

## **Abstract**

This study focused on the interpretation and implementation of the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) in primary schools in Makassar City, Indonesia. The KTSP is a school-based curriculum which was introduced in 2006 and became compulsory across Indonesia in 2009. The main purpose of the study was to explore teachers' interpretation of the KTSP in relation to teaching writing to Year 2 students; to investigate how these teachers implemented the KTSP when teaching writing; and, to identify factors that influenced their interpretation and implementation of the KTSP in relation to writing. The teachers' interpretation and implementation of this new curriculum were assessed through the lens of six key concepts taken from the KTSP. These included student-centred learning, active learning, the role of the teacher as a facilitator, students' interaction as a means of promoting learning, assessment for learning and a thematic approach to learning. This study emerged from an interest in understanding the processes and outcomes of curriculum reform that would inform effective implementation of existing and future curricula in Indonesia.

This study utilised a mixed method approach with two phases of data collection, in which the Researcher collected quantitative data in Phase 1, followed by qualitative data in Phase 2. In Phase 1, 61 Year 2 teachers from 29 primary schools in Makassar City, Indonesia, completed a questionnaire about their interpretation and implementation of the KTSP in writing classes and identified factors that influenced their interpretation and implementation. In Phase 2 of the study, 10 of the 61 teachers were selected. Qualitative data were gathered from these teachers through classroom observations, informal discussions at the end of each

observed lesson and post-observation interviews. In addition, the teachers' writing syllabi, plans of the observed lessons and students' writing samples from the observed lessons were collected and analysed to provide additional evidence of the teachers' interpretation and implementation of the KTSP in writing. This added depth to the quantitative findings.

The study found that the teachers' interpretation and implementation of the KTSP in relation to writing appeared to reflect a traditional view of learning, despite the intent of the KTSP to move away from this approach to teaching and learning.

The teachers' existing knowledge and understanding of the KTSP, their limited pedagogical practices, apparent lack of relevant professional development and their classroom contexts appeared to mitigate against changed practice. In addition, the nature of the expected competencies for writing in Y2, which were very narrow and skill-based, coupled with the teachers' even narrower interpretation of them, appeared to reinforce their traditional teacher-centred method of teaching. As a result, the majority of writing activities were teacher directed and restricted to low level writing skills, with an emphasis on handwriting and the use of basic punctuation. Assessment was also based on these low level skills and students were only required to achieve proficiency in the given competencies.

This study identified three key issues which emerged from the findings and have implications for curriculum change. The first is that effective implementation of a new curriculum at the classroom level is very challenging if teachers do not have both adequate knowledge and working conditions to meet the demands of the new curriculum. In-depth and ongoing learning and support for teachers about all aspects of the new curriculum is a crucial element of effective curriculum change. The second issue relates to the potential conflict between the learning outcomes and the

underlying philosophical and pedagogical perspectives that inform new curricula.

The apparent dichotomy between the prescribed competencies and the constructivist approach to teaching and learning was extremely difficult for the teachers in this study to interpret and implement. In new curriculum frameworks, that determine both outcomes and the underlying philosophical and pedagogical practices, there is a need to ensure a match between these central elements of curriculum.

The third key issue highlighted by the study revolves around the problematic nature of importing a Western-based philosophy of teaching and learning directly into a significantly different context, without recognising the cultural and educational dissonance existing between the two cultures.

Failure to address these three aspects at both the macro-and micro-level will encourage the teachers to retain their old practices and thereby lead to superficial change.

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