

# Managerial Role of the Principal in Curriculum Implementation

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the managerial role of principals in curriculum implementation in Tamil-medium secondary schools in the Nikaweratiya Education Zone of the Kurunegala District, Sri Lanka. The study was conducted using a descriptive survey design within a mixed-methods research approach. A purposive sample of 16 principals and deputy principals and 60 teachers was selected. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study focused on key dimensions such as curriculum planning, implementation, resource management, instructional supervision, and strategies used to address implementation challenges. Findings indicate that principals generally demonstrate a moderate to high level of involvement in curriculum management, particularly in areas such as planning, monitoring of instruction, and coordination of curriculum activities. However, lower levels of effectiveness were observed in providing feedback, supporting professional development, and promoting innovative teaching practices. Teachers, in several areas, reported lower levels of satisfaction compared to principals' self-assessments, revealing perceptual gaps between the two groups. The study also identified challenges such as limited resources, workload issues, and inconsistent coordination among stakeholders. While principals reported taking multiple measures to address these challenges, a significant proportion of teachers perceived these actions as insufficient or not systematically implemented. Overall, the study concludes that although principals play a crucial role in curriculum implementation, there is a need to strengthen collaborative leadership, improve communication between principals and teachers, and enhance support systems such as feedback mechanisms and professional development opportunities. These improvements are essential for ensuring more effective curriculum implementation and improving the quality of education in the study area.

**Keywords:** Managerial Role, Principal, Curriculum Implementation, Teachers

## INTRODUCTION

Education is recognized as a fundamental right; therefore, equitable and quality education should be provided to all (Kirubalan & Sivananthan, 2026). To achieve this, the resources available in schools are utilized to their maximum capacity, through which the curriculum is implemented (Fernan, 2007). The school principal plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of the curriculum. An institutional leader can guide the organization toward effectiveness only by performing multiple roles, one of which is that of a manager (Koontz & O'Donnell, 1976). Therefore, as the head of the school as an organization, the principal is required to assume various managerial roles. In this context, it is the responsibility of the principal to manage the school curriculum in a manner that achieves national goals while also meeting the expectations of parents and the wider community (UNESCO, 2006).

In Sri Lanka's education system, the national curriculum is implemented under the guidance of the Ministry of Education. However, its effective implementation at the school level largely depends on the administrative and leadership competencies of the principal (Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2020). Furthermore, all aspects of planning, execution, and evaluation are closely linked to the role of the school principal. The curriculum is not limited to classroom teaching activities alone but also aims at the overall personality development of students (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). For this purpose, it is necessary to engage in systematic discussions with parents regarding students' learning difficulties, academic progress, and other educational needs (Sivananthan, 2021). In addition, it is important to obtain adequate contribution and involvement not only from the school but also

from the wider community (Sivananthan & Wedikandage, (2023). Meanwhile, principals are required to face various challenges, among which the lack of sufficient resources, limited teacher cooperation, and increased workload are prominent (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004). Providing teacher training, offering classroom guidance, effectively supervising the curriculum, and ensuring community support all require the active involvement of the principal. In particular, to implement content-related components such as the curriculum effectively, principals must operate with a strong and well-structured plan (Bush, 2008).

The Kurunegala District in Sri Lanka's North Western Province, and the Nikaweratiya Education Zone under it, are considered to be relatively underdeveloped compared to other regions in terms of social and economic conditions. In this context, Tamil-medium secondary schools in the area mostly operate with limited resources. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of education in schools, the transformational leadership of principals becomes essential (Samararatne, 2019). In this background, it is important to examine how principals utilize their leadership skills and practices to implement the curriculum effectively.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- ❖ To identify the principal's managerial role in undertaking planning for the effective implementation of the curriculum.
- ❖ To identify the principal's managerial role in the effective implementation of the curriculum.
- ❖ To find out the actions taken by the principal to overcome the challenges faced in curriculum implementation.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Various studies have been conducted both locally and internationally regarding the managerial role of the principal in curriculum implementation. Olivia and Gordon (2018) define the curriculum as a comprehensive framework that reflects the values of a society and its future needs. Curriculum management is aimed at the holistic development of students' personality, and it is closely connected with the leadership of educational institutions (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). In the successful implementation of the curriculum, the principal acts as both a "guide" and an "organizer."

Furthermore, the school curriculum, which is one of the central components of the educational process, goes beyond being merely a collection of subject content; it represents an organized and planned set of all learning experiences provided to students within a school (Oliva & Gordon, 2013). Therefore, the curriculum should not only focus on delivering information to students but also emphasize skills such as critical analysis of information, verification of authenticity, constructing meaning from information, and generating new knowledge (Fullan, 2013).

To successfully implement the curriculum in line with the modern world, curriculum management is based on several key pillars. As an instructional leader who guides effective classroom teaching and learning, the principal must create various facilities and opportunities for teachers through their day-to-day managerial activities. The principal should also demonstrate their daily administrative duties and key responsibilities through their role, so that teachers gain a clear understanding of them. Only then will teachers be aware of the principal's managerial duties and responsibilities. Defining the objectives of the school, determining how they can be achieved, and finally accomplishing those objectives are the main functions of a principal (Perera et al., 1991).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted based on eight Tamil-medium secondary schools in the Nikaweratiya Education Zone of the Kurunegala District in Sri Lanka's North Western Province. The study was designed as a descriptive survey and followed a mixed-methods research approach. Using purposive sampling, 16 principals and deputy principals, as well as 60 teachers selected according to seniority levels, were included as the

sample of the study. Questionnaires and interviews were used as primary data collection instruments, while documents were used as secondary data sources. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, whereas qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected to identify the managerial role of the principal in curriculum implementation were analyzed in accordance with the research objectives and are presented under the following subheadings. The Likert scale used in this study represents the following values: 5 – Completely Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Somewhat Agree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree.

### Managerial Role of the Principal in Curriculum Planning

The managerial role of the principal in curriculum planning was measured using 15 variables. The data were computed using mean and standard deviation values and are presented in the following tables.

Table 1: Strategic–Instructional Management (Planning Quality & Academic Direction)

Variable	Responses of participants			
	Principals (16)		Teachers (60)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Clarity of Curriculum Vision and Goals	4.3	0.45	3.6	0.36
Alignment of Curriculum with National/Institutional Standards	4.4	0.84	3.8	0.23
Principal’s Guidance in Curriculum Design and Review	3.9	0.23	4.2	0.24
Use of Student Performance Data in Planning	3.8	0.74	3.9	0.81
Promotion of Learner-Centered Curriculum Practices	4.3	0.63	4.3	0.25
Encouragement of Teacher Participation in Planning	4.1	0.52	3.5	0.64
Support for Innovation and Curriculum Adaptation	3.6	0.61	4.1	0.28
Integration of ICT and Modern Teaching Strategies	3.7	0.62	4.3	0.28

The mean scores indicate that both principals and teachers generally hold favorable views regarding curriculum-related practices, though with some variations, while the standard deviations show the level of agreement among respondents. Principals reported high agreement on the clarity of curriculum vision and goals (M = 4.3, SD = 0.45) and alignment with national or institutional standards (M = 4.4, SD = 0.84), although the relatively higher SD in the latter suggests more varied opinions among principals. Teachers, however, showed slightly lower but consistent agreement in these areas (M = 3.6, SD = 0.36; M = 3.8, SD = 0.23), indicating more uniform perceptions. In contrast, teachers rated the principal’s guidance in curriculum design and review higher (M = 4.2, SD = 0.24) than principals themselves (M = 3.9, SD = 0.23), with low SDs in both groups reflecting strong consensus. For the use of student performance data in planning, both principals (M = 3.8, SD = 0.74) and teachers (M = 3.9, SD = 0.81) demonstrated moderate agreement, but the higher SD values indicate greater variability in responses. A strong and consistent agreement is evident in the promotion of learner-centered curriculum practices, with both groups reporting identical means (M = 4.3), though teachers’ responses are more consistent (SD = 0.25) compared to principals (SD = 0.63). Regarding encouragement of teacher participation in planning, principals reported higher agreement (M = 4.1, SD = 0.52) than teachers (M = 3.5, SD = 0.64), suggesting some inconsistency in teachers’ experiences. Conversely, teachers expressed stronger and more consistent agreement in support for innovation and curriculum adaptation (M = 4.1, SD = 0.28) and integration of ICT and modern teaching strategies (M = 4.3, SD = 0.28), compared to principals (M = 3.6, SD = 0.61; M = 3.7, SD = 0.62), whose responses show greater dispersion. Overall, while both groups reflect positive perceptions, the differences in mean scores and variability highlight perceptual gaps and suggest areas for improving shared understanding and consistency in curriculum implementation practices.

Table 2: Organizational–Administrative Management (Coordination & Support Systems)

Variable	Responses of participants			
	Principals (16)		Teachers (60)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Allocation of Resources for Curriculum Planning	3.6	0.55	4.3	0.61
Time Provision for Collaborative Planning Activities	4.3	0.42	4.2	0.26
Coordination among Departments and Subject Teachers	3.7	0.31	3.8	0.41
Monitoring and Supervision of Planning Processes	4.4	0.34	4.2	0.51
Stakeholder Involvement (Parents, Community, Authorities)	4.2	0.62	3.5	0.52
Policy Implementation and Compliance in Curriculum Planning	3.9	0.62	3.9	0.64
Ensuring Equity, Inclusiveness, and Accessibility in Planning	4.2	0.52	4.3	0.29

The mean scores indicate that both principals and teachers generally hold positive perceptions regarding organizational practices in curriculum planning, while the standard deviations reflect the degree of consistency in their responses. Principals reported moderate agreement in the allocation of resources for curriculum planning (M = 3.6, SD = 0.55), whereas teachers expressed higher agreement (M = 4.3, SD = 0.61), suggesting that teachers perceive resource availability more favorably, though with slightly varied opinions in both groups. Both principals (M = 4.3, SD = 0.42) and teachers (M = 4.2, SD = 0.26) showed strong agreement on the provision of time for collaborative planning activities, with teachers demonstrating more consistent views. Coordination among departments and subject teachers received moderate agreement from both principals (M = 3.7, SD = 0.31) and teachers (M = 3.8, SD = 0.41), indicating relatively uniform perceptions. High agreement is observed in the monitoring and supervision of planning processes, with principals (M = 4.4, SD = 0.34) rating this slightly higher than teachers (M = 4.2, SD = 0.51), though teachers’ responses show greater variability. Regarding stakeholder involvement, principals reported strong agreement (M = 4.2, SD = 0.62), whereas teachers indicated only moderate agreement (M = 3.5, SD = 0.52), pointing to a perceptual gap and some inconsistency in experiences. Both groups showed identical mean scores for policy implementation and compliance (M = 3.9), with relatively higher SDs (0.62 and 0.64) suggesting diverse opinions. Finally, ensuring equity, inclusiveness, and accessibility in planning was rated highly by both principals (M = 4.2, SD = 0.52) and teachers (M = 4.3, SD = 0.29), with teachers again demonstrating more consistent agreement. Overall, while the findings reflect generally positive perceptions, variations in mean scores and standard deviations highlight differences in experiences and suggest areas where greater alignment and consistency in curriculum planning practices may be needed.

**The Principal's managerial role in curriculum implementation**

The managerial role of the principal in curriculum implementation was measured using 15 variables. The data were computed using mean and standard deviation values and are presented in the following tables.

Table 3: Instructional Supervision & Academic Support (Teaching–Learning Process)

Variable	Responses of participants			
	Principals (16)		Teachers (60)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Monitoring of Classroom Instruction	4.4	0.35	4.2	0.36
Support for Effective Teaching Practices	3.6	0.72	3.1	0.63
Provision of Feedback to Teachers	2.4	0.36	2.2	0.34
Encouragement of Student-Centered Instruction	3.8	0.52	2.9	0.61
Supervision of Lesson Plan Implementation	3.3	0.43	3.2	0.55
Use of Assessment Results to Improve Teaching	3.1	0.62	3.0	0.64
Promotion of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	2.9	0.42	2.7	0.38
Ensuring Quality and Consistency in Curriculum Delivery	3.2	0.67	3.1	0.58

The mean scores suggest that both principals and teachers demonstrate moderately positive perceptions of instructional monitoring and support practices, while the standard deviations indicate generally consistent

responses with some variation in specific areas. Monitoring of classroom instruction is rated highly by both principals ( $M = 4.4, SD = 0.35$ ) and teachers ( $M = 4.2, SD = 0.36$ ), showing strong agreement and consistent perceptions. However, support for effective teaching practices receives only moderate agreement, with principals ( $M = 3.6, SD = 0.72$ ) rating it higher than teachers ( $M = 3.1, SD = 0.63$ ), and the relatively higher SD values indicating some variability in views. Provision of feedback to teachers is rated low by both principals ( $M = 2.4, SD = 0.36$ ) and teachers ( $M = 2.2, SD = 0.34$ ), reflecting general dissatisfaction but with consistent responses. Encouragement of student-centered instruction shows moderate agreement among principals ( $M = 3.8, SD = 0.52$ ), but lower agreement among teachers ( $M = 2.9, SD = 0.61$ ), suggesting a perceptual gap and some inconsistency in teachers' experiences. Supervision of lesson plan implementation is rated at a moderate level by both principals ( $M = 3.3, SD = 0.43$ ) and teachers ( $M = 3.2, SD = 0.55$ ), with relatively consistent responses. Similarly, the use of assessment results to improve teaching shows moderate agreement (principals  $M = 3.1, SD = 0.62$ ; teachers  $M = 3.0, SD = 0.64$ ), though the higher SD values indicate varied perceptions. Promotion of continuous professional development (CPD) is rated slightly below moderate by both principals ( $M = 2.9, SD = 0.42$ ) and teachers ( $M = 2.7, SD = 0.38$ ), suggesting limited emphasis but consistent opinions. Finally, ensuring quality and consistency in curriculum delivery also receives moderate ratings from both groups (principals  $M = 3.2, SD = 0.67$ ; teachers  $M = 3.1, SD = 0.58$ ), with some variability in responses. Overall, while monitoring practices appear strong, areas such as feedback provision, professional development, and support for teaching practices require improvement, and differences in mean scores highlight perceptual gaps between principals and teachers.

Table 4: Administrative Coordination & Resource Management (Organizational Support)

Variable	Responses of participants			
	Principals (16)		Teachers (60)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Allocation and Utilization of Teaching Resources	3.2	0.25	3.1	0.36
Time Management for Curriculum Implementation (timetabling)	2.8	0.82	2.7	0.63
Coordination among Teachers and Departments	2.9	0.33	2.6	0.34
Ensuring Compliance with Curriculum Policies	2.7	0.84	2.6	0.86
Supportive School Environment for Implementation	3.3	0.73	2.8	0.95
Stakeholder Communication and Involvement	4.1	0.22	3.5	0.42
Monitoring and Evaluation of Overall Curriculum Implementation	3.6	0.71	4.0	0.82

The mean scores indicate that both principals and teachers generally show moderate to low levels of agreement regarding several aspects of curriculum implementation, while the standard deviations reflect varying degrees of consistency in their responses. Allocation and utilization of teaching resources are rated at a moderate level by both principals ( $M = 3.2, SD = 0.25$ ) and teachers ( $M = 3.1, SD = 0.36$ ), with relatively low SD values indicating consistent perceptions. Time management for curriculum implementation (timetabling) receives somewhat low agreement from both principals ( $M = 2.8, SD = 0.82$ ) and teachers ( $M = 2.7, SD = 0.63$ ), and the higher SD values suggest notable variation in opinions. Similarly, coordination among teachers and departments is rated slightly below moderate (principals  $M = 2.9, SD = 0.33$ ; teachers  $M = 2.6, SD = 0.34$ ), showing fairly consistent but less favorable perceptions. Ensuring compliance with curriculum policies is also rated low by both principals ( $M = 2.7, SD = 0.84$ ) and teachers ( $M = 2.6, SD = 0.86$ ), with high variability indicating differing experiences among respondents. The supportive school environment for implementation shows moderate agreement among principals ( $M = 3.3, SD = 0.73$ ), but lower agreement among teachers ( $M = 2.8, SD = 0.95$ ), suggesting a perceptual gap and considerable inconsistency, particularly among teachers. In contrast, stakeholder communication and involvement receive high agreement from principals ( $M = 4.1, SD = 0.22$ ) and moderate agreement from teachers ( $M = 3.5, SD = 0.42$ ), with principals showing strong consensus. Finally, monitoring and evaluation of overall curriculum implementation are rated moderately by principals ( $M = 3.6, SD = 0.71$ ) and more highly by teachers ( $M = 4.0, SD = 0.82$ ), though both groups exhibit some variability in responses. Overall, the findings suggest that while certain areas such as stakeholder communication and monitoring show relatively positive perceptions, key aspects like time management, policy compliance, and coordination require improvement, and differences in mean scores highlight perceptual gaps between principals and teachers.

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## **Actions taken by the Principal to overcome the challenges faced in the implementation of the curriculum**

The content analysis of responses related to steps taken to overcome curriculum implementation challenges reveals a clear divergence in perceptions between principals and teachers. A majority of teachers (70%) indicated that no comprehensive or systematic actions were taken to address key challenges such as identifying implementation issues, modifying teaching strategies, providing instructional guidance, or facilitating professional development. Teachers' responses suggest that efforts related to the use of student assessment data, promotion of collaborative problem-solving, introduction of innovative practices, and reallocation of resources were either limited or inconsistently implemented. Similarly, areas such as adjusting timetables, strengthening internal communication, and engaging parents and the community were perceived by many teachers as lacking structured and sustained attention. This indicates that, from the teachers' perspective, the strategies to address curriculum-related barriers are fragmented and insufficiently coordinated.

In contrast, a considerable proportion of principals (60%) reported that multiple measures were actively undertaken to address curriculum implementation challenges. According to principals, efforts were made across a broad range of areas, including monitoring and follow-up of implemented solutions, ensuring equity and support for diverse learners, seeking assistance from education authorities, and promoting collaboration among teachers. Principals also emphasized their roles in providing guidance, encouraging innovation, and utilizing feedback and assessment data to improve teaching and learning processes. However, the discrepancy between principals' and teachers' views suggests a gap between policy-level intentions and ground-level experiences. This mismatch highlights the need for more transparent communication, inclusive decision-making, and consistent implementation mechanisms to ensure that the intended strategies are effectively experienced and recognized by teachers in practice.

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study highlight the significant managerial role of principals in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum activities within schools in the Nikaweratiya Education Zone. Overall, the results indicate that principals generally demonstrate a positive level of engagement in curriculum-related tasks such as planning processes, instructional supervision, and resource coordination. However, variations in mean scores and standard deviations across different dimensions suggest that the effectiveness of these practices is not uniform and is influenced by contextual and institutional factors.

In curriculum planning, principals were found to play a relatively strong role in setting objectives and organizing planning activities, although teacher involvement and participatory planning practices showed some inconsistency. This suggests that while planning structures exist, collaborative engagement with teachers still requires strengthening. Similarly, in curriculum implementation, principals were perceived as actively involved in monitoring classroom instruction and supervising lesson plans. However, lower mean values in areas such as feedback provision, professional development support, and encouragement of innovative teaching practices indicate gaps in instructional leadership practices.

The study also revealed perceptual differences between principals and teachers in several areas. Principals generally rated their involvement and effectiveness higher than teachers did, particularly in areas such as curriculum monitoring and resource management. Conversely, teachers reported lower levels of satisfaction in support mechanisms such as feedback, guidance, and professional development. These differences highlight a communication gap between leadership perceptions and classroom-level experiences, which may affect the overall effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

Furthermore, challenges in curriculum implementation were evident, particularly in relation to resource limitations, workload issues, and inconsistent coordination among stakeholders. Although principals reported taking multiple measures to address these challenges, a significant proportion of teachers felt that such actions were not sufficiently systematic or comprehensive. This mismatch suggests that implementation strategies may not be effectively communicated or consistently experienced at the school level.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that while principals in the selected schools play an essential role in curriculum management, there is a need to strengthen collaborative leadership, improve teacher involvement,

and enhance supportive mechanisms such as feedback systems and professional development. Addressing these gaps would contribute to more effective curriculum implementation and improved educational outcomes in the region.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ To enhance curriculum implementation in schools, the principal should not rely solely on individual leadership but instead promote a system of shared leadership. For this purpose, it is essential to establish a “Curriculum Guidance Committee” comprising senior teachers.
- ❖ To increase teacher participation to 100%, annual planning workshops should be conducted involving teachers from all subject areas.
- ❖ To reduce the principal’s administrative burden and improve the quality of supervision, curriculum monitoring responsibilities should be delegated to sectional heads and subject heads.
- ❖ In order to enable teachers to focus fully on curriculum implementation, their additional non-teaching administrative duties should be minimized.
- ❖ After classroom observations, individual discussions should be held with teachers, providing constructive feedback rather than criticism, thereby ensuring their professional development.

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