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# A Study on Classroom Teachers' Curriculum Literacy Competencies and Reflections on Teaching Practices*

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates classroom teachers' curriculum literacy skills and examines how these competencies influence their instructional practices. Employing a mixed-methods approach with a convergent parallel design, the research included 410 participants, three of whom were selected for the qualitative phase. Quantitative data were analyzed using Mann–Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis tests, while qualitative data underwent content analysis. The findings reveal that teachers generally perceive their level of curriculum literacy as high. However, they also consider some curriculum objectives to exceed students' developmental levels and to be insufficiently aligned with their sociocultural contexts. Although the content is consistent with the intended learning outcomes, its scope remains limited. Instructional practices are shaped by contextual factors such as school environment, available resources, and student characteristics. Classroom observations identified inconsistencies between teachers' expressed views, lesson plans, and actual practices: objectives were often omitted or addressed superficially, interactive methods were rarely implemented, and the prescribed materials and assessment tools were largely neglected in favor of textbook-based activities. These findings indicate that teachers' curriculum literacy skills are not fully functional in practice, resulting in incomplete and sometimes counterproductive adaptations of the curriculum. The study concludes that providing teachers with practical, experience-based training in instructional design, material development, and the effective use of assessment tools would enhance their ability to translate curriculum literacy into more meaningful and coherent classroom applications.

**Keywords:** Curriculum literacy, curriculum, teaching practices, classroom teachers, teacher competency.

## Introduction

The pursuit of quality education is strategic for many countries and is regarded as part of state policy. In implementing this policy, curriculum, which are the most fundamental elements of education, are utilized (Güzel & Karadağ, 2013). The idea that curriculum should be systematically developed or altered in response to the quest for quality in education is one of the significant contributions of the twentieth century to education (Kilpatrick, 2009). This situation, which has also emerged as a result of globalization (Wiseman et al., 2014), has led to the periodic updating or sometimes complete overhaul of the curriculum by the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye to meet contemporary demands and address individual and societal needs. However, updating the curriculum does not necessarily mean that these changes will be implemented by teachers who are primarily responsible for the implementation of the curriculum (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Although the curriculum is updated in accordance with the characteristics of the current era, differences may exist between the official curriculum and the one enacted by teachers in the classroom (Ogar & Opoh, 2015; Retnawati et al., 2016). Cuban (1992) refers to this as the "implemented curriculum" and notes that there is often a significant gap between the written curriculum and the curriculum in practice. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2017), this discrepancy arises because curriculum developers tend to view the curriculum as a theoretical text, while teachers prioritize practice and often overlook theoretical aspects. Remillard (2005) emphasized that it is impossible for

curriculum specialists to address all the needs of schools and classrooms when preparing a curriculum. Hewitt (2006), on the other hand, indicated that the effectiveness of a curriculum in achieving its intended outcomes is determined by its structural quality and the context in which it is implemented. Context generally refers to the environment in which a curriculum is implemented (Null, 2011), encompassing various variables such as the teacher's expertise, available resources, sociocultural environment, and student characteristics (Beacco et al., 2016). The curriculum developed comes into contact with the realities of the school or classroom context through the teacher (Bascia, 2014). In this regard, context is also emphasized as an aspect that enables teachers to relate the curriculum to their instructional environments (Marsh, 2009). Thus, context can be considered a general process that reflects how the curriculum is presented to students and how the teaching-learning and assessment processes function (Mandukwini, 2016). While curriculum specialists' studies provide valid and reliable results regarding the structural characteristics of the curriculum, variables related to context are fluid and difficult to control. Henson (2015), who argued that each school and curriculum is unique, attributes this uniqueness to the social environment in which the school and curriculum are implemented. This makes the process of curriculum implementation complex, which can vary greatly from school to school. If there is one certainty about curriculum implementation, it is that there is no single correct way to achieve it for all teachers in all schools (Marsh, 2009). Therefore, curricula require teachers who are capable of implementing them and organizing learning opportunities and processes that address the diversity of students (Tedesco et al., 2014).

The impact of a curriculum on students is directly related to how teachers implement such a curriculum (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Rivkin et al., 2005). The teachers' role in this process begins with acquiring knowledge about the curriculum, followed by correctly understanding it, adapting it to be suitable for students, and implementing it (Hill et al., 2016; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). This professional competency, known as curriculum literacy, involves possessing knowledge about the curriculum and the skills necessary for designing, implementing, and evaluating the teaching-learning process (Akyıldız, 2020). Teachers who are knowledgeable in curriculum should understand the philosophical and psychological foundations of the curriculum, assess its alignment with the cultural structure of society, and be capable of designing and implementing original teaching plans that align with the curriculum's objectives (Kahramanoğlu, 2019). Any content within a curriculum can be presented in nearly infinite ways, and this diversity allows teachers to adapt the curriculum according to the needs and expectations of students (Stabback, 2016). For effective teaching, teachers should not only possess knowledge about the content and be able to modify it when necessary and rework it based on feedback (Shulman, 1987). This adaptation process, which requires systematic analysis, involves evaluating how well the curriculum meets students' needs, how learning can be maximized, prioritizing objectives, determining expected student outcomes, and finalizing materials (Taylor, 2010). Thus, a continuous cycle is established, ensuring consistent implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, curriculum literacy is emphasized as a crucial teacher competency that demonstrates its effectiveness in curriculum implementation (Erdamar, 2020).

According to Taylor (2010), understanding the curriculum and knowing how to use it most effectively are crucial for accurately perceiving and implementing any changes or updates made to it. This is because updates in curriculum often challenge teachers' existing knowledge and skills (Markee, 1997). In other words, the discrepancies between the written curriculum and its implementation may stem not only from teachers' lack of understanding of the curriculum's nature and responsibilities but also from their negative perceptions of the changes made (Sural & Dedebali, 2018). According to Apple and Jungck (1993), negative perceptions of the curriculum can arise from the fact that although teachers play a central role in curriculum implementation, their demands, goals, and personal experiences are often overlooked. Supporting this view, Richards (2003) noted that there is a tendency to impose changes on teachers rather than effectively involving them in curriculum-related work. However, merely knowing what changes have been made or being willing to implement them is not sufficient for effective curriculum implementation (Battista, 1994). Teachers must also possess the knowledge and skills required for practical implementation. Teachers who lack the knowledge and skills associated with curriculum literacy are likely to struggle with implementing the curriculum or may attempt to manage the process based on their own experiences. According to Erdamar (2020), teachers who do not fully understand the nature of the curriculum are not curriculum literate. Teachers who understand the structure of a curriculum only at a basic level but cannot appropriately execute it are considered pseudo-literate. Functional curriculum literacy refers to a teacher's ability to understand the curriculum structure well enough to

implement it. Teachers with this level of curriculum literacy can effectively plan and execute the curriculum. Teachers who possess conceptual and procedural curriculum literacy can evaluate curriculum structure effectively and adapt it to different contexts. Holistic curriculum literacy, which is multidimensional, involves a teacher's ability to critically assess the curriculum and develop alternative ideas for all or some of its elements. Therefore, differences in the implementation of the curriculum may be attributed to the varying levels of teachers' curriculum literacy. Within this contemporary understanding, literacy is no longer domain-neutral; instead, it is shaped by the context in which it is applied. In this regard, curriculum literacy refers to a teacher's ability to read, understand, interpret, and implement a curriculum effectively, taking into account student needs and contextual realities (Akyıldız, 2020; Bolat, 2017). It consists of two primary dimensions: the reading dimension, which focuses on identifying and understanding curriculum elements, and the writing dimension, which involves designing and contextualizing curricular practices to fit diverse classroom environments. This theoretical framework guided the structure of the current study and informed the development and interpretation of the Curriculum Literacy Scale (Bolat, 2017). Indeed, the literature includes studies that have identified challenges teachers face in applying the curriculum, noting that they either implement it inadequately or modify it during the process or that their adaptations are not positively evaluated (Apsari, 2018; Govender, 2018; Maba & Mantra, 2018; Ogar & Opoh, 2015; Retnawati et al., 2016; Rusman, 2015). While there are studies in Türkiye examining teachers' views on curriculum changes (Duru & Korkmaz, 2010; Kırmızı & Yurdakal, 2019; Yayla & Yayla, 2018), research that specifically examines teachers' curriculum literacy and how it reflects in their teaching practices is relatively new and limited. Generally, according to the findings of studies conducted using quantitative methods, teachers perceive themselves as having a high level of curriculum literacy (Akyıldız, 2020; Aslan & Gürlen, 2019; Erdamar, 2020; Kahramanoğlu, 2019). However, there has not been a study that simultaneously examines teachers' curriculum literacy competencies and how they are reflected in their teaching practices. Additionally, existing research on curriculum literacy predominantly utilizes quantitative data collected through surveys and scales (Aslan & Gürlen, 2019; Çetinkaya & Tabak, 2019). However, no studies have been identified that examine the demographic characteristics influencing teachers' interactions with the curriculum. Furthermore, various factors, such as engagement in curriculum review and participation in the curriculum development process, are believed to influence curriculum literacy levels. For these reasons, there was a need to conduct a study that thoroughly investigates the curriculum literacy competencies of primary school teachers and their teaching practices through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The reason for focusing on primary school teachers in this study is their responsibility, by virtue of their specialization, to effectively implement the curriculum of different subjects. Additionally, primary education is a critical input that determines the quality of learning outcomes at the next educational level because it is the stage at which students acquire basic knowledge and skills (Thomas, 2010).

This study also makes a unique contribution to the literature in several ways. This study provides an original contribution to the literature by simultaneously examining classroom teachers' curriculum literacy competencies and the reflection of these competencies in actual classroom practices through a mixed-methods approach. Unlike previous research, which has predominantly relied on self-reported quantitative data and often focused solely on perceived literacy levels, this study integrates survey data with direct classroom observations, document reviews, and in-depth interviews. In doing so, it offers a comprehensive and multi-layered understanding of the discrepancies between teachers' perceived curriculum literacy and their real-world instructional behaviors. Moreover, the study emphasizes the influence of contextual factors—such as school infrastructure, student characteristics, and access to resources—on curriculum implementation, an area often overlooked in curriculum literacy studies. By highlighting the limited use of interactive methods, insufficient material development, and challenges in assessment practices despite high self-reported curriculum literacy levels, this research addresses a significant gap in the literature.

**Purpose of the Study**

In line with the explanation above, the following questions were addressed in the study:

- What is their level of curriculum literacy?
- Do the levels of curriculum literacy differ significantly according to demographic characteristics?
- How do they perceive the characteristics of curriculum literacy?
- How do they describe contextual factors that influence their instructional practices?
- How do classroom teachers implement instruction?

This study is expected to provide insights into classroom teachers' curriculum literacy and how they implement the curriculum. It also aims to understand the factors that create discrepancies between a written curriculum and

actual instructional practices. The findings of this research highlight the challenges teachers face in curriculum implementation, thereby providing valuable information for the improvement of both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

## Method

### Research Model

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Initially, quantitative data collection methods were used to determine the level of curriculum literacy among classroom teachers. Subsequently, research was conducted in the natural setting in which program implementations occurred (i.e., the classroom environment). This phase involved the use of observation and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of quantitative data and to compare the data. Finally, the relationships between the findings obtained through quantitative and qualitative methods were examined, with emphasis placed on supporting or conflicting aspects (Morse, 2016).

### Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of primary school teachers working in public primary schools in the central districts of Adana. According to the Adana Provincial Directorate of National Education's official website, there are 137 primary schools in the central districts (Çukurova, Sarıçam, Seyhan ve Yüreğir), excluding village schools. An examination of the schools' official websites revealed that a total of 3,614 primary school teachers are employed in these schools. Due to the impracticality of reaching all teachers, stratified sampling was employed, with the central districts serving as strata. Proportional stratified sampling was conducted, selecting approximately 20% of the schools in each district, resulting in 29 schools included in the sample. Subsequently, all teachers in these selected schools were invited to participate on a voluntary basis, ensuring a sufficient representation of the population. The sample size was determined using the formula n = n0 / (1 + (n0/N)) (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016), considering a sampling error margin of 0.05 (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004). Based on this calculation, a sample size of approximately 347 teachers was deemed sufficient. However, a total of 410 teachers voluntarily participated in the study. The classroom observations and interviews were conducted with three of the teachers who volunteered. Table 1 presents the demographic information about the participating teachers.

**Table 1.**

*Characteristics of the Quantitative (N=410) and Qualitative (N=3) Study Groups*

| Characteristics | Groups | Quantitative Study Group | | Qualitative Study Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | f | % | |
| Gender | Female | 249 | 60.7 | T2 and T3 |
| | Male | 161 | 39.3 | T1 |
| Age | 30 years and younger | 7 | 1.7 | - |
| | 31-40 years | 93 | 22.7 | T2 and T3 |
| | 41-50 years | 188 | 45.9 | T1 |
| | 51 years and older | 122 | 29.8 | - |
| Service period | 10 years and less | 14 | 3.4 | - |
| | 11-15 years | 55 | 13.4 | T2 and T3 |
| | 16-20 years | 79 | 19.3 | T1 |
| | 21 years and more | 262 | 63.9 | - |
| Faculty of graduation | Faculty of education | 311 | 75.9 | T1, T2, and T3 |
| | Other | 99 | 24.1 | - |
| Grade level | 1st Grade | 102 | 24.9 | T1 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2nd Grade | 106 | 25.9 | T2 |
| | 3rd Grade | 110 | 26.8 | - |
| | 4th Grade | 92 | 22.4 | T3 |
| Status of taking courses related to the curriculum (pre-service) | Yes | 313 | 76.3 | T1, T2, and T3 |
| | No | 97 | 23.7 | - |
| Status of taking courses related to the curriculum (in-service) | Yes | 232 | 56.6 | - |
| | No | 178 | 43.4 | T1, T2, T3 |
| Status of curriculum acquisition in print or digital format | Yes | 265 | 64.6 | T2 |
| | Partially | 110 | 26.8 | - |
| | No | 35 | 8.5 | T1, T3 |
| Status of curriculum review | Reviewed in detail | 140 | 3.9 | - |
| | Reviewed partially | 254 | 62.0 | T1, T2 |
| | Never reviewed | 16 | 34.1 | T3 |
| Status of participating in curriculum development process | Yes | 12 | 2.9 | - |
| | No | 398 | 97.1 | T1, T2, and T3 |

*(T1: Teacher-1, T2: Teacher-2, T3: Teacher-3)*

**Data Collection Tools**

*Curriculum Literacy Scale (CLS)*

The "Curriculum Literacy Scale" developed by Bolat (2017) was utilized to assess teachers' curriculum literacy levels in the context of "understanding" and "creating". The scale consists of two dimensions—reading (15 items) and writing (14 items)—in total 29 items. The reading dimension includes items related to understanding the program, such as "selection, distinction, etc." (For example: "I can select content appropriate to the objective," "I can understand what the target behavior requires"). The writing dimension includes items related to active skills for adapting the program, such as "preparing, designing, enriching, implementing, evaluating, etc." (For example: "I can design educational activities appropriate for the teaching-learning processes," "I can write questions appropriate to the objective"). In this 5-point Likert scale, teachers express their opinions on the scale items, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of the scale was 0.93, and the Bartlett test result was 3923.65. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the scale were 0.88 for the reading dimension, 0.90 for the writing dimension, and 0.94 for the overall scale. Factor analysis was repeated on the research data, with the KMO and Bartlett tests first conducted for suitability. The KMO value was calculated as 0.97, and the Bartlett test result was 12685.66. The analysis showed that the factor loadings ranged from 0.62 to 0.84, and 29 items were grouped under two factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The first factor explained 34.89% of the total variance, while the second factor explained 35.30%. The re-calculated Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficients were 0.96 for both subdimensions and 0.97 for the overall scale.

The Curriculum Literacy Scale was employed to quantitatively determine teachers' perceived levels of curriculum literacy and to identify potential differences based on demographic variables. This instrument provided data to address the first and second research questions regarding literacy levels and their variation by background characteristics.

*Semi-Structured Interview Form (IF)*

The IF was developed by the researchers in line with relevant literature, CLS items, and expert opinions. The form, designed to understand how teachers conduct instruction, contains a total of 24 questions related to the objectives, content, teaching-learning process, assessment and evaluation, and contextual dimensions of educational programs. For example: "What are your thoughts on the learning outcomes of your lessons?" If it were up to you, how would you modify the outcomes?" (objectives); "How do you decide on the depth and breadth of the topic when addressing it?" What kind of preparation do you undertake in advance?" (content); "Which methods do you choose during the teaching process, and for what reasons? Can you describe how you recently handled a topic?" (teaching-learning process); "What types of practices do you use for assessment and evaluation?" How do you determine assessment tools?" (assessment and evaluation); "If I asked you to describe the physical characteristics of your classroom, what would you say?" How do these characteristics affect your instructional practices?" (context). A pilot application for the interview form was

conducted with two teachers before its main application, and no issues were encountered.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how teachers conceptualize curriculum literacy and describe the contextual factors influencing their instructional practices. These qualitative insights were used to address the third and fourth research questions by revealing teacher perceptions and lived experiences.

### *Classroom Observations*

In this study, classroom observations were used to obtain a detailed and longitudinal picture of how teachers' curriculum literacy is reflected in classroom practices (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2014). The researcher conducted observations in the role of a "non-participant observer," using video recording and note-taking techniques. The classrooms were located in three separate schools, each situated 5-10 kilometers from the city center. Internet access is available in all schools except the one where T1 is employed, and heating in all schools is provided via air conditioning. Two of the schools where T1 and T2 are employed have a library, conference hall and two sports fields. The school where T3 is employed does not have a library, and a significant portion of the schoolyard is used as a parking lot. A classroom with a traditional setup includes a whiteboard, teacher's desk, bulletin board on the back wall, and cabinet. Students are seated in pairs at desks arranged in three or four blocks. Only T2's classroom is equipped with a projector. Bulletin boards display posters appropriate for the grade level (alphabet, multiplication table) and examples of student work. T1 had 32 students, T2 had 38 students, and T3 had 26 students.

Classroom observations were utilized to gain an in-depth understanding of how curriculum literacy manifests in actual teaching practices. This method allowed for the triangulation of interview data and directly addressed the fifth research question concerning how classroom teachers implement instruction.

### *Personal Information Form (PIF)*

The PIF was prepared by the researchers to collect participant data. The form includes a total of 12 questions directed at teachers, covering aspects such as gender, age, years of service, the faculty from which they graduated, and the grade level of the class they are teaching, among others.

The Personal Information Form was designed to collect demographic data from participants, which were then used to examine how variables such as years of experience, educational background, and prior training influence curriculum literacy levels. This tool supported the analysis of the second research question.

### *Document Review*

In order to ensure data triangulation and enhance the internal consistency of the findings, document analysis was conducted as a complementary data source (Robson, 2017). This analysis aimed to provide deeper insights into the contextual factors that shape instructional practices by reviewing official curriculum documents, relevant excerpts from textbooks used during instruction, and the lesson plans corresponding to the observed teaching sessions. Through this approach, the study sought to corroborate observational and interview data, thereby enriching the interpretation of how teachers perceive and respond to contextual influences in their pedagogical decision-making.

The ethical process in the study was as follows:

- Ethics committee approval was obtained from Çukurova University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee in the Social and Human Sciences (Date: March 31, 2021, Number: E-68034).
- Informed consent has been obtained from the participants.

## Data Collection

For the research, which involved collecting data in three stages, necessary legal permissions were first obtained from the Adana Provincial Directorate of National Education. In the first stage, the CLS and PIF were administered through school administrators and guidance counselors. In the second stage, classroom observations were conducted. Observations were prioritized to ensure that teachers exhibited natural behavior without being influenced by prior interview questions. Observations occurred during Life Sciences (LS), Turkish (T), Mathematics (M), and Science (S) lessons at times and days specified by the teachers. During this process, a camera was placed on a tripod at the back of the room to capture a wide-angle view of the classroom. A total of 44 lesson hours were recorded, and the researcher also took observation notes in a "researcher diary." Classroom observations included 15 lesson hours in T1's class (4 of LS, 4 of T, 7 of M), 14 lesson hours in T2's class (2 of LS, 5 of T, 7 of M), and 15 lesson hours in T3's class (2 of S, 7 of M, 6 of T). In the third stage, teacher interviews were conducted. The interviews were held online via Zoom and Google Meet, with video and

audio recordings. The interviews lasted an average of 90 minutes, resulting in 4 hours and 35 min of recorded material. Curriculum relevant to the document review was downloaded from the official website of the Ministry of National Education (MEB). Photos were taken of relevant pages of textbooks used by teachers as well as other resources and materials such as assignments and worksheets. Digital copies of textbooks and lesson plans for T2 and T3 were obtained from the teachers before classroom observations, whereas T1 indicated that no lesson plans were prepared.

**Data Analysis**

Initially, the means and standard deviations of the teachers' scores from the CLS were calculated. Subsequently, the normality of the distributions was examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests on the scale scores for each variable. Because the results indicated that the distributions were not normal, Mann-Whitney U test was used for comparisons between the two groups, and Kruskal-Wallis H test was used for multiple comparisons (Büyüköztürk, 2016). Qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive content analysis. During the preparation phase, audio recordings and observation videos were transcribed, resulting in 120 pages of data collected from interviews and 92 pages of observation data. For the analysis, the structural dimensions of the curriculum (objectives, content, teaching-learning process, assessment-evaluation) and context were considered as the framework. In the coding phase, the data texts and relevant documents were read line by line, and meaningful sections that described the data were coded according to this framework. To ensure coding reliability, the researchers recoded the data texts at different times to check for coding consistency, and coder reliability was established by comparing codes on randomly selected samples. The findings were presented in a language that is understandable to readers, with frequent direct quotations from teachers' statements included in the explanations.

## Results

In this section, the quantitative and qualitative findings obtained through the application of various data collection tools are presented under separate headings in accordance with the aims of the study.

**Curriculum Literacy Levels of Classroom Teachers**

The descriptive statistics for the CLS scores of the 410 teachers who participated in this study are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' CLS Scores*

| Scale Dimensions | x̄ | Ss |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | 4.20 | .63 |
| Writing | 3.98 | .70 |
| Total Scale | 4.09 | .63 |

As shown in Table 2, teachers' levels of curriculum literacy were categorized as "high," with their perceptions of the reading sub-dimension being more positive than the writing sub-dimension.

**Curriculum Literacy Levels of Classroom Teachers According to Demographic Characteristics**

The analysis results of teachers' CLS scores based on variables such as gender (1), faculty of graduation (2), status of taking courses related to the curriculum (pre-service) (3), status of taking courses related to the curriculum (in-service) (4), and status of participating in the development process of a curriculum (5) are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test for Teachers' CLS Scores*

| | Groups | N | Reading | | Writing | | Total Scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Mean ranks | Sum of ranks | Mean ranks | Sum of ranks | Mean ranks | Sum of ranks |
| 1 | Female | 249 | 212.60 | 52937.00 | 209.36 | 52131.50 | 211.51 | 52666.00 |
| | Male | 161 | 194.52 | 31318.00 | 199.52 | 32123.50 | 196.20 | 31589.00 |
| | | | U=18277.50, *p*=.129 | | U=19082.50, *p*=409 | | U=18548.00, *p*=.201 | |
| 2 | Fac. of Ed. | 311 | 205.98 | 64059.00 | 205.79 | 64001.50 | 205.77 | 63995.00 |
| | Other | 99 | 204.00 | 20196.00 | 204.58 | 20253.50 | 204.65 | 20260.00 |
| | | | U=15246.000, *p*=.884 | | U=15303.500, *p*=.929 | | U=15310.000, *p*=.934 | |
| 3 | Yes | 313 | 202.18 | 63283.50 | 206.96 | 64778.50 | 205.05 | 64180.00 |
| | No | 97 | 216.20 | 20971.50 | 200.79 | 19476.50 | 206.96 | 20075.00 |
| | | | U=14142.50, *p*=306 | | U=14723.50, *p*=653 | | U=15039.00, *p*=.889 | |
| 4 | Yes | 232 | 216.87 | 50313.00 | 219.81 | 50995.00 | 218.89 | 50781.50 |
| | No | 178 | 190.69 | 33942.00 | 186.85 | 33260.00 | 188.05 | 33473.50 |
| | | | U=18011.00, *p*=.026* | | U=17329.00, *p*=.005* | | U=17542.50, *p*=.009* | |
| 5 | Yes | 12 | 270.54 | 3246.50 | 288.17 | 3458.00 | 283.38 | 3400.50 |
| | No | 398 | 203.54 | 81008.50 | 203.01 | 80797.50 | 203.15 | 80854.50 |
| | | | 1607.50, *p*=.052 | | U=1396.00, *p*=0.14* | | U=1453.50, *p*=.021* | |

*$p < .05$

An examination of Table 3 reveals that teachers who participated in in-service training related to the curriculum and were involved in the curriculum development process had statistically significantly higher CLS scores ($p < .05$). Differences in scores based on gender, the faculty of graduation, and pre-service training related to curriculum were not found to be statistically significant ($p > .05$).

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for teachers' CLS scores according to variables such as service period (6), grade level (7), obtaining of curriculum (8), and reviewing of curriculum (9) are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Teachers' CLS Scores*

| | Groups | N | Sd | Reading | | Writing | | Total Scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Mean ranks | X2 and *p* | Mean ranks | X2 and *p* | Mean ranks | X2 and *p* |
| 6 | 10 years and - (A) | 14 | 3 | 247.21 | X2=6.647 | 247.21 | X2=8.272 | 259.29 | X2=9.213 |
| | 11-15 years (B) | 55 | | 173.16 | *p*=.084 | 173.16 | *p*=.041* | 171.21 | *p*=.027* |
| | 16-20 years (C) | 79 | | 201.18 | A, D > B | 201.18 | A, D > B | 194.92 | A, D > B |
| | 21 years and + (D) | 262 | | 211.36 | | 211.36 | | 213.01 | |
| 7 | 1st Grade | 102 | 3 | 206.58 | X2=1.891 | 218.10 | X2=3.248 | 213.35 | X2=2.432 |
| | 2nd Grade | 106 | | 192.93 | *p*=.595 | 192.42 | *p*=.355 | 192.04 | *p*=.488 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3rd Grade | 110 | | 208.65 | | 199.31 | | 203.39 | |
| | 4th Grade | 92 | | 215.01 | | 214.00 | | 214.83 | |
| 8 | Yes (Y) | 265 | 2 | 222.06 | X2=14.814 | 219.95 | X2=11.779 | 222.61 | X2=15.962 |
| | Partially (P) | 110 | | 174.38 | *p*=.001* | 183.08 | *p*=.003* | 177.07 | *p*=.000* |
| | No (N) | 35 | | 177.94 | Y > P, N | 166.51 | Y > P, N | 165.27 | Y > P, N |
| 9 | In detail (D) | 140 | 2 | 244.55 | X2=23.334 | 243.23 | X2=23.334 | 246.13 | X2=25.383 |
| | Partially (P) | 254 | | 185.18 | *p*=.000* | 186.99 | *p*=.000* | 185.39 | *p*=.000* |
| | Never (N) | 16 | | 186.41 | D > P | 169.19 | D > P, N | 169.25 | D > P, N |

*$p < .05$

As shown in Table 4, teachers who had obtained and reviewed the curriculum in detail had significantly higher scale scores in reading, writing, and overall scores ($p < .05$). The grade level did not create a significant difference in the teachers' scale scores ($p > .05$). Teachers with less than 10 years of service and more than 21 years of service had higher scores in the writing sub-dimension and total scale scores than teachers with 11-15 years of service ($p < .05$).

**Contextual Factors Influencing Instructional Practices of Classroom Teachers**

In the interviews, three teachers described how instructional practices were shaped by contextual factors, including school facilities, socio-cultural and economic conditions, available resources, student profiles, and curriculum knowledge. They noted issues such as limited classroom and library space, lack of technology and open areas, poor internet, overcrowding, and inadequate climate control. These factors constrained instructional practices, forcing teachers into certain patterns and leading to a loss of motivation. For instance, T1 described how context-limited instructional practices: *"A tiny classroom. I want to conduct drama activities, but I cannot. We go to the library. It is tiny, and there is always another class. You go outside and think you can easily let them play, but there are 2-3 classes on the soccer field. You go to the garden to have an activity, but it is full. There is no Internet infrastructure in the school. We do not have projectors or smart boards in classrooms. We do not even have a computer lab. We have nothing outside the classroom, unfortunately*." Similarly, T2 remarked, "*In south-facing classrooms, students are exposed to excessive light and sunlight. It gets extremely hot and can have a negative impact. For this reason, the school administration changes classrooms every year. Every year, knowing we will have to move all our materials (you know, we make a lot of things out of cardboard in schools) and that they will all get damaged, you lose your enthusiasm at some point. So you try to equip your classroom with the bare minimum of materials.*" This statement highlights how context diminishes the desire to maintain material continuity. Teachers (T1 and T2) who negatively described the socio-cultural environment of the school, citing a lack of support among colleagues and school administrators, superficial departmental meetings, teachers' reluctance to share their activities and materials, discrimination, and competition, expressed that these factors did not contribute to the development of their instructional practices as follows:

"*…We rarely see vice principals. Even when we have something to discuss related to a plan or project, we can only express our requests during the second or third appointment. Unfortunately, when we present a project, their reaction is not like, "Oh, that's great, we support it*." T1

"*We have subject group meetings, but they're superficial and unproductive. I'd prefer meetings where we share ideas based on our school and students*." T2

The socioeconomic characteristics of the school environment include the educational and economic status of families, the lack of involvement of families in their children's education, and student characteristics such as limited proficiency in Turkish and variations in educational backgrounds/readiness levels. The impact of these factors on teaching processes is illustrated by the following statements from teachers: T1 noted, "*If I had worked at a school where all children had attended preschool from the age of three, learned English, and taken high-quality kindergarten classes that covered much of literacy, I definitely would have tried different materials, methods, and activities. Those children would have had different needs*." T2 added, "*We cannot use every teaching method or technique. When conducting activities, students who do not know Turkish are excluded and do not understand. Trying to include them transforms the activity into something very different from what was intended. While attempting to integrate all these aspects, your lesson time*

*ends*." T3 remarked, "*You only get results from 4 to 5 students. You see students who, despite your efforts, come in September having forgotten their reading and writing skills, having never opened their notebook or book during the summer break, or picked up a pencil.*" The explanations given by two teachers, highlighting the restrictive nature of the curriculum and their lack of up-to-date knowledge in application, are as follows:

"*You learn to work with what's available. Even if yellow fits best, if only brown paint is at hand, you use it. That's how I see it*." T1

"*In such situations, I feel that I do not have sufficient information about what to do. In other words, I am unsure of what I can do during the application phase… Everything remains somewhat on paper*." T2

**The Teaching Practices of Classroom Teachers**

The statements made by the teachers during interviews and the findings obtained from classroom observations regarding their teaching practices are detailed below with direct quotations, focusing on the structural dimensions and context of the curriculum.

***Views and Practices Concerning Curriculum Objectives***

Teachers have indicated that the objectives of primary education curricula are generally guiding (T2) and represent behaviors that students should learn according to their age (T3). However, they also emphasized that the allocated time is insufficient (T2 and T3), that some objectives are above the students' level (T1 and T3), and that there were too many objectives. For instance, T3 explained, "*The objectives are applicable to students who have attended preschool and have the highest level of readiness. They are not suitable for students like ours who have 3-4 Syrian children in their class and 4-5 students who have never attended preschool and cannot hold a pencil*." T2 expressed the view, "*For objectives that we teach at a knowledge level, the time is indeed sufficient. However, when it comes to application or when we expect creativity from students… as you can guess, they need a longer period.*" Teachers' opinions on the objectives vary by subject. According to T1, the sequence of the objectives for Life Science is logically correct, the objectives for Turkish are inconsistent in terms of timing, and the objectives for Mathematics and Turkish are coherent. T2 and T3 noted that there are no issues with the objectives for Mathematics, Turkish, Life Science, Social Studies, and Science, but the objectives for Visual Arts and Music are not suitable for the students' cultural and social contexts. Excerpts from the teachers' explanations are as follows:

"*For example, when teaching different types of music in a music class, playing classical music for the students feels very foreign to them… it really seems very boring*." T2

"*An objective is 'to visit historical sites'. Many parents do not understand what a museum is and therefore do not provide permission for the visit*." T3

According to the teachers, several adjustments are necessary regarding the competencies: these include determining competencies based on student needs (T1), focusing more on social skills than academic skills (T1, T2), prioritizing school adaptation in the first grade (T1), and allocating more time to develop arithmetic skills in Mathematics (T3). When the competencies are above the students' level, the strategies employed by teachers include defining new competencies, adapting competencies to the student's level, postponing the competency for a while, or extending the time allocated for the competency in the program. T1 explained, "*When we try to deliver the competencies one by one, we struggle and fail. Because we need to start with more basic skills… For example, while there are competencies like the letter E in Turkish, the letters L and Y, and line-drawing exercises, we end up spending that time acclimating the children to school and calming the crying ones*." T3 emphasized the need for additional time for fundamental skills, stating, "*For example, if we take Mathematics, you cannot teach fractions without fully mastering division; they won't understand. So, I'll provide a bit more extra time…*"

Classroom observations showed both appropriate and inappropriate practices by T1, T2, and T3 regarding lesson objectives. Off-plan behaviors included skipping or altering objectives, not adhering to time allocations, and omitting necessary explanations. For example, T1, during a math lesson, asked about changes in quantity when two strawberries were eaten from five. When students gave the numerical result, T1 responded, "No, I don't want the answer—just tell me if it increases, decreases, or stays the same," which aligned with the subtraction concept objective. T2 addressed the safety-related technology use objective by explaining, "If your mom leaves the iron plugged in, you should tell her, okay?" However, in maths, although the objective was to solve one-step multiplication problems, T2 gave two-step problems instead. T2 also attempted to divide 21 by 3—beyond the intended range—

but stopped when students seemed confused. T3 asked students to order six fractions with equal denominators, although the curriculum limits this to three, thus exceeding the scope. In Visual Arts, T3 skipped objectives like museum visits due to the students' socioeconomic background, instead focusing on fine motor and cognitive activities. These scope adjustments, mostly unplanned, were based on trial and error.

***Views and Practices Regarding the "Content" Dimension of the Curriculum***

Teachers who generally found the curriculum content to be aligned with the curriculum objectives noted several issues: the time allocated for topics was too short (T1, T2, T3), some topics in the textbooks were too narrow in scope (T1, T2, T3), and some activities were deemed incompatible with the content and too few in number (T2). For example, T1 stated, "*The topics in the textbook are aimed at achieving those objectives, but are they sufficient? No. Much more, much more diverse, and more colorful activities could be implemented to achieve those objectives. The scarcity of activities is a serious problem for teachers.*" T2 elaborated, "*Sometimes we see things in the activity section that are not covered in the Life Science textbook. This means that the child will not be able to reflect on what they have learned because they have not learned it. It also makes them feel inadequate*." Teachers emphasized that when determining lesson content, they primarily followed textbooks (T1, T2, and T3), annual plans (T1), and explanations related to the curriculum objectives (T2). To enhance content comprehensibility, engagement, and visual appeal for children, as well as to increase the number of activities, teachers reported employing various strategies. These included consulting additional resources (T1, T2, T3), adjusting the time allocated to specific topics (T1, T3), and designing individualized activities (T1). Teachers frequently use sharing sites (T1, T2, T3), and some review publications/resource books (T1, T3) and practices from other countries and private schools (T1). Examples of teachers' explanations are as follows:

"*For example, if there is a topic related to energy conservation, I can extend it by one hour. On the other hand, personal hygiene is something children are more familiar with, so I can shorten that slightly*." T1

"*...there are not many activities in this book. For example, we might see three types of questions, but explaining the topic through only three repetitions or three questions is insufficient for those students. Therefore, I refer to additional resources to provide more examples and engage students further*." T2

It was observed that teachers sometimes addressed the topic incompletely (T3), assigned homework without covering the topic in class (T1, T2, T3), and engaged in topics or activities not included in the plan (T2). T2 and T1 utilized supplementary books in addition to the textbook, while T3 followed only the textbook. T1 kept the supplementary books in the classroom cupboard and distributed them to students only when needed and then collected them afterwards. For example, in Mathematics, students worked on example problems from both the textbook and the supplementary book for the objective "to understand the concept of subtraction". The textbook provided examples related to subtracting from a specific number of objects, while the supplementary book included examples related to the concepts of increase, decrease, and remaining the same. T2, who stored resources as PDFs or PowerPoint files on their computer, projected the relevant content or activities onto the board using a projector when needed. For example, in the Life Science lesson, for the objective "to be sensitive to the safe use of technological tools and equipment", T2 first focused on explanations regarding the safe use of technological devices from the textbook. Subsequently, students were asked to record their precautions for using the technological devices shown in the visual projection onto the board. In some lessons, only supplementary books were used, and topics outside the scope of competencies were covered. For instance, in the Turkish lesson, T2 followed the supplementary book rather than the textbook for the objective "to identify story elements in the text read." While the curriculum emphasizes that texts should focus solely on characters/entities, the activity required students to identify story elements, including characters, time, place, and events.

***Views and Practices Regarding the "Teaching-Learning Process" Dimension of the Curriculum***

The interview findings revealed that when determining their teaching methods and techniques, teachers considered the characteristics of competencies, the structure of the content (T1, T2), students' prior knowledge (T1), facilitation of learning (T1, T2), and the nature of the lesson (T2, T3). Due to the small classroom size, the large and heterogeneous number of students, the verbal nature of the lesson content, and the ease of implementation, direct instruction has been the most frequently used method. This was followed by the question-and-answer method, which was used to stimulate interest in current topics and increase class participation. For instance, T3 described their teaching process as follows: "*Turkish is generally related to reading and listening, so you read and listen… In Mathematics, I am constantly on the move. I am*

*someone who tries to raise each one on the board in turn or continues with activities*." T2 explained their practices as follows: "*In topics with a lot of details, we can use direct instruction techniques. Sometimes, in subjects like Life Science, where I think students might have already seen and compared real-life examples, we use the question-and-answer technique*." Teachers reported using materials such as recycled items (plastic bottles, soda bottle caps), dry legumes (beans, chickpeas), school supplies (globes, maps, geometric shapes), classroom objects (desks, chairs, windows), and products created with students (posters, scales). Two example quotes are as follows:

"...*For abstract topics, I use visuals and everyday materials like bottles or beans to make learning more tangible—for example, we count beans instead of using an abacus*." T1

"...*For topics students can't observe directly, we use visuals—like a globe for Earth's movements, a map for Turkey's neighbors, or classroom objects to explain geometric shapes*." T2

Classroom observations indicated that only a limited number of planned methods and techniques were implemented (mainly direct instruction and question–answer by T1, T2, and T3). Some activities were skipped or assigned as homework, and alternative instructional processes were used. Material use was minimal, with only T3 occasionally drawing a graduated cylinder (science) and an analogue clock (mathematics). Demonstration, practice (T1, T2, T3), and role-play (T1, T2) were rarely used and faced spatial limitations (e.g., time inefficiency, classroom disorder, low participation). Teachers monitored activities and gave feedback. T2 consistently differentiated instruction for foreign students, using body language and peer support for communication. Sample excerpts from the lessons are as follows:

T3 in the Turkish lesson aloud read a poem from the textbook to address the objective "to read poetry". While reading, T3 commented, "I take a short breath at commas and pause at periods." Later, T3 instructed the entire class, "We will try to read by paying attention to breathing and punctuation marks," and had all the students read the poem.

In the Mathematics lesson, T2 addressed the objective "to use grouping and sharing meanings in division" by having six students come to the board. T2 asked them, "Now, for example, you will play a game. Split into two groups. How will you divide yourselves?" The students formed two groups among themselves, and T2 said, "So, how many people are in this group? (Students: Three) And this group? (Students: Three) How many people are there in total? (Students: Six)... So, when we divide six by two, we get three." Subsequently, T2 attempted to extend the activity by increasing the number of students at the board but ended the activity when the students did not fit into the space.

***Views and Practices Regarding the "Assessment and Evaluation" Dimension of the Curriculum***

Teachers described assessment and evaluation as tools to determine student achievement, guide and improve instruction, and provide feedback. They used oral, written, and multiple-choice assessments and monitored participation and homework. T1 shared, "Sometimes I use oral assessments by calling students to the board. I also assess their homework." Similarly, T2 stated, "We conduct assessments to give feedback to ourselves and parents, usually multiple-choice or short oral quizzes." T1 and T2 typically prepared their own tools, occasionally adapting online resources, while T3 collaborated with colleagues or selected questions from digital platforms. Following poor exam performance, all three revisited topics using modified, student-centered methods. For instance, T2 explained adjusting teaching strategies to enhance student engagement during reteaching.

It was observed that some of the examples included by teachers in their lesson plans for assessment and evaluation were not aligned with the objectives of the curriculum. Teachers often used activities or exercises from textbooks rather than assessment questions they had prepared. To understand students' prior knowledge and monitor progress, teachers typically called students individually to the board to answer questions, often evaluating responses with symbolic marks (+, -, *, etc.). In cases in which answers were incorrect, teachers provided explanations about the questions and, when necessary, retaught the topic. For example, T3, in the Mathematics lesson, wrote five questions on the board related to the objective "to explain the relationship between units of time measurement" and randomly selected students from the class to answer these questions on the board. For students who could not solve the problems, T3 provided hints to assist them in finding solutions. T1, in the Turkish lesson, asked students about the meanings of words from a previously explained text related to the objective "to use words appropriately according to their meanings". When a student did not respond, T1 marked the student with a negative sign and admonished them to pay attention to the

lesson. T2 in the Mathematics lesson asked students to solve problems from the resource book related to the objective "to solve problems requiring multiplication with natural numbers". Students who provided correct answers were marked with stars in their notebooks. Upon completing the activity, T2 called students who had earned stars for each question and affixed a sticker to their notebooks

## Discussion

The results revealed that primary school teachers perceive their curriculum literacy levels as high. This finding aligns with previous research (Aslan & Gürlen, 2019) and represents a desirable outcome for maximizing the potential of curriculum implementation. As Marsh (2009) emphasized, a curriculum that begins as a written plan gains meaning and functionality only when teachers effectively interpret and enact it in classroom contexts. Although careful planning and curriculum design processes are crucial for enhancing educational quality, these efforts remain ineffective without teachers' understanding of what the curriculum demands in practice.

The high self-perception of curriculum literacy in this study may be attributed to the characteristics of the participant group, as a considerable majority (63.9%) had more than 21 years of teaching experience. Experience plays a crucial role in developing professional competencies, which encompass both cognitive and metacognitive skills as well as the capacity to facilitate learning (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Kusiani et al., 2021). As teachers engage in curriculum implementation, reflection, and adaptation, their literacy in understanding and utilizing curricular elements naturally improves (Taylor, 2013). Thus, the finding that teachers with more than 20 years of service demonstrated higher curriculum literacy supports the view that experience strengthens professional literacy. However, self-assessment can be affected by biases, as individuals may not always evaluate their own performance objectively (Ross, 2006). Therefore, these results may also reflect a tendency for teachers to overestimate their competencies.

Findings also showed no significant differences in curriculum literacy levels by gender, age, faculty of graduation, grade level taught, or previous coursework related to curriculum. This result is consistent with some prior studies that found no gender-based differences (Aslan & Gürlen, 2019), though others reported differences favoring either female (Kahramanoğlu, 2019) or male teachers (Erdamar, 2020). Aslan and Gürlen (2019) also found significant variation based on faculty of graduation, but in the present study, the lack of differences may stem from participant homogeneity—75.9% graduated from faculties of education and 76.3% took curriculum-related courses before starting their teaching careers. This homogeneity suggests that pre-service teacher education in Turkey remains heavily theoretical, offering limited practical application. Research has highlighted teacher candidates' dissatisfaction with overly theoretical methods (Gökyer, 2012), difficulties in translating theory into practice (Orhan, 2017), and the prevalence of traditional teaching approaches (Şahin, 2014). Similarly, Yazçayır and Yıldırım (2021) noted that Turkish teacher education programs continue to emphasize theory over practice.

The absence of grade-level differences in curriculum literacy may also result from the structure of primary education, in which teachers must master and implement multiple subjects across grades. As Bergqvist and Bergqvist (2017) and Fer (2019) note, curriculum is an official document that organizes and guides instruction. The ability to read and interpret curriculum documents (Lee, 2016) represents the foundation of curriculum literacy, which entails analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meaning from curricular information (Kurudayıoğlu & Tüzel, 2010). Teachers are central actors in curriculum development and implementation, as they are best positioned to identify curricular strengths and shortcomings (Boyle & Charles, 2016). Therefore, teachers who participate in curriculum development processes and can understand relationships between curricular components (Carl, 2009) tend to exhibit higher literacy levels. Curriculum development, by nature, requires evaluating objectives, offering recommendations, conducting research, and establishing stakeholder relationships (Baş & Şentürk, 2019; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). Hence, it is unsurprising that teachers familiar with these processes possess stronger curriculum literacy skills.

Another key finding was that teachers perceived themselves as more competent in the reading dimension than in the writing dimension of curriculum literacy. Effective curriculum implementation requires teachers to comprehend its structure, internal relationships, and operational demands (Akınoğlu & Doğan, 2012). Because curricula are not designed for specific schools (Null, 2011), the success of implementation largely depends on teachers' interpretation of curricular intent (Taylor, 2010; Stabback, 2016). Teachers must make numerous decisions to adapt curriculum recommendations to their classroom realities (Mandukwini, 2016), continuously reflecting on questions such as, "Am I ensuring curriculum effectiveness?" or "How can I make it more meaningful for my students?" (Marsh, 2009). The writing dimension—

which involves contextual evaluation, informed decision-making, and implementation—therefore requires a more advanced skill set, explaining why teachers may feel less confident in this domain.

The three teachers interviewed expressed generally positive views about the primary school curriculum objectives but found some goals overly ambitious for students' readiness levels, particularly in Turkish and Mathematics. They also perceived some Visual Arts and Music outcomes as culturally irrelevant—concerns echoed by previous studies (Engin & Arslan, 2019; Yılmaz & Orhan, 2020). These difficulties were attributed to students' limited Turkish proficiency and inadequate preparedness. Although teachers attempted to adapt objectives and timelines (Mandukwini, 2016), classroom observations revealed minimal implementation of these adaptations, skipped objectives, and time constraints, particularly in Mathematics, potentially contributing to learning difficulties.

Teachers also reported that curriculum content aligns with objectives but lacks sufficient breadth. Limited instructional time, a low number of activities, and the weak alignment of some activities with objectives were noted. Teachers compensated by using supplementary resources, adjusting instructional time, and designing their own activities—indicating their ability to link content and objectives and to adapt content for students' developmental levels. Classroom observations confirmed that some teachers utilized additional resources beyond textbooks, consistent with previous literature suggesting that teachers rely on textbooks while supplementing with external materials when necessary (Fan et al., 2021; Nsibande & Modiba, 2012; Altunkaynak & Çağımlar, 2020; Shahmohammadi, 2018). However, observation data revealed little evidence of original activity design, supporting teachers' lower self-assessment in the writing dimension. The abundance of ready-made digital and print materials may have further reinforced dependence on pre-existing resources, reducing teachers' creative engagement in developing new ones.

Quantitative and qualitative findings collectively indicate that teachers' curriculum literacy is context-dependent and influenced by school environment and available resources. As Null (2011) emphasized, although curricula are developed independently of specific schools, their success depends on contextual realities. Such contextual variation explains differences or inconsistencies in implementation (Smith et al., 2017). Despite teachers' claims that they selected methods based on objectives, student needs, and lesson nature, observations showed a predominant reliance on lecture and question–answer methods, with minimal use of interactive strategies. Incomplete lesson implementation, divergence from planned activities, and limited material use were common. The effectiveness of teaching depends on selecting student-centered, interactive strategies (Al-Rawi, 2013) and ensuring continuity between objectives, materials, and assessment (Anuar et al., 2021). However, consistent with prior studies (Avcı & Kayabaşı, 2019; Demir & Özden, 2013), teachers often favored methods that simplified instruction rather than enhanced learning, frequently attributing this to contextual limitations (Govender, 2018; Mitchell, 2016). Socioeconomic disparities affect students' readiness and comprehension (Erkan, 2011; Saracaloğlu et al., 2011), consequently influencing teachers' instructional decisions.

Finally, although teachers reported using diverse assessment methods—oral, written, and multiple-choice tests—they primarily relied on textbook-based exercises rather than developing original tools aligned with objectives. Lesson plan reviews revealed limited alignment between assessment items and learning goals. Since curriculum literacy involves constructing valid assessment tools and interpreting results (Bolat, 2017), this misalignment suggests incomplete understanding of curriculum objectives. Previous studies corroborate this pattern: teachers' limited familiarity with authentic assessment (Retnawati et al., 2016), declining use of assessment practices with increased experience (Sumual & Ali, 2017), and persistent inadequacies in evaluation skills (Maba & Mantra, 2018). Although some teachers viewed assessment as a continuous process—monitoring and reteaching based on student outcomes—such practices may mask deeper measurement issues. The observed tendency to focus on reteaching rather than diversifying assessment strategies demonstrates a functional gap in teachers' curriculum literacy.

## Conclusion

This study revealed that while teachers perceive themselves as possessing high levels of curriculum literacy, their practices often fail to reflect these competencies in a functional and consistent manner. Observations and interviews showed that teachers made contextual adaptations to the curriculum but often implemented it incompletely or with pedagogical shortcomings. Although strict adherence to curriculum documents remains a matter of debate, effective implementation requires both curriculum literacy and the ability to plan instruction for

diverse educational contexts (Marsh, 2009; Tedesco et al., 2014). The observed inconsistency between teachers' stated plans and classroom practices, including one teacher who did not prepare lesson plans at all, aligns with prior findings that emphasize insufficient planning and contextual adaptation skills (Rusman, 2015; Maba & Mantra, 2018; Apsari, 2018).

These results highlight several interrelated issues: limited curriculum design competence, inadequate dissemination of curriculum updates, and insufficient support for teachers in understanding evolving roles. Teachers' approaches to curriculum (Cheung & Wong, 2002), lack of adequate orientation to program changes (Ogar & Opoh, 2015), and restricted access to teaching materials (Govender, 2018) may collectively explain these shortcomings. Their self-reported lack of current knowledge further suggests that updates to the curriculum and to teacher expectations have not been effectively communicated (Fer, 2019).

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Ministry of National Education organize more practice-oriented and skill-based professional development opportunities for teachers. These could include training seminars and workshops on instructional design, lesson planning, material creation, authentic assessment, and curriculum adaptation. Practical exercises focusing on how to integrate curriculum objectives with classroom realities could strengthen teachers' ability to translate theoretical knowledge into effective practice. Furthermore, teacher feedback mechanisms should be expanded during curriculum development and revision processes to ensure that teachers' insights inform decision-making and foster ownership of curricular reforms.

To enrich curricular content, it is suggested that textbooks be supported with technological enhancements, such as QR codes linking students to interactive or extended activities. Integrating digital content would not only promote engagement but also help bridge the gap between prescribed objectives and diverse learner needs.

Finally, the findings of this study are limited to the participating teachers and should be interpreted within this scope. Future studies could compare curriculum literacy across different educational levels and subject areas using observation-based and mixed-methods designs. Comparative research examining public and private educational institutions could reveal how institutional contexts shape curriculum implementation. Moreover, action research focusing on curriculum literacy could provide deeper insights into how teachers develop practical strategies to improve their curricular competence over time and how these improvements translate into better student outcomes.

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