

STUDENT TEACHERS' VIEWS ON CURRICULUM REFORM DYNAMICS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the thoughts of Universitas Negeri Makassar student teacher regarding the dynamics of Indonesia's curriculum reforms. There was a survey conducted among 30 student teachers to identify their understanding of the curriculum, issues faced during its implementation, and recommendations for its improvement. The results show that although the students possess a good basic knowledge regarding curriculum theory, they are challenged by its Student Teachers in practice, particularly with regard to resource limitations and bureaucratic pressures. The students also recommended the provision of more practical training for prospective teachers, as well as facility and mentorship enhancements for the teachers in responding to the changes in the curriculum. This study provides information on how student teachers contribute perspectives that support the advancement of curriculum implementation in schools across Indonesia.

Keywords: Curriculum Reform, Pre-service Teachers, Teaching Practice, Indonesian Education

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji perspektif mahasiswa calon guru yang mengikuti Program Pra-Layanan Mengajar (Pre-Service Teaching Program/PSTP) di Universitas Negeri Makassar mengenai dinamika reformasi kurikulum di Indonesia. Survei terstruktur yang terdiri dari pertanyaan kualitatif dan kuantitatif dilakukan terhadap 30 mahasiswa calon guru untuk mengeksplorasi pemahaman mereka tentang kurikulum, tantangan yang dihadapi selama implementasinya, serta rekomendasi mereka untuk perbaikan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun partisipan memiliki pemahaman dasar yang kuat mengenai teori kurikulum, mereka menghadapi tantangan signifikan dalam penerapannya secara praktis, terutama terkait keterbatasan sumber daya dan kendala birokrasi. Mereka menekankan perlunya pelatihan praktis yang lebih intensif bagi calon guru, serta peningkatan fasilitas dan dukungan pendampingan agar lebih siap menghadapi perubahan kurikulum. Penelitian ini memberikan informasi tentang bagaimana mahasiswa calon guru memberikan perspektif yang mendukung kemajuan pelaksanaan kurikulum di sekolah-sekolah di seluruh Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Reformasi Kurikulum, Calon Guru, Praktik Mengajar, Pendidikan Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The education system in Indonesia has had a long ride with numerous curriculum reforms. With each reform comes a new promise to the quality of the education. It began with the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), which was more liberal and provided room for creativeness in learning. This was later replaced with the 2013 Curriculum, which was thematic and competency based. The Merdeka Curriculum then came along with priority to the independence and freedom of the learners. However, the education system in Indonesia still faces multiple challenges, including disparities in access, unevenness of learning quality, and difficulty in implementing forever-changing curricula (Damayanti, 2023).

However, as much as each change in the curriculum is intended to yield more relevant and effective education, it does not always succeed in practice in the arena. Teachers, whose duties involve the implementation of new curricula, are usually coerced by pressure to deal with rapid changes that sometimes are even yet not fully grasped. Additionally, curriculum changes' inconsistencies in their implementation in schools prove that these changes do not always progress in every sector or school without disruption. As stated by Sari (2022), Indonesia's education curriculum development cannot be divorced from social and political politics and ever-shifting society demands. She claims that each curriculum reform is the government's effort to improve the education system to make it student-centered and more pertinent to global issues.

To university students undergoing Field Experience Practice (PPL), such curriculum changes provide interesting yet challenging experiences. As future teachers, they not only study curriculum theory in school but observe firsthand the implementation of such curricula in schools. Arofah (2021) argues that curriculum evaluation is a crucial step towards establishing the extent to which implemented curriculum manages to fulfill educational objectives. This evaluation encompasses not just content and methodological aspects but also considers the applicability of the curriculum to the needs of students and evolving social relationships. This experience provides them with fantastic opportunities to think critically – both from the perspective of having been oneself a student navigating through different curricula, and that of future teachers soon to be faced with these changes. The PPL is thus that unique space where theory meets practice, allowing room for student-teachers to gain insight into curriculum implementation issues at some depth.

The ultimate objective of every curriculum reform is to face the challenges of an ever-changing era. As technology is constantly evolving, globalization is expanding, and labor market needs are becoming more complicated, the education system needs to produce graduates who are not only knowledgeable, but also possess relevant skills and attitudes that can enable them to deal with these innovations. Santika et al. (2022) make it clear that curriculum revisions mean more than a technical shift; they are revealed educational philosophies, values, and aims reflecting changing social requirements and patterns. Therefore, curriculum reforms tend to create more responsive, innovative pedagogical strategies grounded in 21st-century competencies like critical thinking, collaboration, and information literacy.

Yet, for all these evident goals, changing curricula turns out to be more difficult than expected. In reality, many challenges arise from the teachers' partial comprehension of

new curricula to constraints on educational facilities and infrastructure. In certain areas, curriculum changes become especially onerous because of a lack of preparation for incorporating new frameworks into everyday teaching activities. Teachers are often beset by confusion when preparing proper lesson plans, while students at the same time face difficulties adjusting to new ways of learning. Setiawati (2022) argues that curriculum policy changes can impact learning processes in schools significantly. Adaptation to new curricula can affect teaching methods, use of resources, and the readiness of teachers to manage new pedagogical challenges. The transition period has a tendency to lay bare an inherent gap between policy formulation and practice implementation, particularly in resource scarce environments.

For the students on Field Experience Practice (PPL), this provides unobstructed visibility into the realities of the problems that occur at schools. They not only gain knowledge of theory of curriculum change in the university classrooms but get to see firsthand how such curricula are implemented and the issues encountered by the teachers and the students as well. Aprillia et al. (2022) observe that curriculum reforms within the learning process significantly impact the manner in which students and teachers interact with one another in educational processes. Their research emphasizes the need to adapt to curriculum reforms to create more effective learning environments that are significant to evolving contemporary demands.

Though timely curriculum overhauls are always intended to improve the standards of education, in reality, such reforms prove poorly prepared. Among the central problems of implementation is teacher readiness. Although teachers constitute an important element of a successful implementation of curricula, the majority are not familiar with new curricula. This is attributed to poor training programs and a lack of enough time to efficiently master the theoretical foundations as well as real applications of such changes. Rahmawati et al. (2023) show that curriculum reforms have a huge influence on the way teachers plan and implement instruction. Their study highlights the very important need for teachers to achieve an in depth understanding of curriculum changes in order to achieve more efficient teaching practices that respond to changing educational needs.

Additionally, the majority of schools lack proper facilities and infrastructure to support curriculum change that calls for technological usage and various pedagogies. Fajartriani and Karsiwan (2021) state that effective management of school infrastructure and facilities is critical in ensuring successful learning processes and highest achievement of learning goals. Few facilities in many schools, particularly rural schools, pose a big challenge to more progressive curricula adoption. For instance, teachers attempting to introduce technology based approaches tend to be hampered by inadequate machines, poor network connections, or poorly equipped classrooms for encouraging new modes of instruction. Another critical challenge is the overall understanding of curriculum reforms by stakeholders. In many instances, new curricula are implemented without adequate communication or full understanding between all the stakeholders from teachers to school administrators. Without adequate understanding, adoption of curricula proves ineffective and even leads to misinterpretation and confusion in the learning process. Lack of knowledge by teachers often results in unequal distribution of new curricular models to different schools and regions.

For student teachers undergoing Teaching Practicum (PPL), these conditions provide valuable lessons. They gain more than academic knowledge of curriculum changes from university classes; they observe firsthand how practicing teachers handle these matters in real classroom contexts. In the process, they witness firsthand: (1) the overriding importance of meticulous planning and deep understanding in successfully implementing the curriculum, and (2) how infrastructural limitations are effective barriers to educational change. Rachman et al. (2022) emphasize that adequate facilities and a conducive working environment play a significant role in teacher performance, as both factors are accountable for professional comfort and effectiveness in the execution of teaching responsibilities. This research underscores the actual connection between resource availability and the quality of education a relationship that becomes overtly apparent in teaching practicum experiences.

The load felt by teachers in accommodating curriculum changes generally goes beyond the learning of pedagogical content to include multiple other aspects that influence classroom performance. Husnani et al. (2019) identify that modern day teachers encounter interdisciplinary challenges, with a focus on adjusting to teaching technology innovations and responding to demands for improving quality of teaching correlated with current innovations. One of the primary challenges is increasingly complex administrative requirements. Each change in curriculum generates new lesson planning, assessment design, and documentation requirements, and these contribute substantially to teachers' administrative workload. Bureaucratic extra weight typically encroaches upon time better used in more effective teaching-learning process development. Rigianti and Karimah (2024) emphasize that the modern day problems of teaching that challenge teachers are not only competency needs as professionals but are intricately linked to performance measurement, which are quintessential indicators of teachers' achievement in schools. These assessment structures are unlikely to take into account context-specific challenges that confront teachers during curriculum changes.

Moreover, teachers need to adjust to innovative pedagogical methods, which tend to be quite different from conventional ones that they were trained on. Sole and Anggraeni (2018) speak about the important role of e-learning innovation in meeting 21st-century teachers' challenges, underlining the necessity for constant adjustment to the technology momentum in education. While these changes are intended to enhance the quality of teaching, the truth is that not all teachers are yet prepared to transition to more competency-based or technology-focused approaches. This adaptation takes many years, specialized training, and in most cases, a reinstatement of professional confidence. Abidah et al. (2022) further stress that teachers are severely tested within the era of Society 5.0, particularly in terms of rapid technological developments. Their work lays strong emphasis on the need for teachers to upgrade themselves towards new technology and embrace pedagogic culture reconcilable with the needs of the times so that students are prepared to deal with ongoing change in society. The transformation necessitates technical upskilling as well as a paradigm shift in pedagogy to appropriately bridge old and new paradigms in education.

Amid a recent curriculum reform, student teachers undergoing Field Experience Practice (PPL) have a privilege of seeing for themselves firsthand the observation and application of curricula in schools. Being prospective teachers, not only do they study

theories of curriculum at university, but also witness firsthand how the curricula are applied by practicing teachers in real classroom settings. Herman et al. (2023) assert that Indonesian curriculum reform policies are key drivers for quality improvements in education. They are meant to be consistent with both prevailing developments and the demands of the labor market, ultimately in the interests of enhancing learning quality and assisting the improvement of student competency. Through their PPL experience, student teachers are capable of critically examining the curriculum theory-practice gap and developing critical skills and knowledge essential in their future careers as teachers in Indonesia's evolving education landscape.

Student teachers gain effective observation skills when they carry out Field Experience Practice (PPL) in schools. They observe beyond the learning process to actually seeing how the taught curriculum works practically. Through this exposure, they also get to see various classroom settings - from classroom interactions between teacher and student to the issues experienced in the roll-out of new curricula. Through these experiences, PPL students develop rich understandings of curriculum implementation that often highlight strongly divergent contrasts with campus-based academic learning. They witness how curricula, designed with specific aims and expectations, are pragmatically implemented into practice teaching, and how forces external to the curriculum like resource limitations or students' non-readiness affect implementation effectiveness. Fitria and Fidesrinur (2017) emphasize that Field Experience Practice is strategically utilized to develop students' professional competency, particularly in connecting theoretical knowledge with classroom practice. The learning by experience bridges the gaps between theory and practice and prepares future teachers to deal with the intricacies of the evolving Indonesian education system.

Reflection by student teachers on the implementation of curriculum in schools is not only significant for their professional development but also as valuable assessment material for Teacher Education Institutions (LPTKs). As institutions that prepare prospective teachers, LPTKs are duty-bound to update and modify their campus-based teaching materials and pedagogical practices from time to time. Field reflections of PPL students offer real-time perspectives on: (1) real classroom realities, (2) how the theory becomes the basis for practice, and (3) how far the students feel prepared to handle such situations. Yulianto and Khafid (2016) describe that Field Experience Practice (PPL) is a focus on supporting the professional teaching readiness of students via experiential skill-building and practical acquisition of knowledge from experience. Such real-world reflective notes are valuable inputs for teacher education curriculum construction, creating an influential feedback cycle between theoretical and actual application within Indonesia's ever-evolving educational terrain.

Several previous studies have underlined the importance of field experience in bridging curriculum theory with real practice in schools. Darling-Hammond (2006) and Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) emphasize that the reflective process during teaching practice is crucial for developing prospective teachers' understanding of curriculum dynamics. Research by Sari & Rahayu (2020) and Fitriani & Anwar (2019) shows that Student Teachers often face challenges in implementing new curriculum, particularly related to resource limitations and the mismatch between theory and practice. Furthermore, Santoso

(2023) found that a flexible curriculum can enhance student motivation and engagement; however, the implementation of such policies still requires adequate mentoring and facilities support.

This study will attempt to analyze intensively how student teachers involved in the Field Experience Program (PPL) understand and assess curriculum implementation within schools. As future educators with a frontline role in the education field, they bring new and critical perspectives to understanding how curricula are applied within actual classroom settings. The research would like to learn about their capacity to measure the impact of curricula that have already been adopted, ascertain if these curricula indeed respond to students' needs, and examine how they are interpreted within real teaching and learning environments. With this study, we aim to capture valuable understanding of both the difficulties of curriculum implementation and the readiness of teacher candidates to navigate shifting educational structures. The study will shed light on the key intersection of curricular theory and practice in the classroom from the unique vantage point of those transitioning from theory-based learning to real-world practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a survey method to gather data from 30 Student Teachers who have completed their Field Experience Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar. Survey research is an effective approach for collecting data on participants' perceptions and experiences, allowing researchers to quantify attitudes and gather qualitative insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These students were targeted because they had direct exposure to the implementation of the curriculum in schools, with firsthand experience in issues related to the provision of insights on the application of the curriculum in the real world. The survey intends to solicit students' perceptions, judgments, and perceived issues on the application of the curriculum in their respective PPL schools. The questionnaire elicits the opinions and reflective critiques of the participants on how effective they perceived the curriculum that was rolled out, the challenges they experienced in the process of teaching, and their observations about the dynamics of ongoing curriculum change. It also aims to identify potential gaps in the implementation of the curriculum that are not apparent to other stakeholders, while collecting student teachers' recommendations on how best to improve curriculum implementation in schools.

Data was collected by administering a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires specifically tailored to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire addresses several areas including knowledge of curriculum, implementation challenges, and personal experience during the PPL. This methodological approach is likely to yield comprehensive and in-depth data on student teachers' perceptions of school curriculum implementation. The study aims to provide helpful data for the enhancement of both curriculum design and teacher preparation programs, particularly from the unique vantage point of those transitioning from theoretical learning to practical application in real classrooms.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research among 30 PPL (Teaching Practice Program) students of Universitas Negeri Makassar provides deep insight into their perception and evaluation of the implementation of the curriculum in the schools where they carry out their practicum. From the data analysis, some key findings were derived on the implementation of the curriculum currently. First of all, it was evident that the majority of the students had observed a big gap between what they were taught about theories at school and what is practiced in the profession. Although they had a basic understanding of the curriculum being implemented, they felt that it was hardest to adapt immediately in the classroom environment, particularly to align teaching materials with diverse student needs and limited resources in schools. This implies that despite the fact that the new curriculum may be highly elaborated on paper, its school conditions in school infrastructure and teacher readiness will predominantly define its challenges of implementation.

In addition to this, most students also mentioned a considerable administrative burden during the preparation of lessons, particularly in preparing RPPs in accordance with new curriculum guidelines. They indicated that the RPPs would mostly have to be adapted based on real classroom environments, considering the limited time factor and the diversity of students' needs. Some students also said that most teachers did not appear to be ready to cope with the continuous and rapid changes in the curriculum. This further added to both teachers and PPL students experiencing challenges in carrying out their duties at school. Proper orientation and training of the new curriculum at the school level was also observed to be one of the key bottlenecks hindering efficient curriculum implementation.

However, on the other hand, the majority of students also commented that they felt there was constructive potential in the new curriculum, specifically its competency-based approach. They felt that despite all the setbacks, the curriculum that was implemented offers room for adaptive and creative learning, making the teachers and students more flexible along the learning process. These findings bring us to the conclusion that the PPL students also have a critical and broad overview of the ongoing curriculum implementation. They possess thoughtful reflections on the implementation of the curriculum in the field, the issues encountered in achieving the intended learning objectives, and are also able to provide constructive recommendations on how curriculum implementation can be improved in the future, particularly in the aspects of teacher readiness and facilities conducive to learning.

From a survey of 30 student teachers (PPL), it was found that they have sufficient knowledge of curriculum theory but face real problems in field practice. The main problems are caused by poor school resources and the ineffectiveness of teachers in coping with curriculum change. The students also proposed a number of suggestions, including the need for improved curriculum implementation training, improved education facilities, and rigorous mentoring of teachers to accomplish more effective and sustainable curriculum implementation in schools.

Table 1. Student Teachers' (PPL) Perception Survey

Aspect Assessed	Key Findings	Student Percentage
Curriculum Understanding	Students grasp curriculum theory but face difficulties in practical application.	85%
	Students feel insufficient understanding of the implemented curriculum, especially regarding rapid changes.	15%
Implementation Challenges	Limited school resources, including inadequate facilities.	70%
	Administrative burden, particularly in preparing lesson plans (RPP) according to new curriculum guidelines.	50%
	Teacher readiness for rapid curriculum changes and lack of training.	30%
Teaching Engagement	Students actively participate but feel unprepared for independent implementation.	80%
	Students primarily observe rather than engage in direct teaching.	20%
Improvement Recommendations	Enhance preparatory training for more applicable curriculum implementation addressing field challenges.	70%
	Improve school facilities, particularly technology access and learning media	65%
	Intensive mentoring for teachers to support curriculum changes.	50%
Views on New Curriculum	New curriculum provides greater opportunities for holistic student competency development.	75%
	New curriculum changes too frequently, creating learning instability.	25%

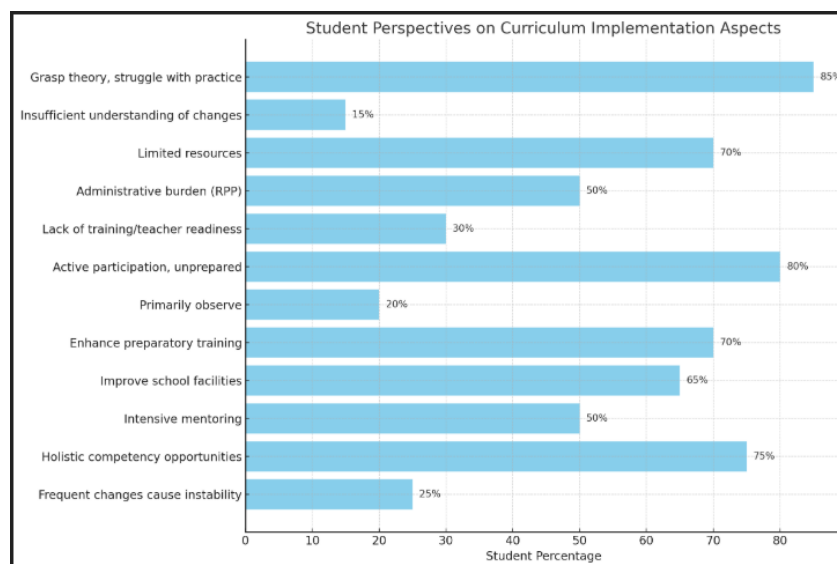


Figure 1. Visualization of PPL Students' Reflection

Discussion

The 30 student teachers' questionnaire (PPL) provides a comprehensive picture of their knowledge, challenges faced, and perspectives regarding curriculum implementation during their practicum. Generally, PPL students recognize the ongoing curriculum changes but face significant challenges in practical application. The findings highlight obstacles such as limited resources, administrative overload, and insufficient teacher readiness to adapt to new curriculum demands. These issues align with prior studies that emphasize the difficulty teachers face when transitioning to competency-based curricula, especially without adequate support and training (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Abidah et al., 2022). Furthermore, the students' recommendations for enhanced practical training, improved school facilities, and stricter mentoring resonate with national policies aimed at strengthening teacher competencies, such as the Indonesian Ministry of Education's Regulation No. 14 of 2019 on Teacher Professional Standards and the role of LPTKs in preparing teachers for evolving educational demands (Kemendikbud, 2019). Integrating these recommendations into teacher education frameworks could bridge the gap between curriculum theory and practice, better preparing future educators for the dynamic challenges of Indonesia's education system.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the reflections of Universitas Negeri Makassar student teachers (PPL) on the dynamics of curriculum changes in Indonesia, particularly regarding the implementation of the new curriculum in schools. Based on a survey of 30 PPL students, it was found that although the students had a sound theoretical understanding of the curriculum taught at university, they encountered significant challenges when directly involved in the field and witnessing the realities of curriculum integration in schools. The primary difficulties included limited resources, administrative burdens, and insufficient teacher readiness to adapt to the new curriculum. Despite these challenges, the students offered constructive recommendations to improve the quality of curriculum

implementation, emphasizing the need for more practical training, expanded school facilities especially technology and learning media and intensified mentoring for teachers to facilitate a smoother transition.

This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the gap between curriculum theory and practice from the perspective of prospective teachers actively engaged in field experience. The findings underscore the importance of collaboration between Teacher Education Institutions (LPTKs) and schools to better prepare future educators for ongoing educational reforms. The practical implications suggest that strengthening support systems and capacity-building efforts is essential to develop a more responsive and capable education system in Indonesia that can effectively navigate curriculum changes.

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