conducted by a team of curriculum development. Need assessments was thought as the last step conducted in developing the curriculum. This is different from the common practice of curriculum development that places need assessment as the first step to be handled by curriculum developer, especially in objective-based model of curriculum development.

In practice, though it is recommended in the guidelines of school level curriculum development, teacher as curriculum developer did not conduct need assessment as the primary step in this model of curriculum development. They thought that analyzing needs is not a must in developing school level curriculum.

In connection to activities conducted prior to school level curriculum development, they thought that the activities in the table below are commonly carried out by a team of school level curriculum development.

Table 4: Activities conducted prior to SLCD

Activities conducted prior to SLCD	%
- Training	46
- Discussion	26
- Seminar and workshop	14

- Regular meeting	14

The above table indicates that training and discussion on school level curriculum development must be carried prior to SLCD. These activities were followed by seminar, workshop and regular meeting held by school management. In line with this, the respondents says that the activities must be organized and handled by school-level curriculum development team. The members of the team consists of headmaster, superintendent, experts in curriculum development and instruction, and teachers which represent different subjects in the school curriculum. The same activities were also suggested by teachers as means for disseminating all of school level curriculum documents. They thought that training and workshops as effective means for dissemination.

In spite of the fact that teachers have knowledge of SLCD through numerous means as mentioned above, at the level of the curriculum implementation they encountered some problems as indicated in the following table.

Table 5: Problems encountered in SLC Implementation

Problems in the implementation of SLC	%
- Lack of school facilities to support SLC implementation	33,7
- Incompleteness of SLC documents	19,9
- Lack of assessment tools	19,8
- The guidelines of SLC is not clear	14,3
- Others	13,3

The data indicates that the respondents thought that lack of school facilities, school level curriculum documents, assessment tools, and the clarity of the guidelines were considered as problems in implementing the curriculum. Based on the interview with some of the respondents, incompleteness of the curriculum document and the incomplete guidelines for its implementation in schools has resulted in   lack of the clarity in designing instructional planning. One of the respondents interviewed, for instance, says that " *Jujur saja kita mah masih bingung dalam membuat Rencana Pelaksnaan Pembelajaran (RPP).*" (She admits that teachers are still confused in designing instructional planning). When they were

asked how to design the instructional planning, most of them said that they made the planning by (1) copying and adjusting the model of instructional planning developed by the Curriculum Center; (2) following and copying all contents covered in the recommended textbooks. Indirectly, the data indicate that teachers tend to ignore the principles and the guidelines in the practice of SLCD in schools.

The inconsistency reflected not only in the ways teachers design instructional planning but also in developing other curriculum components. For example, almost majority of the respondents (75 %) say that in evaluating the effectiveness of the planned program they tend to use the test, mostly summative tests using paper and pencil tests. They develop the test with reference to types of tests commonly developed in the national examination. With this improper tool of evaluating the program, teachers and headmaster could not identify accurately, for example, evaluating students' attainment of the learning objectives formulated in instructional planning.

The findings are supported by the fact that most of the teaching institutions in the country do not provide teachers with planned professional development programs that can help them develop their knowledge and skills needed to cope with new trends and developments in curriculum and instruction. The other factor that might deforms the implementation of school level curriculum is teacher's qualification. The data released by the Department of National Education indicates that 37 % of teachers in Indonesia are not qualified enough to fulfill the requirements of professional teacher as stated in the Minister of National Education Decree No. 18 on Teacher's Academic Qualification and Competences.

The mismatch in SLCD as also experienced in the previous curriculum development (the 1994 and 2004 curriculum development) is considered as one of the factors that distort the effort of improving quality education in our schools. Some experts in curriculum development (Sale, 2000, Brown, 1995, and Gagne, 1992) say that Curriculum Components Consistency (Triple Cs) as recommended in systematic or objective-based model of curriculum development for having a relatively measured program development which is a prerequisite for improving the quality of education in schools.

Conclusion

This study has indicated that school-level curriculum development adopted by the Board of National Education Standard is regarded as means for empowering schools and granting the education autonomy at school level as mandated in the Law No 30 on National Education System. One of the goals of introducing school level curriculum in our schools is to improve quality education. Since, by giving the autonomy in developing educational program, though some experts regarded this policy as a pseudo autonomy, to school level where teachers, head masters and others in school administration can work cooperatively with related experts in developing school curriculum based on students' needs and potentials and school capacity. The role of the government through the BNES is to set the curriculum standard or standard frameworks for developing school curriculum.

As the data revealed that mismatch and inconsistency are still marked the practice of school level curriculum development. This inconsistency is thought by some experts as one of the factors that could distort the attainment of one of the goals of this curriculum development that is to improve quality of education.

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Prepared at

Third International Conference UPSI-UPI

UPSI Malaysia 25th – 27th November, 2008

MALAYSIA

November, 2008