Review Article

The role of preschool and primary school teachers in curriculum development

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Abstract: This article examines the vital role of preschool and primary school teachers in curriculum development and highlights their multiple roles as designers, implementers, evaluators and localisers of educational content. Although policymakers and curriculum planners typically establish curriculum frameworks, it is teachers who transform these frameworks into relevant, contextually appropriate and engaging learning experiences in the classroom. This article explores how teachers use their practical knowledge and pedagogical expertise to modify curricula to meet the diverse needs of young learners and how they provide feedback that informs continuous improvement. However, the article also highlights the significant challenges teachers face in curriculum development, such as a lack of time, inadequate professional development opportunities, and administrative barriers that restrict their participation in decision-making processes. These challenges are often shaped by the specific demands of early childhood and primary education, where teachers must balance structured curriculum goals with the dynamic needs of young learners. By addressing these issues and supporting teachers through targeted professional development, educational institutions can empower teachers to actively contribute to meaningful curricula. This collaborative approach encourages the development of dynamic, inclusive and culturally relevant curricula to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Ultimately, this article advocates acknowledging and appreciating preschool and primary school teachers as key stakeholders in the curriculum development process, as their participation is vital to fostering effective and responsive learning environments.

Keywords: Curriculum development, Curriculum implementation, Teacher agency, Policymakers, Professional development, Curriculum framework, Preschool education, Primary education

Introduction

Teachers play a central role in curriculum development by designing meaningful learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of students. While curriculum planners and policymakers often establish overarching frameworks, it is teachers who interpret, adapt, and implement these frameworks in the classroom. Teachers are not merely implementers of curriculum directives but are active contributors who draw on their deep understanding of student needs, classroom dynamics, and local contexts.

This role is especially crucial in preschool and primary education, where teachers must ensure that the curriculum aligns with young children's developmental stages and supports foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning. Their involvement ensures that educational programmes are not only standards-driven but also developmentally appropriate, locally relevant, and

responsive to the realities of contemporary classrooms.

Teachers possess a unique combination of pedagogical knowledge and practical classroom experience, allowing them to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum materials and instructional approaches. They play a key role in identifying gaps, providing feedback, and recommending adjustments to better support student learning. Moreover, teachers frequently act as curriculum localisers, tailoring national or regional standards to suit the sociocultural context of their students. For example, preschool teachers may incorporate play-based learning activities to enhance cognitive and motor skills, whereas primary teachers may integrate storytelling or experiential science tasks that reflect children's interests and capabilities.

Despite their pivotal role, teachers face multiple challenges in fully participating in curriculum development. These include time constraints, inadequate access to professional development, and limited influence on decision-making processes. Challenges also differ across educational stages: preschool teachers may struggle to balance structured learning with exploratory play, whereas primary teachers face the complexity of differentiating instruction to meet varied learning needs. Addressing these challenges is essential for creating curricula that are not only aligned with educational standards but also truly reflect the lived experiences and learning needs of students.

This article examines the multifaceted role of teachers in curriculum development, focusing on their contributions, the barriers they encounter, and the importance of enhancing their professional capacity. Particular emphasis is placed on preschool and primary education, where teachers' insights are crucial in shaping foundational learning experiences that influence long-term academic and personal development.

Methodology

In this study, a structured literature review was conducted to examine the roles, challenges, and professional development needs of preschool and primary school teachers in curriculum development. The aim was to critically synthesise the regional and international literature to identify key issues influencing teachers' involvement in curriculum reform, localisation, and implementation. The specific objectives were to (1) examine barriers that hinder teacher participation in curriculum processes, (2) explore the role of teachers in contextualising and localising curriculum content, and (3) assess the impact of professional development on teacher readiness for curriculum design.

To ensure transparency and minimise selection bias, the process was guided by a systematic review framework. The literature published between 2010 and 2025 was sourced from peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and credible grey literature. Database searches were performed using ERIC, Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar databases. Search terms included 'curriculum development', 'teacher participation', 'preschool education', 'primary education',

'professional development of teachers', 'curriculum reform', 'hidden curriculum', and 'teacher self-efficacy'.

The inclusion criteria were studies written in English, focused on early childhood and primary education, and directly addressed teacher involvement in curriculum-related processes. Studies limited to secondary or tertiary education, or those that did not address curriculum issues, were excluded.

A thematic synthesis approach was used to analyse the findings, guided by conceptual frameworks such as Fullan's (2015) theory of educational change, the TPACK model (Koehler & Mishra, 2009) and recent models of teacher agency (Karakose et al., 2023) and hidden curriculum (Au, 2018). This approach enabled rigorous integration of diverse insights while ensuring analytical depth and conceptual coherence.

Preschool and primary school teachers as curriculum designers

Teachers are pivotal in shaping curricula because of their direct and sustained interactions with students, placing them in an ideal position to design educational programmes that address the specific needs of young learners. According to Swargiary (2024), teachers' involvement in curriculum development is crucial because they contribute practical, hands-on experiences from their classrooms to the design process. Their participation ensures that the curriculum is not merely theoretical but firmly grounded in classroom realities, thereby promoting student engagement and enhancing learning outcomes.

A compelling rationale for involving teachers in curriculum development is their intimate and nuanced understanding of preschool and primary students' developmental needs, learning behaviours, and classroom dynamics. The National Association for Research in Science Teaching [NARST] (2018) asserts that teachers possess "pedagogical content knowledge", which allows them to understand not only the subject matter but also the most effective ways to teach it. This dual expertise is essential to designing curricula that are relevant and accessible to a broad spectrum of learners. For example, teachers can identify curricular gaps, develop targeted strategies to address them, adapt materials to different learning levels, and employ diverse instructional methods to engage all students.

Furthermore, the ongoing interaction between teachers and students enables educators to recognise and respond to evolving educational needs. For example, Tomlinson (2017) highlighted how teachers can incorporate differentiated instruction techniques into curriculum development to ensure equitable access for students with diverse learning profiles and backgrounds. Early childhood education can include play-based learning, sensory-rich activities, or interactive storytelling tailored to various developmental levels. In primary education, teachers can change the level of difficulty of tasks or use peer-assisted learning

to support inclusive classroom practice. This adaptability enables teachers to change the curriculum in a timely and responsive manner.

Recent international scholarship has also emphasised the importance of recognising and empowering teachers as active curriculum agents. Gordon et al. (2022) stress the role of teacher self-efficacy in fostering the confidence needed to engage in curriculum design and reform. Teachers who believe in their instructional competence are more likely to innovate, personalise, and adapt learning materials to suit diverse student populations.

In addition, Au (2018) drew attention to the influence of hidden curriculum and the unspoken values, attitudes, and norms conveyed through school routines and teacher-student interactions. Teachers significantly shape hidden curricula through the environments they create and the relationships they foster, reinforcing the need for participatory curriculum design models that actively incorporate teachers' voices and lived experiences.

Collaboration between preschool and primary school teachers and curriculum planners

Collaboration between teachers and curriculum planners is essential to the development of a comprehensive and effective curriculum that meets both academic standards and the diverse needs of students. Teachers, who are the primary implementers of the curriculum, contribute critical experience-based insights into their daily application, while curriculum planners bring expertise in policy alignment, content coherence, and long-term educational goals. This collaboration fosters a productive balance between theory and practice, resulting in curricula that are both academically rigorous and practically relevant.

Gupta (2023) posits that meaningful collaboration between teachers and curriculum planners results in curricula that are more relevant to students' lives and more likely to prove effective in the classroom contexts. Teachers provide feedback based on real-world classroom experiences and help to assess whether curricula are aligned with students' developmental capacities, learning preferences, and cultural backgrounds. This partnership is particularly significant in early childhood and primary settings, where teachers can offer insight into the local contexts and engagement strategies that planners may overlook. Khalifa et al. (2016) argue that involving teachers in curriculum design ensures that instructional content is culturally responsive and inclusive, thus promoting educational equity. In preschool classrooms, this can include integrating culturally relevant stories, songs, or play-based activities. In primary school settings, teachers can enrich content by incorporating local history, language, or traditions, making lessons more relatable and engaging for students.

Simultaneously, curriculum planners play a vital role in ensuring that curriculum is aligned with national or regional educational standards, thus supporting consistency, accountability, and progression across educational systems. Their responsibility lies in structuring curriculum content to support broader goals, such as preparation for lifelong learning, higher education, or the workforce. Collaboration between teachers and planners enables the synthesis of these macro-level goals with the micro-level realities of classroom teaching, leading to more coherent and implementable curriculum design.

Research by Khasawneh et al. (2023) reinforces the idea that collaborative efforts among teachers and between teachers and curriculum authorities enhance professional development and lead to improved academic outcomes for students. Building on this, Tran (2023) emphasises that when teachers are empowered and included in decision-making processes, their sense of self-efficacy increases, resulting in greater commitment to curriculum reform and improved instructional effectiveness.

Role of preschool and primary school teachers in the implementation of the curriculum

Teachers are the cornerstone of curriculum implementation as they are directly responsible for transforming prescribed frameworks into meaningful classroom practice. Their role extends beyond merely delivering curriculum content; teachers must interpret, adapt, and personalise instruction to accommodate the diverse needs of their students. This adaptability ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and engaging, which ultimately leads to better learning outcomes.

Fullan (2015) posits that teachers are key agents of change in curriculum implementation. Their critical responsibility is to interpret the objectives, subject matter, and structure of the curriculum and transform these components into engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. While curriculum designers determine what students should learn, teachers determine how this content is taught by selecting appropriate instructional strategies, adjusting pacing, and employing assessment tools to monitor and promote student progress. In this way, teachers act as an important bridge between theoretical frameworks and lived classroom experiences.

A central part of effective curriculum implementation is the ability of teachers to adapt instruction based on students' individual learning profiles. One widely endorsed strategy is differentiated instruction, a comprehensive approach aimed at optimising outcomes for all students while minimising achievement gaps (Gheyssens et al., 2020; Griful-Freixenet et al., 2020; Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016). For example, in preschool classrooms, teachers may use play-based learning to introduce literacy concepts at varying levels of readiness. In primary settings, scaffolding

techniques can support the gradual development of student problem-solving abilities in mathematics. By adjusting content, instructional methods, and learning outcomes, teachers ensure that learners with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and interests can access and engage with the curriculum.

Another essential component of curriculum implementation is creating a conducive learning environment. Yang et al. (2024) emphasised the need for classrooms that promote active learning, collaboration, and critical thinking. Such environments are fundamental to achieving curriculum goals, including nurturing creativity, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving skills. In early childhood education, this might involve activity centres where children explore concepts through sensory play. In primary education, strategies such as structured group discussions or project-based learning (PBL) can foster teamwork and analytical thinking. Teachers play a pivotal role in cultivating these dynamic environments, allowing students to engage deeply in the curriculum.

Emerging international scholarship further highlights the importance of teacher self-efficacy in successful curriculum implementation. Rosy (2024) argues that teachers who have confidence in their professional abilities are more likely to take initiative in adapting content, experimenting with instructional techniques, and addressing learner diversity, traits that are essential to effective and responsive curriculum implementation.

Preschool and primary school teachers as curriculum evaluators

Teachers play a critical role as curriculum evaluators by providing invaluable feedback that informs the ongoing review and development of educational programmes. Given their daily engagement with students and learning materials, teachers are uniquely positioned to assess the curriculum's effectiveness in achieving learning outcomes, meeting students' diverse needs, and responding to evolving educational challenges. The insights they offer are fundamental to the continuous refinement of curricula, ensuring that learning experiences remain relevant, inclusive, and impactful.

A key component of teacher evaluative responsibilities is to determine how effectively the curriculum supports the intended student learning outcomes. Teachers gather information about student achievement, engagement, and conceptual understanding (Suskie, 2018). These data, collected through formal assessments, classroom observations, and student feedback, offer valuable insight into how curriculum content is translated into real learning. For instance, in primary classrooms, teachers may identify that abstract mathematical concepts are introduced too early, prompting developers to incorporate more concrete hands-on activities. Similarly, preschool teachers can assess the developmental appropriateness of literacy tasks by observing children's responses to storytelling or phonemic awareness exercises.

Furthermore, Stenhouse (1975) underscored the essential role of teachers in researching and developing curricula, emphasising that they are able to identify gaps, strengths, and limitations in existing programmes. Through reflective practice, teachers evaluate whether instructional methods effectively support critical thinking and deeper learning. Their insights can address factors such as lesson pacing, content suitability, and the adequacy of resources. In early childhood settings, for example, teachers may determine that a scripted reading programme is overly rigid and advocate for more play-based, child-led literacy instruction. In primary settings, teachers can recommend adding more inquiry-based science experiments to foster curiosity and understanding. These observations allow curriculum developers to make evidence-based adjustments that enhance the program's relevance and quality.

The evaluative function of teachers also extends to assessing whether curricula effectively support diverse learning needs. Celik (2019) notes that teachers routinely use differentiated instructional strategies to accommodate students' varying abilities, cultural backgrounds and interests. Their feedback helps determine whether the curriculum provides sufficient flexibility to support inclusive and equitable learning environments. For example, preschool teachers may notice a lack of culturally representative stories, leading to revisions that incorporate folktales from multiple backgrounds. Primary teachers may find that standardised tests do not fairly assess students with learning differences, thus recommending alternative assessments, such as oral presentations or project-based tasks.

Challenges faced by preschool and primary school teachers in curriculum development

Teachers are an integral part of curriculum development, yet they often face significant challenges that hinder their full participation in the process. These obstacles, arising from institutional, professional, and personal domains, often restrict teachers' ability to contribute meaningfully to curriculum design or reform. Understanding these challenges is essential to foster supportive environments that allow teachers to engage more actively and effectively in curriculum development.

One of the biggest challenges is time pressure. Zydziunaite et al. (2020) highlight that teachers' workloads are heavily dominated by responsibilities such as lesson planning, classroom management, student assessment, and administrative tasks, leaving limited time for meaningful engagement in curriculum design. Developing curricula requires deep reflection, collaboration, and research, activities that are difficult to prioritise amid daily demands. For example, preschool teachers spend much of their

time managing routines, facilitating structured play, and nurturing social-emotional development, limiting opportunities for curriculum planning. In primary schools, the need to teach multiple subjects, assess student progress, and prepare students for standardised tests further restricts their participation. This lack of time often results in teachers being sidelined from curriculum development, despite their vital classroom experience and insights.

Another major obstacle is the lack of targeted professional development in curriculum design. Maila and Ross (2018) assert that many teachers are not adequately trained in the theoretical underpinnings and practical strategies required for curriculum development, undermining their confidence and capacity to contribute to curriculum-related decisions. Existing professional development often focuses on classroom management or pedagogy, rather than equipping teachers with skills for curriculum planning and evaluation. For example, preschool educators may receive training in child psychology or behaviour management, but lack exposure to curriculum frameworks tailored to early learning contexts. Primary school teachers might focus on content-specific strategies while missing out on interdisciplinary planning skills. This professional gap can leave teachers feeling ill-equipped and marginalised, limiting their contributions to curriculum development conversations.

Teachers also encounter bureaucratic barriers that limit their participation in curriculum decision-making. In many education systems, curriculum design is managed centrally by policymakers or senior administrators, without input from teachers. Dennis (2016) and Okoth (2016) emphasise that top-down reforms frequently exclude classroom teachers, even though they are expected to implement these changes. This disconnect often results in curricula that do not align with classroom realities, reducing their effectiveness. For example, preschool teachers may be required to deliver overly academic content that undermines play-based learning, while primary teachers may be forced to follow rigid curricula that fail to meet student's diverse needs in literacy and numeracy. On the contrary, decentralised models such as those in Scandinavian countries offer a more inclusive alternative. Lantz-Andersson et al. (2022) note that these systems involve teachers as co-creators of the curriculum, encouraging collaboration with policymakers and researchers. This approach values teachers' practical expertise and enhances their professional agency. Compared to centralised models, co-creation fosters greater teacher ownership and lowers resistance to reform. This comparison underscores the limitations of top-down systems and reinforces the importance of decentralising curriculum development to include practitioners on the front line.

Finally, resistance to change is a notable challenge in curriculum development. Nevenglosky (2018) suggests that teachers often experience discomfort or insecurity when introduced to unfamiliar instructional approaches, particularly if they were excluded from the decision-making process. This reluctance can undermine the success of curriculum reforms. For instance, preschool teachers used to traditional storytelling may hesitate to adopt digital tools, fearing that they might disrupt children's attention or emotional engagement. Similarly, primary teachers may resist the integration of project-based learning due to a lack of training in facilitating inquiry-based approaches.

The role of preschool and primary school teachers in localising the curriculum

Teachers play an essential role in localising the curriculum by adapting standardised content to better reflect the cultural, social, and contextual realities of their students. Although curricula are often designed at national or regional levels to maintain uniform educational standards, these broad frameworks may fail to address the specific needs and lived experiences of local communities. With their direct and continuous engagement with students, teachers are uniquely positioned to modify, enrich, and contextualise curriculum content, making learning more relevant and impactful within their classrooms.

One of the most effective strategies teachers use to localise the curriculum is culturally responsive teaching. Nayasi et al. (2022) asserted that culturally responsive practices require teachers to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into all aspects of teaching and learning. This approach allows students to see their identities and experiences reflected in the curriculum, thus improving their engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. For example, in preschool settings, teachers can incorporate local songs, dances, and storytelling traditions to establish a familiar, emotionally resonant learning environment for young children. At the primary level, history lessons can be revised to include local heroes, community milestones, or indigenous knowledge systems, helping students cultivate a deeper connection to their cultural heritage. By incorporating local customs, traditions, and languages, teachers make the curriculum more inclusive and meaningful for learners of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Beyond cultural alignment, teachers also adapt the curriculum to address specific local educational priorities and challenges. Pak et al. (2020) note that national curricula often overlook socioeconomic disparities or environmental concerns that affect certain communities. For example, in a preschool located in a coastal village, teachers may introduce thematic activities on marine ecosystems to develop environmental awareness from an early age. In a rural primary school, science lessons can incorporate sustainable farming practices to equip students with practical knowledge that aligns with their community's way of life. This type of localisation enhances the curriculum's relevance and builds real-world problem-solving skills tailored to students' contexts.

Adapting to resource constraints is another critical component of curriculum localisation. Teachers operate in diverse environments, from well-resourced urban schools to underfunded rural classrooms. A standardised curriculum can assume the availability of technological tools, internet access, or specialised equipment, which are often lacking in many schools. Teachers must therefore creatively reinterpret curricular requirements to suit their available resources. For example, preschool teachers in low-income settings can use locally sourced or recycled materials for creative and sensory learning, while primary teachers may conduct science experiments using natural materials such as soil, leaves, or stones to demonstrate key concepts. Gouëdard et al. (2020) assert that effective curriculum localisation enables teachers to deliver comparable educational content while adapting to disparities in infrastructure and funding.

Gray (2024) further reinforces that teacher agency is fundamental to successful localisation. When teachers possess a strong sense of professional autonomy and self-efficacy, they are more likely to take initiative in contextualising content and challenging one-size-fits-all approaches that do not meet the needs of their students. Participatory curriculum development models, which empower teachers as co-creators, not only improve relevance but also enhance teacher ownership, motivation, and long-term commitment to curriculum goals.

Professional development and teacher preparation for curriculum development in early childhood and primary education

Ongoing professional development is essential to prepare teachers to participate effectively in curriculum development. As the educational landscape undergoes constant transformation, driven by new teaching methodologies, technological advancements, and changing student needs, teachers must continuously update their skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to curriculum creation and improvement. Well-structured professional development programmes equip teachers with the critical competencies required to design innovative, relevant, and contextually appropriate curricula. In the context of preschool and primary education, such development is particularly vital, as teachers require specialised knowledge in early childhood pedagogy, developmental psychology, and age-appropriate instructional techniques to construct effective curricula for young learners.

Karakose et al. (2023) emphasise that professional development opportunities also significantly boost teacher self-efficacy, a key driver of teacher engagement in curriculum reform. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more confident, proactive, and willing to participate in curriculum planning and pedagogical experimentation aligned with contemporary educational goals.

The value of professional development in curriculum work is well supported by educational research. Holmqvist and Lelinge (2020) assert that sustained, collaborative, and content-specific professional learning improves teachers' ability to design and implement curricula that respond to student needs. Such programmes deepen subject knowledge, introduce new pedagogical strategies, and build curriculum development expertise. Through professional development, teachers gain confidence and skill to make informed curricular decisions about what content to teach and how to deliver it effectively. For example, preschool teachers may benefit from training in play-based or inquiry-driven methodologies, while primary school teachers may require targeted support in literacy and numeracy instruction to align teaching with foundational learning standards.

A critical area often overlooked in teacher preparation is curriculum theory and design. Many educators receive limited training in this domain during their initial teacher education. Fullan (2015) notes that teachers often lack essential skills such as developing learning outcomes, sequencing content, and selecting aligned assessment strategies. Professional development can address this gap by providing specialised workshops, collaborative design sessions, and mentoring opportunities where teachers work alongside curriculum experts. For preschool educators, such training can focus on developing sensory-rich, exploratory learning experiences, while primary school teachers can benefit from mastering scaffolding and differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs. These initiatives promote reflective teaching and empower teachers to contribute substantively to curriculum planning, ultimately improving the quality of classroom instruction.

Additionally, embedding participatory curriculum design models into professional development, as recommended by Makrakis and Kostoulas-Makrakis (2023), transforms teachers from passive recipients into active co-constructors of curriculum. This collaborative model improves teacher agency, professional investment, and long-term commitment to educational reform.

Another key dimension of effective professional development is the integration of educational technology. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, proposed by Koehler and Mishra (2009), highlights the importance of blending technological fluency with sound pedagogy and content mastery. As digital tools become increasingly embedded in curriculum design, teachers must acquire the skills needed to integrate technology effectively and equitably. Technology-focused professional development helps teachers incorporate digital tools, personalise learning pathways, and leverage data analytics to refine instructional choices. For example, preschool teachers might learn to use interactive storytelling apps to support language development, while primary school teachers could use gamified learning platforms to enhance student engagement in subjects such as mathematics and science. Teachers trained in technology are better positioned to design dynamic, multimedia-rich

lessons using simulations, videos, and online assessments.

Collaboration is another cornerstone of effective professional development. Working together, teachers can exchange ideas, share strategies, and collectively innovate curriculum content. Svendsen (2020) observes that collaborative professional development cultivates collective efficacy and shared responsibility for curriculum change. In early childhood education, this might involve co-developing integrated thematic units combining storytelling, music, and movement, while in primary schools, collaboration can lead to interdisciplinary project-based learning activities that span subjects. Collaborative planning encourages teachers to incorporate diverse perspectives, resulting in more holistic and inclusive curricula that meet the needs of all students. Such collaborative approaches, aligned with participatory design principles, not only improve curriculum quality but also strengthen teachers' professional identity and sense of ownership as active contributors to educational transformation.

Conclusion

The role of preschool and primary school teachers in curriculum development is multidimensional and crucial to the success of any educational programme. As central stakeholders in the learning process, teachers bring practical, experience-based insights drawn from their daily interactions with young learners, making them indispensable contributors to the design, implementation, evaluation, and localisation of curricula. Through their direct engagement with students' needs, classroom dynamics, and the complexities of diverse learning environments, they can transform curriculum frameworks into engaging, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. This teacher-driven adaptation ensures that the curricula remain responsive to the academic, cultural, and social-emotional needs of young children, thereby enhancing the relevance, inclusivity, and overall effectiveness of education.

A core aspect of the participation of early childhood and primary school teachers in curriculum development is their dual role as curriculum designers and formative evaluators. By offering ongoing classroom-based feedback on how well the curriculum aligns with the intended learning goals, teachers contribute to a continuous improvement cycle. As evaluators, they monitor student progress, identify learning gaps, and propose modifications to instructional strategies or content.

However, several challenges hinder teachers' full participation in curriculum development. These include limited time, inadequate access to professional development, bureaucratic obstacles, and institutional resistance to innovation. Overcoming these barriers requires systemwide support, such as sustained investment in targeted professional learning programmes focused on curriculum theory, design, and assessment. When teachers are empowered with the required skills and knowledge, they can make meaningful, evidence-informed contributions that benefit both learners and the broader educational system.

In addition, collaborative partnerships between early childhood and primary teachers and curriculum developers are essential to bridge the gap between educational theory and classroom practice. Teachers' input ensures that curricula are realistic, locally relevant, and pedagogically sound, while still aligning with national or regional educational standards. Through contextualisation and cultural localisation, teachers can tailor curriculum content to reflect the values, languages, traditions, and lived experiences of the communities they serve.

To enhance the practical implications of these findings, the following actionable recommendations are suggested: 1. Education ministries and institutions should adopt models of ongoing, collaborative professional development models, such as lesson study, curriculum co-design workshops, and mentoring partnerships that explicitly focus on curriculum development competencies; 2. Policy frameworks should mandate the inclusion of teacher representatives on national and regional curriculum development panels, ensuring that teacher perspectives shape both policy and practice; 3. Schools and systems should incentivise teacher-led curriculum innovation through grants, recognition programmes, or protected time within the school schedule; and 4. Establish and support school-based curriculum leadership teams to facilitate teacher collaboration in adapting national curriculum frameworks to local realities. By institutionalising these supports, education systems can transition toward more participatory, context-responsive curriculum development processes that not only empower teachers but also enrich learning outcomes for young children.

Authors' contribution

The authors contributed equally to the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical statement

Ethical approval was not required for this study.

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