

CHALLENGES IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE IN PAKISTAN

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18467834>

Keywords

Article History

Received: 05 December 2025

Accepted: 20 January 2026

Published: 03 February 2026

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Abstract

Curriculum implementation is an essential stage of the educational process because it converts policy goals into classroom practice. The gap between curriculum design and classroom execution persists in Pakistan despite numerous curriculum revisions. This essay examines the difficulties in implementing curricula from the viewpoint of teachers, emphasizing institutional, systemic, and classroom-level obstacles. The study finds important concerns such as poor teacher preparation, a lack of resources, curriculum and assessment misalignment, administrative limitations, and contextual socio-cultural factors using a qualitative analytical approach based on current literature and contextual evidence. The essay also suggests doable ways to enhance curriculum implementation through professional development, policy alignment, and teacher empowerment. The results show that improving teachers' roles, abilities, and working circumstances is crucial to the successful implementation of curricula in Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

The process of converting planned curriculum objectives and content into real teaching and learning procedures in classrooms is known as curriculum implementation (Marie & Domingo, 2024). The success of educational reform is largely dependent on how well curricula are implemented at the institutional and classroom levels, even though politicians frequently pay close attention to curriculum creation (Campbell-Phillips, n.d.). The disparity between intended and implemented curricula is a recurring finding in international research, especially in educational systems with limited resources and capacity (Nevenkosky & Cale, n.d.). With numerous changes meant to enhance educational quality, relevance, and equity, curriculum reform has continued to be a top governmental objective in Pakistan. Evidence indicates that curriculum implementation still

presents major obstacles in spite of these efforts (Hussain et al., 2025). Ambitious learning objectives are often stated in policy documents, but the tools needed to assist teachers in accomplishing these objectives are still lacking (Orr et al., 2022). The overall impact of reform programs is undermined as a result of difference between curriculum goals and classroom practices. Teachers play a central role in curriculum implementation by interpreting curricular frameworks, selecting instructional approaches, and adapting content to meet diverse classroom demands (Bull et al., 2025). The way that curricular intentions are implemented in practice is directly impacted by their professional competency, availability of resources, and comprehension of curriculum requirements. However, a lack of professional development

opportunities, overburdened curricula, misaligned evaluation systems, and insufficient instructional assistance are just a few of the structural and instructional obstacles that teachers frequently encounter. Their ability to carry out curriculum policies as intended is severely restricted by these limitations (Nevenglo sky & Cale, n.d.).

Contextual differences in Pakistan's educational system make curriculum implementation even more difficult. Unfair conditions for curriculum implementation result from differences between public and private institutions, rural and urban environments, and resource availability. Despite this variability, government standards and curriculum rules frequently take a consistent position, giving teachers' contextual reality little thought. Therefore, by imposing unreasonable demands on educators and schools, curriculum materials may unintentionally contribute to implementation challenges. Systematic examination of curriculum policies, frameworks, and related official documents has received very little attention, despite the fact that previous studies have examined curriculum implementation issues through teacher surveys and interview-based research (Fink et al., 2025). Since these agreements create the settings under which teachers operate and shape instructional expectations, this constitutes a substantial gap in the literature. In order to close this gap, the current study critically examines Pakistani curriculum-related papers using qualitative documentary analysis. The goal of the study is to pinpoint issues with curriculum implementation that are present in these documents and examine how they affect teaching methods from a teacher-centered viewpoint.

Literature Review

It is often acknowledged that curriculum implementation is a complex, context-sensitive process that goes beyond policy creation and curriculum design. According to Fullan (2007) and Ornstein & Hunkins (2018), academics contend that the effectiveness of curriculum reforms depends not only on the caliber of curriculum documents but also on how these documents are understood and implemented in

classrooms. Teachers' attitudes, professional competencies, institutional circumstances, and larger policy settings all interact intricately during implementation (Canuto et al., 2020). As a result, a persistent issue in all educational institutions is the mismatch between the goals of the curriculum and the methods used in the classroom.

Teachers are key players in curricular enactment, according to numerous international studies. By converting abstract objectives into instructional method, classroom activities, and evaluation procedures, teachers mediate curriculum policies (Silseth et al., 2023). Fullan (2007) argues that effective curriculum implementation depends on teachers' understanding, commitment, and capacity to adapt curricular goals to address diverse learner needs. In a similar vein, Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) point out that teachers' workload, pedagogical expertise, and availability of instructional support all have an impact on curricular adoption. Curriculum modifications frequently lead to surface-level conformity rather than significant adjustments in teaching and learning methods when these circumstances are adverse (Barron, 2024).

Research from underdeveloped nations also shows how systemic and structural limitations exacerbate difficulties in implementing curricula. Reform initiatives are sometimes hampered by a lack of funding, poor infrastructure, big class sizes, and shoddy governance practices (UNESCO, 2016). According to research, instructors in these situations frequently don't have enough professional development to properly evaluate and implement new curricula (O'Sullivan, 2010). Because of this, curriculum reforms may be applied piecemeal, with teachers using tried-and-true teaching strategies that run counter to the goals of the reforms. These results imply that curricular papers by themselves are inadequate without ongoing institutional and professional support.

Curriculum implementation issues in Pakistan have been thoroughly documented in connection to pedagogical and systemic aspects. According to Aly (2007), curriculum reforms in Pakistan typically have an ambitious scope but poor implementation planning, especially when it

comes to teacher preparation and resource allocation. Inconsistencies in classroom practices across various areas and school systems have been caused by this gap between legislative ambitions and actual support. Shamim (2008) adds that examination-focused instruction, big class numbers, and language-related difficulties are important factors influencing instructors' choices about how to teach. These elements frequently force educators to put exam preparation ahead of curriculum goals that place an emphasis on skill development and critical thinking.

Further research highlights instructors' little involvement in curriculum creation. According to Halai (2011), teachers' feeling of ownership is diminished and implementation fidelity is adversely affected when they are not included in curriculum preparation. In a similar vein, Siddiqui (2016) observes that top-down curricular reforms in Pakistan frequently ignore instructors' contextual expertise, leading to resistance or mechanical adoption of required content. Together, these studies show that difficulties with curriculum implementation are not just instructional problems but are also ingrained in larger governance and policy frameworks.

The National Curriculum Framework (2020) and other recent curriculum policy initiatives support student-centered pedagogies and competency-based learning. However, research indicates that due to ongoing resource constraints and a mismatch between curriculum objectives and evaluation systems, classroom practices are essentially unchanged (Government of Pakistan, 2020). Teachers still utilize rote-based methods because of institutional expectations and current evaluation procedures, not because they are resistant to change. This discrepancy emphasizes how crucial it is to look at curriculum materials to comprehend how policy aims are expressed and conveyed to educators.

While surveys, interviews, and classroom observations have been used in a large corpus of research in Pakistan to study curriculum implementation, systematic examination of curriculum policies, frameworks, and official guidelines has received very less attention (Haque & David, 2022). A useful lens for spotting implicit

presumptions, inconsistencies, and gaps in curricular papers that influence teachers' implementation experiences is documentary analysis (Bull et al., 2025). It is easy to determine how curriculum expectations match—or don't match—the practical realities of teaching in various educational environments by thoroughly examining these materials. With teachers at the center of the implementation process, the literature generally shows that systemic, institutional, and pedagogical variables are at the core of Pakistan's curriculum implementation challenges. Nonetheless, more research is still required to critically analyze the curricular texts that define and limit teaching methods, going beyond the opinions of individual teachers. In order to close this gap, the current study uses qualitative documentary analysis to investigate curriculum implementation issues that are present in Pakistani official curriculum-related materials.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the key challenges encountered by teachers during the implementation of the curriculum in Pakistan.
2. Examining how institutional factors shape teachers in curriculum implementation.

Research Questions

1. What are the key challenges faced by teachers in curriculum implementation in Pakistan?
2. How do institutional factors shape teachers' curriculum implementation practices?

Methodology

The method used in this study was qualitative documentary analysis. Twenty scholarly articles, official reports, and policy documents pertaining to curriculum implementation and teachers' viewpoints were specifically chosen. Peer-reviewed journal publications, national education policy documents, curriculum frameworks, and studies published between 2007 and 2024—with an emphasis on the Pakistani educational context—were among the sources. A theme analysis was conducted on the chosen documents. Finding recurrent issues with teacher

capacity, institutional support, evaluation procedures, and contextual limitations was the main goal of the initial classification. These codes were then grouped into more general themes that reflected issues at the institutional, systemic, and classroom levels. This methodological approach ensured conceptual rigor and contextual relevance while enabling a thorough knowledge of curricular implementation challenges without the need for primary data collecting.

Challenges and Issues in Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation presents a number of difficulties for Pakistani educators. Inadequate professional training is a significant problem, especially when new curriculum are implemented. Curriculum objectives and recommended pedagogical practices are unclear to many teachers. Limited availability of teaching and learning resources, especially in public sector schools, remains a significant challenge. Teachers' capacity to implement student-centered teaching practices is further hampered by large class sizes and demanding workloads. Additionally, teachers are forced to prioritize content memory above conceptual understanding due to the examination-oriented atmosphere. Meaningful curriculum delivery is also hampered by administrative pressure to finish the coursework within constrained time limitations. Curriculum implementation is further complicated by sociocultural issues, such as pupils' varied learning requirements and language limitations.

Solutions and Improvement Strategies

Comprehensive and ongoing teacher professional development is crucial to addressing these issues. Curriculum comprehension, teaching techniques, and assessment literacy should be the main topics of training programs. Curriculum implementation can be greatly improved by providing sufficient teaching resources and encouraging learning settings.

Another crucial tactic is to match curriculum objectives with assessment systems. Teachers can better tailor education to the requirements of their

students by reducing content overload and providing flexibility in curriculum delivery. Ownership and successful implementation can also be enhanced by bolstering school leadership and incorporating educators in curriculum decision-making.

Findings

According to the report, institutional issues rather than individual teacher shortcomings are the main cause of Pakistan's curriculum implementation problems. Teachers show a desire to successfully apply the curriculum, but they are hampered by inadequate training, a lack of resources, and strict evaluation procedures. The results also show a high correlation between classroom practices and teachers' comprehension of curriculum objectives.

Results and Discussion

The findings imply that poor curriculum implementation has a detrimental influence on both student learning outcomes and teaching quality. Rather than being resistant to change, teachers' reliance on conventional approaches is sometimes a reaction to contextual constraints. The findings of this study indicate that curriculum reforms rarely achieve their intended outcomes when teachers are not actively involved or supported during the implementation process. The results of curriculum implementation can be greatly enhanced by addressing pedagogical and structural issues.

Conclusion

Pakistan's curriculum implementation has numerous obstacles that have an immediate impact on teaching and learning in the classroom. As important stakeholders, teachers face institutional, pedagogical, and systemic obstacles that restrict the efficient delivery of curricula. Curriculum revisions will continue to fall short of their intended objectives if these issues are not resolved. For significant educational improvement, policy, curriculum, and assessment must be aligned and teacher competence must be strengthened.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are put out in light of the findings:

- Implement long-term, practice-based teacher training initiatives.
- Make sure that assessment procedures and curriculum objectives are in line.
- Offer reasonable class sizes and sufficient teaching materials.
- Include educators in the creation and modification of the curriculum.
- To assist teachers, bolster school leadership and oversight systems.

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