Moving Forward, Moving Backward: Politics of Curriculum Development in the Philippine Secondary Schools

Hubertus Guru and Romualdo E. Abulad
The Graduate School, Faculty of Arts and Letters
University of Sto.Tomas
The Philippines 1015

ABSTRACT

The major players in the curriculum development process such as teachers, supervisors and other curriculum developers are the key to its success and its ability to improve the students’ performance. However, there are obstacles which may be inferred from the positive factors and conditions that are considered necessary to, or aid in, the curriculum development process. Guided by the central question, “What makes the curriculum development in the Philippine secondary school political?,” the researchers employed a phenomenographical design using open-ended and semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990) with 24 school supervisors and classroom teachers of selected secondary schools in the Philippines. Field texts were subjected to data reduction using repertory grid and dendrogram analysis. Interestingly, the cool and warm analysis revealed three contexts of the curriculum development process, namely, strategic, democratic and bureaucratic contexts.

KEYWORDS: Curriculum development process; Filipino supervisors and teachers; Strategic, democratic and bureaucratic contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum development process has become an essential dimension in the evolution and construction of a curriculum, involving in its planning, implementation and evaluation various people, processes, and procedures (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004; Seel & Dijkstra, 2004). Moreover, it is efficacious only if it draws the participation of the instructors in the learning process. In other words, the efficiency of curriculum development as the crux of the learning process is determined not only by the curriculum package but also by the participation and cooperation of the administrator (principals), instructors and the whole school community (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, 1998).

There is no doubt that the major players in the curriculum development process such as teachers, supervisors and other curriculum developers are the key to its success (Guskey, 1995; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Spillane & Callahan, 2000). Their knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions play a fundamental role in the understanding and implementation of the reforms intended by
the process (Blignaut, 2007; Haney, 2002; Haney, Czerniak & Lumpe, 1996). This entails active learning and constructing of new meanings on their part. As the constructivist theorists argue, the participation of teachers in curriculum development opens a new path to the social and political realities that require teaching effectiveness for the improvement of the students’ performance (Bantwini, 2010; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Spillane & Callahan, 2000).

Curriculum development process purports to serve as an open system which is described as a journey by all involved - a journey to be experienced with zest (Bantwini, 2010; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004) and a journey that directs and guides the delivery of all instruction in the school aimed at improving student performance (Coppula, Scricca & Connors, 2004; Gordon, 2000). Further, it provides a basis for supervisory decisions and actions by allocating the contents and methods that are seen as relevant to the students’ present and future life (Seel & Dijkstra, 2004). Additionally, curriculum development motivates the supervisors to focus their attention and mobilize their effort, at the same time encouraging the development and use of effective task strategies (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2006; Locke & Latham, 2002).

Research scholars like Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2007) averred that curriculum development should be creative, adaptive and interpretative.

While there is an extensive literature dealing with curriculum development, not much speaks specifically of obstacles. The existing literature is usually couched in affirmative terms. Obstacles are nonetheless implied and may be inferred from these positive presentations of factors and conditions that are necessary to, or aid in, curriculum development. Glickman (2002) has brought to the public’s attention some factors culled from his own observations and experiences as a supervisor and teacher. If a supervisor wants a curriculum activity organized within the school for the improvement of instruction, he is likely to succeed in this even in the face of many handicaps - limited or untrained staff; lack of facilities, time and funds; and insufficient consultative services. However, if the supervisor is not really interested in curriculum development and does not particularly want any organized curriculum activity, then despite the presence of many other favorable factors and circumstances, little constructive work is likely to be accomplished (Randolph, Duffy & Mattingly, 2007; Shawer, Gilmore, & Banks-Joseph, 2008).

It is clear that one great obstacle to curriculum development lies within the nature of the subject itself - that there is no immediate natural stimulus for change which causes the adaptation of the curriculum to new conditions of life (Campbell, 2007). For instance, many secondary-school principals or supervisors believe in the superiority of a core curriculum for the high school and the efficacy of the unit method of teaching in appropriate areas, but, after a generation or two, it may still be difficult to get the idea decisively approved by critics (Knight, Tait, & Yorke, 2006), particularly on account of its political context (Levin, 2007).

Of the obstacles to curriculum development, the greatest is the lack of conviction on the part of leadership on the need for curriculum revision (Chisholm, 2005; Rogan & Grayson, 2003; Jansen, 2002). Unless the principal and the other status leaders who are in direct charge of the curriculum development program have a fervent understanding of why the curriculum needs revision and a burning desire to see it accomplished, there is always danger in the face of daily immediacy that inertia will bring the work to a grinding halt (Tuncay & Uzunboylu, 2010; Fullan, 2004; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Spillane & Callahan, 2000).
Some obstacles to curriculum development also lie within the competencies of the staff (Mohammed & Harlech-Jones, 2008). Of great concern is the fact that newly trained teachers are rarely oriented in the curriculum development process and its implications to educational research. Teacher education institutions owe an obligation to the profession to perfect this area of their own curricula (Chisholm, 2005; Rogan & Grayson, 2003). Meanwhile, in-service education must provide many teachers with their first contacts in the field. An added complication is the fact that many teachers simply cannot read typical educational research or get any meaning from it. Desperately needed are more services for collating, summarizing, and interpreting research for the consumers-teachers active in curriculum development (Loucks-Horsley, Love, Stiles, Mundry, & Hewson, 2003; Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Further, the staff personnel must come to understand - many yet fail to do so - that working on curriculum is a way of life for the teacher. Since change is inevitable and constant, curriculum must continuously be revised (Mohammed & Harlech-Jones, 2008). Tomorrow’s problems and needs are sure to be different in some degree. Teachers can no more stop working on the improvement of instruction than doctors can quit working on the conquest of disease and the techniques of healing. Acceptance of this principle has come hard for teachers (Hopper, 2007; Higgins, 2004; O’Sullivan, 2002; Ward, Clark, & Heidrich, 2009).

Albeit some developments in the past have paid increasing attention to the teachers’ perception of the curriculum development process, their roles are still viewed as essentially passive (Lo, Ramayah & de Run, 2010). This perception could drive the teaching staff to become actually passive and thus bear no impact on the curricular goal (Sidhu & Fook, 2010; Coppula, Scricca & Connors, 2004). Such passive role of teachers in curriculum development eventually leads to the ineffective implementation of the recommendations for the improvement of student performance (Steyrer, Schiffinger & Lang, 2008). Perhaps the teachers will respond unfavorably to the top-down, authoritarian approach to curriculum development (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 2004; Coppula, Scricca & Connors, 2004; Sterman, 2000), which may in turn weaken the effects of goal setting and teacher participation. Consequently, the passive role of teachers may inhibit the teaching staff from working collaboratively and cooperatively and even reduce the chances for the desired qualitative performance (Rahimi, Borujeni, Esfahani & Liaghatdar, 2010).

Despite the fact that Danchin, MacLeod and Tata (2010), as well as Coppula, Scricca and Connors (2004), strongly highlight the importance of the collaboration of teachers in curriculum development, the findings of the study revealed that such involvement or participation of the teaching staff has been apparently frail. The involvement and participation of the teaching staff in curriculum development is still considered the new kid on the block and is currently en vogue in relation to school effectiveness (Edwards, Green & Lyons, 2002).

RESEARCH METHOD

To understand the dynamics, politics and ethics of supportive supervision in Philippine secondary schools, this research work employs the qualitative approach. Specifically, the researcher seeks to answer questions about supportive supervision practices grounded on aspects such as curriculum development, lesson planning, observation and professional development. Said approach is chosen as it engages in the type of problem being investigated,
which cannot be readily understood through mere quantification or metric techniques due to its subjective nature (de Guzman & Tan, 2007).

Due to the same subjective nature of the qualitative research problem, the researcher purports to use the phenomenon under study through the eyes of the respondents. As Fochtman (2008) points out, “to truly understand another human being, we must investigate how the respondent perceives an experience.” The ultimate aim of qualitative research is to give a clean perspective and description of the human experience as a phenomenon. The power of qualitative research is derived from “the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions” (Myers, 2000) achieved by the researcher.

**DESIGN**

The phenomenographic approach which was used for this study is a type of descriptive research concerned with the different ways of experiencing and understanding which people have of various phenomena. This was developed in Sweden in the 1970s initially in the field of education (Marton, 1986, 1981; cited by Anderberg, Svensson, Alvegard & Johansson, 2008). The variations of understanding represent particular ways of viewing, thinking and interpreting some aspects of the world. It has been repeatedly observed that phenomena are aspects of reality, experienced and understood in a relatively limited number of qualitatively different ways (Marton, 1981; Svensson, 1997; Säljö, 1996). Phenomenography differs from phenomenology in that variation, not essence or similarity, is the outcome of this study (Marton, 1988). While the nature of phenomenographic research is constant, the research outcomes may vary (Bowden, 2005). This makes it different from phenomenology where the researchers may use different approaches according to the chosen philosophic perspective, for example Husserl or Heidegger (Polit & Beck, 2004). The categories of description are the key features resulting from an analysis of data in phenomenographic research (Marton, 1988). These provide the description which supports the meaning identified in the variations of experience and represents the qualitatively different ways in which phenomena are understood (Bowden, 2005).

Selection. Sample participants were constituted among those involved and affected by supportive supervision, particularly the school supervisors and teachers who were selected from some secondary schools in the Philippines. There were inclusion criteria for each respondent group. Two or three respondents were chosen from each school and they were the principal respondents of this research. The supervisors, who had more or less five years of service, were known for their successful contributions to the academic performance of their institutions, and for having performed satisfactorily in their tasks and responsibilities. Teachers who had been in the teaching profession for at least five years were also considered qualified in this research. The selection of respondents was based on the recommendation of Kruger (1988) who favored those “who have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” and whose views could be taken as ‘fact’. Consequently, respondents were chosen only if they had lived the experience under study (Goulding, 2005). Additionally, the selected schools should have at least practiced or implemented the Understanding by Design (UbD) curriculum which was introduced by the Department of Education in 2009.
Data Gathering Procedure. As a major data collection technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), in-depth interviews were conducted with a select group of supervisors and teachers from different secondary schools in the Philippines. Open-ended questions were asked to elicit individual responses in the sharing of lived experiences, including the interviewees’ experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme’s questions (Welman & Kruger, 1999). Patton (1990) suggests that additional qualitative interviewing, such as informal, conversational and semi-structured interviews, would add to the needed information. Rapport with interviewees was established to avoid the feeling of “strangeness” and hesitation that could stand in the way of sharing their inner thoughts and real experiences as supervisors or teachers. The purpose of the research then is to reveal and describe the subjects’ perspectives and/or experiences with respect to supportive supervision in the Philippine secondary schools.

The researcher personally conducted the interviews. As a protocol, the researcher introduced himself to the respondents before the interviews took place. The nature and purpose of the study were thoroughly explained. The listening skills of the interviewer were applied to assure the respondents of the confidential nature of their sharing so that neither hesitation nor apprehension could stand in the way of the needed information. The interviewer humbly requested the permission of the interviewees to use a tape-recorder during the interview proper in order to capture the whole interview without missing any important information.

Mode of Analysis. The researcher personally transcribed the recorded information to lessen some errors in the transcription, as Poland (1995) disclosed that the accuracy of the transcriptions strengthens the trustworthiness of the data gathered. Further, the study followed the steps of the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry as outlined by Swanson-Kauffman and Schonwald (1988 as cited by Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). This includes bracketing, analyzing, intuiting and describing. Bracketing pertains to the researcher’s way of achieving the “state of transcendental subjectivity” (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004 as cited by Wojnar & Swanson, 2007) by setting aside previous preconceptions on supportive supervision. Thorough data analysis constitutes several subcomponents such as (1) reading and rereading of the interview transcriptions to grasp the whole ideas or opinions of the interviewees; (2) extraction of the significant statements or key responses (Lebenswelt) of each participant; (3) formulation of the meaning of significant statements to find the key words and phrases within each response (here the researcher transformed each meaning unit from the language of the interviewees to the language of the researcher); (4) categorization of the formulated meanings into themes to describe ‘how’ (noesis) the phenomenon expresses itself and ‘what’ (noema) the phenomenon is; (5) integration of the findings into an exhaustive description of supportive supervision; (6) validation of the findings; and lastly (7) incorporation of any changes in the subjects of investigation (Colaizzi, 1978 as cited by Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Intuiting involves the conscious effort of the researcher to place himself in the situation of the subjects without citing his own interpretations of the phenomenon (Swanson-Kauffman & Schonwald, 1988 as cited by Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), as a result of which a “theoretical model representing the essential structures of the phenomenon” is formed (Colaizzi, 1978 as cited by Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The emerged categories and themes will then be subjected
to triangulation, or member checking procedure (Cresswell & Miller, 2000), as well as to the critical–firmed technique (Rossmann & Rallis, 2003), to establish the validity of the data and ensure the trustworthiness of the findings of the study.

**FINDINGS**

The individual and collective experiences of the 12 supervisors and 12 classroom teachers of this phenomenographic study describe three distinct and yet interrelated contexts that make curriculum development in the country political, namely: (i) strategic context; (ii) democratic context and (iii) bureaucratic context. Interestingly, the said contexts prompt the key players to perform certain positioning, empowering, and managing functions as they deal with the challenges, engagements, and operations encountered in the curriculum development process. These functions, though distinguishable from each other, are invariably interrelated and interconnected, as shown by the arrows in figure 1.

![Figure 1. The political context of curriculum development in secondary education](image)

**The Strategic Context of Curriculum Development**

In the process of improving the existing secondary curriculum, the respondents in this study found themselves confronted with the problems related to its development process. They found themselves in a strategic context in which they needed to perform their positioning function as identified by three moves, namely, benchmarking, setting direction and following mandate.

As revealed by the supervisors and teachers who are the respondents of this study, the curriculum developers in the Philippine secondary schools still suffer from inadequate knowledge and lack of experience. Moreover, politics still has a noticeable place in the process itself. As expressed, “The insufficiency of their knowledge and experience prevents the supervisors from introducing some changes in the curriculum development process.” (AT) "You
know it is not easy to make changes in the curriculum development process because we have to seek the approval of some politicians.” (MAF) Thus, benchmarking, as a move, is resorted to in order to stimulate the supervisors and teachers to take the initiative to improve the academic performance of the learners and learn some of the best practices in the CD process. This may be gleaned from the following verbalizations:

- Benchmarking with other countries can serve as a stimulus by which we can compare and adopt the best practices in their curriculum development. (BC)

- There is nothing wrong with cautiously adopting the curricular models and even the philosophy of the competent schools of America, Europe and Asia, as long as they can strengthen our own curriculum especially for K to 12. (GA)

- Working together and benchmarking with universities abroad will improve the academic performance of the learners. (OP)

- We hope to learn from the examples of other countries in order to stimulate, strengthen and encourage the supervisors, teachers and administrators to develop our curriculum. (CD).

The study noted that the select group of supervisors and teachers share a common view on the importance of setting direction in order to address the uncertainty of the process and ensure the implementation of the developed curriculum by a top-down approach; this has emerged as a challenge to the curriculum developers. As verbalized by the respondents:

- On the one hand, the supervisors should provide the appropriate directions for the teachers in order for them (teachers) to be more responsive in the broader context of the curriculum development process, yet on the other hand they should be specific in setting the direction. (AT)

- I think that, for the benefit of the teachers and school, the right direction could serve as a guide or compass for us in the process of curriculum development. (DM)

- I have to insist and use my authority. (FF)

- Every time there is a new administration, another development comes in like that of the K to 12 program. (PP)

The collective experience of the participants of this study shows the need for order while introducing changes in the curriculum development process, and for this following mandate perhaps serves as the best move. As claimed by the respondents, following mandate compels the subordinates to abide by the directives and comply with the requirements of DepEd. This is done to address the concerns of the interviewees regarding their feeling of discomfort when they disagree with their supervisors, when they see the insufficiency of
resources and when there are objections from the various sectors of the society regarding the changes in the curriculum, particularly in regard to UbD and K to 12. The participants shared:

We have no choice but to comply with and follow the directives given by the DepEd in spite of the objections from different sectors of society and the lack of resources. (JOP)

Although I know the changes could not help me much, I feel uncomfortable if I oppose the ideas of the administration. (OP)

The administration must have good intentions for the school . . . and will certainly bring new changes in the school curriculum. (FF)

The Democratic Context of Curriculum Development

The road taken by the supervisors and teachers in the curriculum development process in the Philippine secondary school has not been as easy as expected by many. Empowerment as a function could become a new move only as they share, accompany and dialogue with their teachers.

In their desire to share responsibility, promote trust and gain self-esteem, the respondents of this study revealed that sharing with teachers can give them the freedom to design the activities in line with their subjects and in relation to the curriculum development process. Conformingly, they shared:

The teachers are encouraged to share their ideal regarding the new trends of curriculum development because I believe that by sharing they gain self-esteem. (FF)

They engage in professional sharing and their own discussion is focused on the subject matter. Equal measure of responsibility and justice should be given to them. (SG)

Despite the encouragement and opportunity to share, however, the teachers are still hesitant or reluctant to air their opinion whenever they are called to the office or during their faculty meetings. This is shown by the following verbalizations:

I have no courage at all when I am in front of my superior; what I can do is only to say “yes.” My mouth can’t open at all. (HD)

Maybe it is in our culture not to speak out when the elders are talking; this still carries even in the practice of my profession as a teacher. I am hesitant to share my opinion or ideas during meetings with my supervisor or principal. (AT)

The findings of this study show that distrust and doubt about the capability of others has become one of the causes of the interruptions in the curriculum development process. “Honestly, I have to admit that sometimes I doubt the capability and loyalty of my teachers because they might say yes in front of me, yet at my back they might do a different thing.” (DM)

The respondents would appreciate finding themselves in such a democratic context as to eliminate the mentioned condition by empowering the teachers through constant dialogue.
Also, they should be given more chance to air their views or opinions and the supervisor should be encouraged to have a “heart to heart” talk with the teachers. This practice will mean trust in the teachers and make them more creative as they go through the curriculum development process. As described by the respondents:

The constant dialogue with teachers will increase their self-confidence and make them feel free to air their opinion. (GOM)

I always observe that, if there is a teacher who is shy and quiet, it helps if I ask him/her to go to my office because there we could have a heart to heart talk.” (CD)

Teachers should be empowered so that they can be more creative in their job. (JOP)

Interestingly, the respondents admitted that by being with teachers one can easily determine and identify the problems encountered in the classrooms and can then immediately respond to their needs. As one respondent recalled: “... by my presence in the faculty room I could easily determine the teachers’ problem and we can discuss together how to resolve it.” (FF) Besides, the supervisors can thereby reach out to, hear the sentiments of and feel the joy and pain experienced by the teachers inside the classroom. As verbalized by the interviewees:

I decided to move my office near the faculty room so that I can reach out to my teachers easily and hear from them their sentiments about their students and co-teachers. (MAF)

I would like to see my teachers and talk to them often in order to feel the joys and pains in their struggle as teachers of this institution. (CD)

However, some of the respondents revealed that teaching and learning would not be liberating if ‘being with teachers’ means imposing the rules and regulations on them. Moreover, overfamiliarity with the supervisor could cause some delays in doing the job. As expressed:

The presence of my supervisor means that he has some instruction to give us and I feel uneasy if he is around. (EB)

Sometimes, my presence seems ignored by my teachers due to the familiarity created by my stay in the faculty room. My instruction is also sometimes taken for granted. (DM)

Despite the impediment, being with teachers is still highly lauded by the respondents of this study. They appreciate the chance in which they could closely interact with their supervisor, being their mentor, as a part of a continuous learning experience in the curriculum development process. This working together deepens the relationship among the teachers and between them and their supervisor. As the respondents said:
My main purpose in being with them is to hear and feel the grievances they encounter in their interaction with their students and co-teachers. (BC)

When I am with them, I make sure that there is bonding between us which strengthens the relationship among the teachers and their supervisor. (RB)

The Bureaucratic Context of Curriculum Development

The findings of this study showed that in the process of improving the existing curriculum of the Philippine secondary school, the respondents find themselves in a bureaucratic context within which to perform their managing function. This managing function may be described by three factors, namely, change-drivenness, scarcity and protocol.

The select group of supervisors and teachers gathered for this study revealed that being change-driven should be one of the characteristics of a bureaucratic context, that is, the management should welcome dynamic changes in the curriculum development process. As admitted by the respondents, the context is change-driven if the supervisor has the political will to introduce new interventions in the bureaucracy. As verbalized: “I have to make the move by talking to my teachers and initiating some changes in the system.” (GOM) “My move to introduce the changes is to talk with them one by one and get their ideas particularly on the way we run the school.” (MAF)

Inspired by the need to change the system in order to fast-track the curriculum development process and be able to offer excellent service, the respondents recognized that there is currently too much power intervention coming from the person in authority. This is expressed in the following verbalizations:

I admit that they want to change the bureaucratic system, yet I see too much intervention from the higher ups. The administration cannot simply make some changes without reason.” (RB)

Politically, when there is a new administration we have to be ready for the changes in the system and this would normally include curriculum development, with excellence as a good excuse. (MAF)

It is interesting to note that the politically bureaucratic context of curriculum development recognizes scarcity as the supervisors and teachers themselves admit the weaknesses in both the curriculum and the curriculum development process. The gap between the supervisors and teachers arises from the discrepancy in the process. The school supervisors and teachers offered the following remarks:

They want to change our curriculum system, yet there are not enough resources and our learners are not yet ready for ideas such as UbD and K to 12. (PP)

They could not even supply or give us the proper facilities needed; how much more for the big projects? More teachers are needed. (MAF)
The changes in the bureaucracy appear to produce confusion among the subordinates, and the lack of facilities for the implementation of the curriculum development process was noted by the respondents in this study.

It seems to me that the changes they made in the DepEd or in our school have not been well discussed and that's why it seems to confuse the subordinates. (JOP)

We do not have enough resources and our learners are not ready yet for K to 12. (EB)

They couldn't even supply or give us the facilities needed, so how much more the other projects? More teachers are needed, more classrooms are needed, more facilities are needed. (PP)

Recognizing the discrepancies in the curriculum development process, all respondents agreed that the supervisor should take action to break the gap experienced by the teachers and in order to have a harmonious relationship among themselves and between them and their supervisors. This would be for the improvement of their service to the students. As verbalized: “I hope the supervisor is keen enough to be more conscious about the situation in order to make the environment conducive for learning.” (EDA)

With the aim of producing more disciplined and law-abiding citizens, the supervisor, teachers and students all take part in the curriculum development process. However, they acknowledge their ignorance of the standard procedure and the correct protocol of the school, as collectively disclosed by this study. This idea is best expressed by the following response:

You know, one of my wishes for this school is that everybody should be disciplined and law abiding. Although we have a very clear policy, yet it seems to me people just ignore it. (MAF)

The study also noted that the rules and regulations given by the higher ups are a must, but at the same time the stakeholders should be ready with changes that might be recommended from time to time by the DepEd. These changes should be complied with. This study revealed that the curriculum development process in the Philippines also follows protocol as dictated by higher authorities using top-down policy. School supervisors are expected to be compliant and self-regulating in their observance of the laws as well as the implementation of the programs. As verbalized by a respondent:

In the public schools, at least from my experience, we have to be flexible in dealing with the different offices and follow the instructions and protocol given by the higher authorities particularly when it comes to the curriculum development. (MAF)

DISCUSSION

The politics of curriculum development as surfaced in this study through phenomenenography has interestingly brought forth the lived experiences of a select group of
supervisors and teachers in some Philippine secondary schools as they think and deal with their supervisory role. Indeed their political involvement in the context of curriculum development process cannot be avoided. As indicated in this study the curriculum development process exerts political influence in both the local (school) and the national (government) levels. Yates and Grummet (2011) confirmed that, worldwide, the curriculum development process has always been influenced by politics, which is an essential part of governance. (Levin 2007)

In this paper, supportive supervision has captured the three essential conditions or contexts which enhance the political aspect of the curriculum development process, namely, strategic context, democratic context and bureaucratic context. These three contexts help transform and reform the curriculum development process in the Philippine secondary school.

Curriculum Development as Strategic Context

Motivated by the processes and procedures involved in constructing the curriculum for better teaching and learning (Seel & Dijkstra, 2004), the observable politics in the strategic context of curriculum development involves the dynamics between supervisor and teachers as they perform their responsibilities with a view to ensuring quality output and delivering the best outcomes for the students. There is no doubt that teachers need to be strategically contextualized in order to bring success to the curriculum development process (Guskey, 1995; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Spillane & Callahan, 2000). Their knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions play a fundamental role in understanding and implementing the intended reforms (Blignaut, 2007; Haney, 2002; Czerniak & Lumpe, 1996). This demands active learning and constructing of new meanings on the part of the supervisors and teachers, thus pushing further the political realities that require teaching effectiveness to improve the students’ performance (Bantwini, 2010; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Spillane & Callahan, 2000).

This is done to allow the supervisors and teachers to attend to their positioning function in the process of curriculum development. Roberts (1998) reiterated the need to minimize the power to control (Levin, 2007) and avoid the struggle for positions which takes advantage of others (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

By and large, benchmarking seems to have become an effective approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning, one that could enable the supervisors and teachers to be more globally competitive in the crafting of the curriculum. Moreover, through good benchmarking, which includes comparison and imitation, profitable partnerships can be formed with other schools or countries for a better and more effective curriculum development process and for an increase of knowledge and experience. According to Jain, Chandrasekaran, and Gunasekaran (2010); Coppula, Scricca and Connors (2004); and Kelly (2001), benchmarking is an important measuring tool for improving curriculum development. It provides a tool for the comparison of successful methods and prepares students for success in the global marketplace. Coppula, Scricca & Connors (2004) and Kelly (2001) also emphasized that international benchmarking is a means to analyze internal performance through comparison with similar institutions in other countries.

Additionally, benchmarking provides supervisors and teachers (Primrose & Alexander, 2013) with reputable standards by which they can measure the quality and cost of administrative opportunities for the improvement of knowledge. Key players (Waldron,
Mcleskey, & Redd, 2011; Fullan, 2007) committed to improving the quality of offerings and activities can move the process forward by identifying a benchmark institution that shares a similar mission or structure (Bosso, Chisholm-Burns, Nappi, Gubbins & Ross, 2010).

Setting direction as a part of the strategic context which includes the positioning function is meant to guide the supervisor and teachers toward developing a shared understanding of the curriculum development process, which should in turn contribute significantly to student achievement. Moreover, setting the right direction gives the entire school a way to measure and monitor daily routines and prioritize activities that directly contribute to furthering the school’s direction, goals, and vision. Coppula, Scricca and Connors (2004) confirm that setting the right direction has become a crucial step in supportive supervision because it enables the developers to work hand in hand with the staff toward improving student achievement. However, Yates and Grumet (2011) cautioned that the political sources and motives for setting the direction of curriculum development, though explicit, are oftentimes obscure and indirect.

Waldron, McLesky and Redd (2011), for their part, emphasized that setting direction can restructure the curriculum and instruction as well as improve the teaching and learning practices. This also helps to ensure improved working conditions, high quality of instruction and fair and just decisions related to the curriculum development process (Waldron & Mclesky, 2010; Webster-Wright, 2009, Fullan, 2007).

Following mandate has a role in the strategic context. As shown by this study, it is a political reality that the positioning function enables the key players to attain greater power to enforce the desired output in the process of curriculum development. Levin (2007) revealed that it is a political reality that more and more people are seeking greater involvement in curriculum matters. This condition propels the supervisor and teachers to comply with the rules and regulations given by the school and the educational agency and to implement the prepared curriculum based on the new demands and trends in education. Hargreaves (1994) as cited by Wang and Paine (2003) found that the government-initiated curriculum development reforms result in teachers’ working more collaboratively and their feeling a stronger obligation towards and responsibility for their colleagues. This happens as they follow the curriculum (Strub-Richards, 2011) and learn the standards mandated by the educational agency for quality teaching (Wang & Paine, 2003).

**Curriculum Development as Democratic Context**

The findings of this study confirmed the importance of the democratic context where the supervisor (being the actor) and the teachers (being the implementors) collaboratively put their heads together to improve the curriculum. This collaboration in curriculum development eventually results in the improvement of the student performance and the deepening of their relationship as viewed from the aspect of supportive supervision (DuFour, 2004; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). The curriculum development process in a democratic context develops the individual freedoms of those engaged in the task and those who are collectively participating
and promoting the empowerment function of teachers while reframing the curriculum development process for global competition (Sawyer, 2010).

Sharing with the teacher as revealed in this study has brought a very positive attitude among the teachers through increased self-confidence, which in turn results in their being heard more effectively by the supervisor. Additionally, the distribution of power among the subordinates gives them a feeling of greater trust and responsibility coupled with justice. Collinson and Cook (2004) revealed that the power of sharing engages the teachers in the use of their deliberative skills to listen with a trust which is grounded in humility and faithfulness.

Indeed, sharing with teachers should be viewed as itself an effort of active participation and involvement in cooperative curriculum work (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). The curriculum development process should therefore encourage the active participation of teachers for the success of the practice (Ünal, Coştu, & Carataş, 2004; Saracaloğlu, Yılmaz, Cengel, Cöğmen, Karademir & Kanmaz, 2010). Moreover, the strong teamwork and collaboration between the supervisors and teachers (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2007) will eventually provide opportunities for teachers to plan together and share resources to improve classroom instruction (Coppula, Scricca & Connors, 2004) while developing mutual trust and fostering positive relationship. This model, according to Coppula, Scricca and Connors (2004) and Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2007), encourages collegial sharing, group planning, mentoring and peer support among all the members of the teaching staff.

Dialoguing with teachers imbues the empowered with the right to freely discuss how they think and feel about their day-to-day work. It is hoped that this will facilitate and, better still, amplify meaningful communication between and among supervisors and teachers concerning topics and issues that they wish to address. Curriculum developers such as Walker (2003) who prefer descriptive approaches indicate that communication is the basic element of the curriculum development process (Brice & Ornosko, 2000, cited by Marsh & Willis, 2007). Mutual and healthy communication is the key to an effective process, while feedback and correction are among the basic elements of any dialogue with teachers (Demiray, Kurubacak, & Yuzer, 2012). Teachers meet with their colleagues and discuss about the new curricula while trying to get contact with related institutions (Saracaloğlu, Yılmaz, Cengel, Suna Cöğmen, Karademir & Kanmaz, 2010).

Being with teachers shapes each teacher's ability to better understand the experiences related to the curriculum development process and enables the supervisor to acquire greater compassification for the teachers so that they can teach the learners more effectively. Munro and Russell (2007) reiterated that being with teachers could strengthen their partnership to work together sincerely in collaboration. Moreover, being with teachers will issue in more accurate observation and provide the teacher with the appropriate teaching conditions and environment (Memduhoğlu, Aydin, Yılmaz, Güngör, & Oğuz, 2007). It assists the teacher in designing relevant and purposive activities which ensure cooperation in decision making, while acting as a genuine facilitator and guide (Kaufman, Agars & Lopez, 2008) as well as coach and mentor for both faculty and staff.
Curriculum Development as Bureaucratic Context

The study revealed that the Philippine secondary school is experiencing bureaucracy in an era of phenomenal change. In an effort to handle this, the curriculum developers have discovered that the bureaucratic context is designed not only to accommodate their own political interests but also to encourage the supervisors and teachers to manage the rapid changes that are driving the process. The key players believe that a bureaucratically driven curriculum development process needs political will for its implementation (Shue & Wong, 2007, as cited by Vickers, 2009). Change-driven leadership engages the key players in the process to positively saturate the task with talk of fairness and merit and the need to avoid certain forms of political influence on matters pertaining to the curriculum development (Roberts, 1998).

Notably, change-driven leadership is largely advocated and admired. The departure from the deep-seated past practices (Atkin 1998; Solomon, 1999) must begin with a critical look at the curriculum itself. This effort raises deep encouragement and support for the curriculum development process, as well as the policies and practices which could help in the attainment of the goal as wished for by many (Hart, 2002).

As shown in the findings, the managing function in the curriculum development process still shows such impediment as the gap between the supervisor and teachers and the discrepancies in the resources and facilities recognized as scarcity. This is tantamount to the demand for the curriculum developer to respond to these needs in political terms (Walker, 2003 cited by Saracaloğlu, Yılmaz, Çengel, Çoğmenb, Karademir & Kanmaz, 2010). This means that the demands of the lower groups (teachers) for curriculum development cannot be satisfied without threatening the favorable circumstances of the upper groups (supervisors). Since the upper groups usually have considerable political boundaries, the demands and needs of the lower groups seek to redefine themselves for a better relationship (Hsiau, 2000). Hence, according to Hoy and Miskel (1982) as cited by Saracaloğlu, Yılmaz, Çengel, Çoğmenb, Karademir and Kanmaz, (2010), the constant communication with teachers on the decision making process includes the discussion of some discrepancies in facilities and resources. The dialogue should consider the following points: 1. The opportunity to participate in the formulation of policies is an important factor in building the morale of teachers and their enthusiasm for the school organization. 2. Participation in decision making is positively related to the individual teacher’s satisfaction with the profession of teaching. 3. Also, according to Aydin (2000) as cited by Saracaloğlu, Yılmaz, Çengel, Çoğmenb, Karademir and Kanmaz, (2010), if their views are considered for the solutions to the problems, the staff can get a real satisfaction. Supported by the results, when the teachers’ demands to participate in curriculum development studies are taken into account, this kind of interaction can increase the effect of the harmonious relationship between the supervisor (upper) and the teachers (lower).

Interestingly, this study noted that the curriculum development process emphasizes the gradation of authority and the hierarchy in a system which knows protocol. This is encouraged by the curriculum developers in order to advocate a form of democracy by way of awareness of and obedience to the standard operating procedures; this enables the supervisor and teachers to organize themselves for the fulfillment of the institutional goal. Glattohorn, Boschee and
Whitehead (2006) disclosed that protocols are appropriate to the curriculum development process as a way of communicating to and showing respect for the people in position.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to describe the politics of the curriculum development process in the Philippines as revealed by select supervisors and teachers from different secondary schools. Through the phenomenographic approach using in-depth interviews, a significant amount of qualitative data has been gathered from which were drawn the context of the curriculum development process. By means of the descriptive method, the political nature of the process is thus recognized as a reality in the Philippines. This political reality endows some people with the strategic power to make decisions, the outcomes of which invite the key players to be more conscious and prudent in promoting the true progress of the learners within their context. Based on the findings of this study, the political strategy includes the following: benchmarking by comparing the best practices of other countries; setting direction to establish the goals and objectives of the school community, especially the curriculum developers; and the key players’ attitude of willingness to follow the mandate of either the government agency or its institution.

The democratic context of curriculum development is the order of the institution, in which the supervisors and teachers can develop their individual freedom by collectively participating, collaborating, dialoguing and communicating for the common good. The study showed that sharing with teachers, being with teachers and dialoguing with teachers should become the political reality where more and more people are seeking greater involvement in the curriculum development process. In this context where all the key players in the curriculum development process have the control and influence in decision-making, the political behavior of the curriculum developers empowers them to develop the curriculum based on the needs of the students in a fast-changing world. This may be done through partnerships and collaboration among the supervisors and teachers with the aim of assuring the equal quality of the output for the learners across the nation. At present, the politics of the curriculum development process is driven by interests, and particularly by the most vocal interests. Finding ways to mediate these interests through the different processes of gathering and using evidence will remain a challenge, though one worth pursuing.

The bureaucratic context as a political influence creates strong incentives for the supervisors and teachers to worry about constraints versus tasks, rules versus outcomes, and “top-line” versus “bottom-line” -- in other words, conformity to the contextual goals of better performance on the part of the learners within the curriculum development process (Roberts, 1998). Indeed, the findings of this study encourage curriculum developers to be more concerned with adhering to processes which are known, immediate, defined by rules and more easily defensible, rather than achieving outcomes which are uncertain, delayed and controversial. Thus, the political relationships between supervisors and teachers and between teachers and students are reflected in the vertical authority lines which are believed to be change-driven, and characterized by scarcity and protocol.
By and large, the three-pronged context of the curriculum development process emerged from the narrative voices and lived experiences of the supervisors and teachers in their respective institutions. This has helped develop their understanding and made them realize the advantages in the institutional setting of setting priorities in the work, improving the facilities, and properly coordinating with the different agencies, etc. as a means to avoid any misunderstanding. It is to be hoped that the bringing together of the data of this inquiry can stimulate new thought and generate new pathways in the curriculum development process of the Philippine secondary school.

REFERENCES


