

Chapter 5

Culturally Sensitive Curriculum Development



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Introduction

Because education is one of the pillars of a society, a lot of political effort and expertise is put into the development and improvement of educational systems. With the support of donors such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNESCO, and national governments, many international cooperation projects have been initiated to support educational improvement in developing countries. To achieve these overarching, ambitious goals of educational change and improvement, multi-faceted, wide-ranging strategies are necessary (Plomp & Thijs, 2002; Thijs, De Feiter, & Van den Akker, 2002), in particular in the domain of curriculum development. In this study, curriculum is defined in its almost classic form as ‘a plan for learning’ (Taba, 1962) and curriculum development as (Van den Akker, 2003): ‘usually a long and cyclic process with many stakeholders and participants; in which motives and needs for changing the curriculum are formulated; ideas are specified in programs and materials; and efforts are made to realize the intended changes in practice’ (p. 2). In order to achieve effective curriculum reform that establishes changes in educational practices, methodical and context-sensitive curriculum development is essential. Throughout the years, many models have been introduced to depict the various curriculum development activities included in the curriculum development process. Most models are based on a generic approach to educational and curriculum development, in which development tasks are categorised under analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation activities (Wedman & Tessmer, 1993). Various external factors and trends affect the process of curriculum development, such as government policies, technological innovations, and stakeholder pressure (Fullan, 2007). Since curricula cannot stand on their

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own but must be fitted to societal conditions and political views, collaboration between stakeholders has typically been stressed, as well as the need to account for local contexts and cultures in the process of curriculum development.

In international cooperation projects, the stakeholders involved in the curriculum development process have different cultural backgrounds, and the context in which curriculum reform is intended to take place is shaped by culture in a way that is often unfamiliar to the stakeholders. Therefore, international project teams are challenged to take culture into account in their curriculum development endeavours. However, difficulties are experienced in developing strategies for responding to cultural differences in development processes aiming at curriculum reform. In response to these problems, the study reported in this chapter and carried out in the PhD project by Gervedink Nijhuis (2012), was conducted to identify critical cultural factors in curriculum development processes in international cooperation projects.

Cultural Diversity in International Cooperation

According to Diallo and Thuillier (2004), international cooperation projects are managed by units or teams at a national level or by executive agencies such as NGOs or international cooperation departments within various institutions. Various stakeholders can be identified in these projects: project coordinator, task manager, national supervisor, project team, steering committee, the beneficiaries, and the population at large. Cultural differences can exist among these stakeholders. Kealey, Protheroe, MacDonald, and Vulpe (2005) gave four reasons why international projects that take place in intercultural settings are complex to initiate and carry out. Three of the reasons are relevant for this study. First, international projects are located in a different cultural setting for at least one of the project partners. In a different cultural context, individual values, organisational structures, and organisational processes may differ, which has major consequences for project management and collaboration between project partners. Second, project partners from different countries can differ substantially in situation, interests, and incentives, which can affect the relationship between the project partners as well as local stakeholders' willingness to change. Third, at least one project partner is less familiar with the political, legal and regulatory, macroeconomic and social environment of the host country. Consequently, the 'environmental scanning function', namely, accurate perceiving and understanding of the environment, is less accurate for this project partner.

Culture in Educational Reform

The first and second reasons addressed by Kealey et al. (2005) pertain to the role of culture in influencing the organisations and stakeholders involved in educational reform. Stephens (2007) defined culture as: "(1) the knowledge and ideas that give

meaning to the beliefs and actions of individuals and societies and (2) the ideational tool which can be used to describe and evaluate that action” (p. 29). Culture is a multilevel concept which can be identified at visible and invisible levels (Hofstede, 1980; Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). According to Dimmock and Walker (2002), societal cultures impact the more explicit organisational cultures. Whereas organisational values, beliefs, and norms can be managed and changed, the deeper underlying values of societies are more permanent. The influence of societal and organisational cultures on educational structures, processes, and practices is particularly emphasised when focusing on educational reform in culturally diverse settings, (Dimmock & Walker, 2000, 2002). Dimmock and Walker (1998) developed a ‘cross-cultural comparative framework’ which shows the relationships between two levels of culture, societal and organisational, and four interrelated elements of schooling and school-based management, namely, organisational structures, leadership and management processes, curriculum, and teaching and learning. For example, schools in strongly centralised systems differ from schools in more decentralised systems in respect to their organisational structures. Societal and organisational culture can also influence the position, role, leadership style, and power of the principal as well as management processes such as decision making, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and staff development. In this respect, Matveev and Nelson (2004) stated that project teams with members from culturally diverse settings are particularly vulnerable to interaction problems, because of differences in stakeholders’ perceptions of the environment, motives and intentions of behaviours, and communication norms, along with stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudices. Due to culture, among other reasons, schools can also vary in the goals and purposes of the curriculum, the range of subjects and disciplines, the levels at which the curriculum is offered, and differentiation in the curriculum. Finally, schools can differ in the way teaching and learning activities are conducted. Views of the nature of knowledge, the interaction between the teacher and the student, and teaching methods and approaches are especially culturally dependent (e.g., Den Brok, Levy, Wubbels, & Rodriguez, 2003; Hofstede, 1986; Levy, Wubbels, Brekelmans, & Morganfield, 1997).

Challenges to Accounting for Culture in Curriculum Development

As stipulated in the third reason discussed by Kealey et al. (2005) and shown by Dimmock and Walker (1998), educational reform initiated within the frame of international cooperation is affected by societal culture. Consequently, cultural understanding and reflection is an important condition for success. As curriculum development is often part of reform initiatives, accounting for culture in such curriculum development processes is necessary. Berkvens (2009) mentioned that educational development agendas are highly influenced by Western beliefs and expectations, and that international aid organisations do not take the time to

understand cultural dispositions and to develop contextual understanding. As a result, concepts are introduced with the best intentions, but in an inconsiderate and uncoordinated way, leading to poorly implemented and superficially understood concepts. This confirms the need for the environmental scanning function introduced by Kealey et al. (2005). Leyendecker (2008) discussed the interrelation between the larger socio-cultural and political context, and the beliefs, values, and relationships of people influencing curriculum reform and implementation. Referring to reform initiatives in Namibian and South African schools, one of the main reasons for the maintenance of the status quo in these schools was believed to be a misfit between the curriculum development ambitions stimulated by international cooperation and the local educational practices within the cultural context (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Hence, the environmental scanning function can be extended to a curriculum and classroom level in which societal culture is taken into account.

International Cooperation, Culture, and Curriculum Development

The success of an educational reform supported by international cooperation depends upon an effective synthesis of the culturally shaped needs and context characteristics expressed (e.g., Caddell, 2005; Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Hopkins, 2002; Rogan & Grayson, 2003), and effective curriculum development in which stakeholders understand the influences of culture on the curriculum development process. As Kouwenhoven (2003) strikingly stated: “Culture is an aspect that pervades substantive aspects of the curriculum as well as the processes of design, development and implementation” (p. 137). Nevertheless, the influence of culture on curriculum development processes has been little studied empirically. According to Rogers, Graham, and Mayes (2007), changes in design models and methods are needed to facilitate greater sensitivity and responsiveness to cultural differences.

In the study reported in this chapter is an investigation of how culture affects curriculum development processes in the context of international curriculum development projects. Better insight into cultural implications for curriculum development processes, as addressed, can support the development of theories and strategies aiming at greater sensitivity and responsiveness to culture. The study was conducted with regard to an international cooperation programme (NPT: Netherlands Programme for Institutional Strengthening of Post-secondary Education and Training Capacity), consisting of various projects, between The Netherlands and Ghana to strengthen the capacity of Ghanaian post-secondary education and training organisations. Due to the involvement of two countries with different societal cultures and a focus on educational reform through curriculum development, the programme seemed to be exemplary for studying the role of culture in curriculum development processes.

Research Question

To facilitate culturally sensitive curriculum development, this study aimed at clarifying the influence of culture on curriculum development processes in the context of international cooperation. Based on this research objective, the main research question was defined as:

How do cultural factors influence curriculum development processes in the context of international cooperation projects?

This main research question was operationally defined and answered in five sub-studies. The first sub-study addressed the *development of a framework* for culturally sensitive curriculum development in which the main components of educational reform are integrated. The development of such a framework could more explicitly facilitate the identification of cultural influences on curriculum development processes in international cooperation projects and could conceptually support the analysis of these factors. In three more specific sub-studies, the framework was applied to identify the cultural influences on the process of developing a curriculum for a professional development programme for polytechnic Heads of Department (PDHoD). This development process was part of a project in the NPT programme to enhance leadership and management capacity in Ghanaian polytechnics. The curriculum was designed and implemented by a Ghanaian and a Dutch curriculum specialist who were members of a broader project team, consisting of curriculum specialists, educational change facilitators, and ICT support staff from Ghana and The Netherlands. Whereas sub-study 2 focused on the influence of culture on the *curriculum development activities* conducted, sub-study 3 addressed the cultural influences on *conditions* created during the curriculum development process. Sub-study 4 particularly focused on the *immediate learning outcomes* of the Heads of Department who participated in the professional development programme and the *transfer* of these learning outcomes to the polytechnic context. In the fifth sub-study, the developed framework was applied to address the influence of culture on curriculum development activities conducted and conditions created in other international cooperation projects within the NPT programme between Ghana and The Netherlands.

Design of the Studies

A case study approach was adopted for the overall design of the studies. Yin (2003) noted that case studies are appropriate to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about a contemporary set of events. For purposes of triangulation, different research instruments were used, such as questionnaires, interviews, document analysis, and observations.

Development of a Framework

Prior to the case studies, the *first sub-study* focused on the development of a framework for culturally sensitive curriculum development that can be used as an instrument to analyse and identify cultural influences on curriculum development processes in international cooperation projects. Based on analysis of the literature and experts' reviews, a framework was developed that included as a component the 'curriculum development process', subdivided into curriculum development activities as part of context analysis, design by iteration, sustainable implementation, and conditions for curriculum development as part of creation of ownership, and project management. The framework also included 'practice' as a component, representing the educational context, and the component of 'cultural frame of reference', concerning four dimensions of culture: high-low power distance, collectivism-individualism, high-low context, and polytime-monotime.

Single-Case Study

Next, the framework was applied to analyse a curriculum development process in the context of the NPT programme between Ghana and The Netherlands. In the *second sub-study*, the developed framework was used to identify influences of culture on curriculum development activities concerning the professional development programme for Heads of Department (PDHoD) in polytechnics in Ghana. More specifically, the cultural influences on the curriculum development activities associated with context analysis, design by iteration, and sustainable implementation were analysed. Data were collected by means of interviews with the curriculum specialists, observations, and document analysis.

The *third sub-study* focused on the identification of cultural influences on the creation of conditions for the development of the professional development programme for Heads of Department in Ghanaian polytechnics. In particular, the developed framework was used to analyse and identify cultural influences on the development of conditions as part of creation of ownership and project management. As in sub-study 2, data collection involved interviews with the curriculum specialists, observations, and document analysis.

In the *fourth sub-study*, the influences of culture on the outcomes of the professional development programme for Heads of Department and the transfer of these outcomes to the polytechnics were analysed and identified by applying the developed framework and were related to Guskey's (2000) model for evaluating professional development programmes. Data were collected through interviews with the Heads of Department, questionnaires, and observations.

Multiple-Case Study

A multi-case study was used to analyse other curriculum development processes in the context of the international cooperation programme between Ghana and The Netherlands. In the *fifth sub-study*, based on the outcomes of the sub-studies 2 and 3, curriculum development activities and conditions as part of five other projects in the NPT programme were analysed for cultural influences by using the developed framework, and these outcomes were compared with the outcomes of the single-case study. Data were collected by means of interviews with project coordinators and project team members.

Main Findings

As already mentioned, the framework developed in the first sub-study consisted of three components, the curriculum development process, practice, and cultural frame of reference. The *curriculum development process* component included curriculum development activities as part of context analysis, design by iteration, and sustainable implementation. If contextual factors are carefully analysed, iterations of designing, implementation, and evaluation activities are included, and strategies are developed to embed the curriculum in the school context, coherence between the curriculum and the cultural context can be ensured. The conditions as part of creation of ownership and project management were also included in the curriculum development process component in the framework. By involving stakeholders in curriculum development activities and effective management of the overall curriculum development process, coherence between stakeholders' perceptions can be created, as well as favourable process conditions. In the framework, the *practice* component represented the educational context. School structures, educational processes, and stakeholders have their influence on and will be affected by the curriculum development process. The *cultural frame of reference* framework component included cultural characteristics that might affect curriculum development processes and educational practices. Four dimensions of national culture were selected that were expected to affect curriculum development processes and the implementation of curriculum development outcomes in the context within which educational improvement was considered necessary: high-low power distance, collectivism-individualism, high-low context, and polytime-monotime. Hofstede's (2001) dimension of 'high-low power distance' deals with the extent to which people in less powerful positions within a society accept and expect that power is unequally distributed. The dimension of 'collectivism-individualism' was defined by Hofstede as the extent to which individuals are part of strong, cohesive groups in a society. The two other cultural dimensions were described by Hall (1976). The dimension of

'high-low context orientation' deals with the extent to which information is included in communication messages. The dimension of 'poly(chronic)-mono(chronic) time orientation' deals with the ways in which people handle time. Each dimension was characterised by its two opposing end points, reflecting ideal types. Both ends of the cultural dimensions were included in the framework and the dimensions were presented as unrelated to any curriculum development activity or condition.

The conceptual framework for culturally sensitive curriculum development was used in the subsequent sub-studies to facilitate the identification of cultural influences on the development of the PDHoD curriculum and on other curriculum development processes as part of international cooperation projects between Ghana and The Netherlands. The outcomes of the second sub-study indicated that the curriculum development activities conducted in the development process for PDHoD were congruent with the activities included in the conceptual framework (i.e., context analysis, design by iteration, and sustainable implementation); they were strongly impacted by Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions of power distance and collectivism-individualism and were impacted to a limited extent by Hall's (1976) cultural dimensions of context and time. Both ends of the cultural dimension of power distance were identified in the development activities related to context analysis; under design by iteration, the two ends of the dimensions of power distance and collectivism were identified, as well as low context and polytime; concerning sustainable implementation, both ends of the power distance and collectivism dimensions characterised the activities. This sub-study revealed cultural differences within the curriculum development activities. Whereas the curriculum specialists and broader project team aimed at developing a PDHoD characterised by low power distance (fitting needs), collectivism (group work, peer support), and individualism (self-reflection, individual responsibility), Ghanaian stakeholders were influenced in PDHoD development and in the polytechnic context by high power distance (teacher-centred approach, hierarchy in polytechnics), individualism (own interests), and collectivism (not taking individual initiatives). To reinforce the intentions of the curriculum specialists, the PDHoD was adjusted and outside support activities were conducted, characterised by high-low power distance (anticipating hierarchy, sharing responsibilities and demand-driven support) and collectivism-individualism (increased collaboration, self-reflection and initiative). The outcomes of the sub-study substantiated the need to account for culture in curriculum development activities, and the value of the conceptual framework for identifying and analysing aspects of culture in curriculum development processes.

How culture affected the creation of conditions for the development of PDHoD was investigated in the next sub-study. The conclusion from sub-study 3 was that the conditions as part of building ownership and managing the project were congruent with the conditions included in the framework (i.e., creation of ownership and project management) and were strongly influenced by all four cultural dimensions and their end points. As in sub-study 2, cultural differences that sometimes caused conflicts and misunderstandings were identified. The intended conditions were characterised by low power distance (involvement by local stakeholders, shared responsibility) and collectivism (strong networks), but the Ghanaian stakeholders

and project partner experienced influences of high power distance (top-down approach, strict hierarchy in polytechnics) and individualism (individual allowances, individual work) in the project or educational context, which decreased their involvement and put pressure on the project management. Furthermore, the Dutch project partner was more used to low context communication strategies (communication on paper) and monotime (strict planning), in contrast to the high context strategies (face-to-face communication) and polytime (flexible planning) preferences of the Ghanaian project partner and stakeholders. These differences obstructed adequate communication between the project partners and project management. Different types of strategies were developed by the broader project team to support the conditions for the development of PDHoD, which could be characterised by low power distance (shared responsibility), collectivism (strengthened collaboration), low context (communication on paper), and high context (face-to-face communication). Notwithstanding, some cultural dissimilarities remained challenging for the project team to cope with, which highlighted the necessity to develop strategies to deal with cultural differences manifesting in curriculum development conditions.

Results of the fourth sub-study led to the conclusion that all four cultural dimensions and their end points affected the outcomes of the PDHoD as well as their transfer. Cultural similarities were observed between the PDHoD and the educational needs and preferences of the Heads of Department (HoDs), which resulted in positive perceptions of the PDHoD, learning results as intended, and intentions to transfer the learning outcomes. The HoDs appreciated characteristics of the programme identified as low power distance (demand-driven, participation), individualism (analysis and reflection strategies), collectivism (team building and collaboration), and monotime (planning). These cultural implications were also identified in HoDs' learning results and intentions to transfer the learning outcomes. In addition, with regard to the cultural dimension of context, the HoDs appreciated characteristics of high context (support to contextualise learning) in the PDHoD, while their learning results included influences of low context (transparency).

However, the existing norms, structures, and procedures in the polytechnics, and HoDs' and staff members' attitudes influenced the concrete implementation of the PDHoD and corresponded in a limited way with what was learned in the PDHoD. This led to a cultural mismatch between the aims of the PDHoD and HoDs' working situation and challenged the transfer of the learning outcomes of the PDHoD to educational practices in the polytechnics. The HoDs especially criticised characteristics of the programme identified as high power distance (teacher-centred), collectivism (showing off), individualism (insufficient individual benefits), high context (need for more local workshop leaders), and polytime (loose time management). Some of the cultural influences characterizing these critical notes could also be identified in the polytechnic context in relation to HoDs' transfer experiences and perceptions of the organisational support provided, such as high power distance (high dependency) and individualism (focus on individual interests). Tendencies of HoDs and staff members themselves, identified as collectivism (preference for team work and group decisions), high context (combining work with personal relationships), and polytime (postponing appointments), also

hindered the transfer of learning outcomes to the polytechnic context. Strategies to improve the PDHoD were suggested by the HoDs, which indicated attention to high-low power distance (strengthening consultation with stakeholders, provision of steering,), and collectivism (stimulating collaboration); the HoDs even developed their own strategies, identified as high power distance (coping with hierarchy) and high context (avoiding explicit expressions).

To be able to compare the process of developing PDHoD with other curriculum development processes, the fifth sub-study included five international cooperation projects within the NPT programme between Ghana and The Netherlands (including the project in which the PDHoD was developed). Based on the results of this sub-study, it could be concluded that all cultural dimensions and their end points strongly influenced the curriculum development in the five international cooperation projects. Concerning activities under context analysis, the outcomes of this sub-study confirmed the findings of sub-study 2, and additionally underscored the influence of high power distance (decision making by Dutch project partner) in needs analysis activities as part of context analysis. In relation to design by iteration, not all previous findings were supported. In contrast to what was found in the earlier sub-studies, the influence of collectivism (emphasis on group work) was not explicitly underscored in the other curriculum development projects, while the influence of high context (focus on friendly relations) was additionally identified. The cultural influences identified in the process of developing the PDHoD concerning the activities to create conditions as part of creation of ownership were also identified in this sub-study, and complemented with influences of polytime (less structured way of working) and monotime (structured way of working). The cultural influences identified concerning project management activities were to a certain extent similar to the outcomes of the previous sub-studies, but influences of Low-High Context and Collectivism were not found. Differences between the outcomes of sub-studies 2 and 3 and the outcomes of this sub-study could be explained by differences in the design of the other international curriculum development projects, by the specific focus of the sub-study, and by the fact that the projects were not analysed as in as comprehensive, specific, and in-depth a way as in the earlier sub-studies.

Conclusion and Discussion

As a result of this study, a conceptual framework for culturally sensitive curriculum development was developed and greater understanding was gained about the role of culture in curriculum development processes in international cooperation projects. In the following sections the research findings are reflected upon.

Conceptual Framework: Additions and Changes?

The conceptual framework for culturally sensitive curriculum development that was developed in the first sub-study proved to be valid, usable, comprehensive and generic. The empirical sub-studies produced evidence for the three components included in the framework and their underlying concepts. The curriculum development activities and conditions as part of the *curriculum development process* component were all identified in the curriculum development process for PDHoD. Since various cultural influences affected the curriculum development activities, conditions, and outcomes, the importance of making the curriculum development process more culturally sensitive was stressed.

Concerning the *cultural frame of reference* component, evidence was found for the relevance of each of the four dimensions in analysing curriculum development processes for cultural influences. The selection of two out of five Hofstede's dimensions was justified by the literature and experts' reviews and proved to be useful to keep focus in the study. Furthermore, Hall's dimensions turned out to be very relevant, especially to gain understanding about the influence of culture on activities as part of creation of ownership and project management. The exclusion of assumptions in the framework proposing possible relations between the cultural dimensions and curriculum development activities was supported by this study. The inclusion of assumptions would have limited the usability and applicability of the conceptual framework and would have narrowed the scope of the analysis. To illustrate, Hofstede (2001) categorised Ghana, among some other countries, under the West African Region and concluded that Ghana could be characterised as high power distance and collectivism, and The Netherlands as low power distance and individualism. In this study, the conceptual framework provided the possibility of investigating these cultural influences on curriculum development processes much more specifically, comprehensively, and subtly. Based on the experiences gained in this study, further adaptation of the operational definition of the cultural dimensions seems to be worthwhile to make these definitions more concrete and distinctive. Furthermore, findings from this study suggest that influences of the power distance and collectivism dimensions may coincide in curriculum development processes and educational contexts, as well as influences of the collectivism-individualism dimension and Hall's context and time dimensions. Although this would correspond with the findings of other studies (e.g., Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse, & Savery, 2001; Schwartz, 1994; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998; Zhu, Nel, & Bhat, 2006), more research is needed to support these beliefs.

Concerning the *practice* component, the application of Guskey's (2000) levels of professional development evaluation together with the framework of culturally sensitive curriculum development, provided opportunities to identify influences of culture on the learning outcomes and their transfer in educational practice. Therefore,

the conceptual framework can be extended by integrating Guskey's levels of professional development evaluation. Particularly when the curriculum development process aims at developing a professional development programme, an extended conceptual framework can clarify how culture affects the outcomes of the professional development programme and the transfer of these outcomes to educational practice. This may provide better understanding about the influence of culture on the effectiveness of curriculum reform.

Culture and Curriculum Development in International Cooperation Projects: Outcomes and Guidelines

This study aimed at identifying how cultural factors influence curriculum development processes in international cooperation projects. The main research question of the study was stated as: "How do cultural factors influence curriculum development processes in the context of international cooperation projects?" Based on the study findings arising in the context of international cooperation between Ghana and The Netherlands, evidence was obtained that influences related to the cultural dimensions of power distance, collectivism-individualism, context, and time strongly affected activities undertaken to develop curricula, to create the conditions for curriculum development, and to implement the curriculum development outcomes in practice. This overall conclusion strengthens the need to account for culture in curriculum development processes in the context of international cooperation projects. Analysis of the processes to develop PDHoD and other curricula in the international cooperation projects between Ghana and The Netherlands provided insights into the way in which the four cultural dimensions and their end points affected curriculum development. In this section, the overall study outcomes are presented and guidelines are given for how to account for culture in curriculum development processes in international cooperation.

Curriculum Development Activities

Activities as part of context analysis were strongly influenced by the power distance dimension, but subsequent curriculum activities as part of design by iteration and sustainable implementation were also affected by the two ends of the collectivism dimension and to a certain extent by the context and time dimensions. Hence, the influence of culture on stakeholders' values and on the educational context in which the curriculum development activities were conducted and in which the curriculum would be implemented became more obvious during the curriculum development process. Consequently, although the activities to develop the curricula were aimed at meeting the needs of the Ghanaian stakeholders, the execution of curriculum development activities and the implementation of the curricula in the educational

practice did not always work out as intended. Based on these outcomes, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Conduct extensive context analysis activities at an early stage of the curriculum development process, aimed at identifying cultural influences that could affect the curriculum development activities and the implementation of curricula in the educational contexts at a later stage (guideline 1)
- Interpret and analyse the outcomes of stakeholders' needs analysis as part of context analysis activities from a cultural point of view and in relation to the cultural educational contexts, to avoid having demand-driven activities for curriculum development that do not fit the contexts for which the curricula are intended (guideline 2)
- Conduct formative evaluation activities as part of design-implementation-evaluation iterations throughout curriculum development processes to continually create opportunities for adjusting the curriculum development activities and their outcomes to cultural influences on stakeholders' preferences and on the educational contexts (guideline 3)

The stakeholders involved in development of the PDHoD were given suggestions by the project teams to foster sustainable implementation of the curriculum in their own practices. The involvement of a local curriculum developer also helped the stakeholders to adapt the curriculum to their cultural educational context. Besides this, the project team developed strategies for themselves to deal with the cultural influences on the curriculum development activities and outcomes. These adjustment strategies were characterised by the power distance and collectivism dimensions and anticipated the cultural, educational context, the values of the project partners, and the curriculum development intentions. Based on these outcomes, the following guidelines are formulated:

- Facilitate local stakeholders in their activities to implement curricula sustainably in cultural educational contexts (guideline 4)
- Develop adjustment strategies anticipating the role of culture in curriculum development processes, outcomes, and educational contexts to facilitate sustainable curriculum implementation within educational contexts (guideline 5)
- Strongly involve local curriculum developers in curriculum development processes to increase the cultural relevance and appropriateness of curricula, and to facilitate sustainable curriculum implementation within cultural educational contexts (guideline 6)

Conditions for Curriculum Development

Conditions as part of creation of ownership and project management were influenced by all cultural dimensions. Concerning the power distance and collectivism dimensions, differences existed between the intended conditions the project team strived for and the perceived conditions in the project or educational context. The

dimensions of context and time also strongly influenced the conditions for curriculum development. Differences on these dimensions in project management and communication strategies between the Dutch project partner on the one hand and the Ghanaian project partner and stakeholders on the other hand, decreased stakeholders' and project partners' ownership and put pressure on project management as conditions for curriculum development processes. Based on these outcomes, the following guidelines are formulated:

- Conduct extensive context analysis activities at an early stage of the curriculum development process to identify cultural influences on stakeholders' preferences and on educational contexts, which could affect project management activities and stakeholders' ownership necessary for effective curriculum development activities and sustainable implementation of developed curricula in the educational contexts (guideline 7)
- Clarify the expectancies and preferences concerning the division of tasks and responsibilities, communication strategies, time perceptions, and financial remuneration between the project partners at an early stage of the curriculum development process and analyse them for cultural influences to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings during the curriculum development process (guideline 8)

Anticipating that cultural influences of the power distance, collectivism, and context dimensions would affect project partners' common intentions, individual preferences, and the educational context, the project team developed and applied different types of strategies. These strategies aimed at supporting the curriculum development activities and dealing with the cultural differences experienced in relation to the curriculum development conditions. Nevertheless, some cultural dissimilarities remained challenging for the project team to cope with and impacted the whole curriculum development process. Based on these outcomes, the following guidelines are formulated:

- Create extensive opportunities at an early stage of the curriculum development process to get to know the project partners' cultural backgrounds, to reach agreement on strategies to deal with cultural differences, and to build joint partnerships as conditions for curriculum development (guideline 9)
- Be willing, open-minded, and culturally-sensitive about understanding and appreciating differences in educational contexts and in the behaviour of project team members and stakeholders in order to adequately support curriculum development (guideline 10)
- Develop adjustment strategies anticipating the role of culture in the preferences of project partners and in the educational contexts, to facilitate curriculum development processes and to create conditions for curriculum implementation in educational contexts (guideline 11)

Outcomes of Curriculum Development

Cultural similarities were observed between the developed curriculum and stakeholders' educational needs and preferences on the dimensions of power distance, collectivism, and time. This resulted in positive curriculum perceptions, learning results as intended, and intentions to transfer the learning outcomes. However, not all cultural influences identified in stakeholders' attitudes and in the educational context as related to one of the ends of the power distance, collectivism, context, and time dimensions corresponded with what was learned in the curriculum. For this reason, the transfer of the learning outcomes to the educational context was perceived as challenging by the local stakeholders. However, the project teams were limited in their possibilities for supporting the implementation of the curriculum. Based on these outcomes, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Conduct context analyses and formative evaluation activities as part of design by iteration in early stages of the curriculum development process, focusing on cultural influences on stakeholders' perceptions and transfer experiences, to create a match between the curriculum and stakeholders' values, needs and educational contexts (guideline 12)
- Create opportunities to involve local stakeholders as developers, experts, and/or instructors in curriculum development processes to ensure the effectiveness of the developed curriculum in the cultural educational context (guideline 13)
- Facilitate local stakeholders during the curriculum development process to create transfer and problem-solving conditions that support the implementation of curriculum development outcomes in the cultural educational contexts (guideline 14)

Recommendations

This study made a contribution to existing knowledge and produced instruments that are available for project coordinators and project team members, especially curriculum developers, who are involved in curriculum development endeavours as part of international cooperation projects. In this concluding section, suggestions are given for increasing the cultural sensitivity of their curriculum development efforts.

Application of the Conceptual Framework

By applying the conceptual framework for culturally sensitive curriculum development, curriculum developers are facilitated in better understanding culture and cultural mismatches in curriculum development processes, and in improving on-going

and future curriculum development endeavours. The conceptual framework provides a useful tool to visualise the cultural sensitivity of curriculum development in international cooperation, to analyse curriculum development processes for cultural influences, and to discuss cultural misunderstandings among the project partners. When culture becomes more concrete and apparent, different types of strategies can be developed to anticipate the identified cultural influences and to increase the cultural sensitivity of curriculum development processes and curricula before problems occur. By applying Guskey's (2000) levels of professional development evaluation together with the framework, cultural challenges in or mismatches between the professional development programmes and the local cultural context may be revealed. More cultural awareness and mutual understanding can also help to avoid conflicts between the project partners.

Importance of Curriculum Development Activities and Conditions

Based on the outcomes of this study and the guidelines provided to account for culture in curriculum development processes in international cooperation projects, project teams can critically analyse and reflect on culture right from the beginning of the project. By means of extensive context analysis activities, opportunities can be created to become acquainted with the culturally shaped organisational structures, processes, and contexts. Stakeholders' and project partners' norms, values, and preferences involved in the curriculum development process can also be elicited. Furthermore, time and patience are needed to jointly identify and reflect on cultural influences that may affect upcoming activities to develop curricula, conditions for curriculum development, and the implementation of curricula in the educational context. Accounting for culture in early phases of the project will pay off.

Obviously, not all cultural implications can be foreseen. Integrating formative evaluation activities into the curriculum development process can help to identify cultural differences, mismatches, and misunderstandings during the development process, and can offer possibilities for developing strategies to improve and adjust the curriculum development activities and outcomes. Moreover, international cooperation organisations and other institutions outside the schools can support and facilitate the implementation of curriculum reforms and the transfer of professional development programmes in local, culturally shaped contexts.

Involvement of Local Stakeholders, Experts, and Researchers

Characteristics of the cultural context can be especially hard to ascertain for foreign project team members, while local stakeholders understand these influences by nature. Therefore, to be able to anticipate the influence of culture in the curriculum development process, to ensure a good fit between the developed curricula and the educational contexts, and to create stakeholder acceptance, strong involvement of local stakeholders (i.e., school managers, teachers, and students) is recommended.

Additionally, collaboration among project members and experts who have intercultural experience and skills in international cooperation projects is strongly recommended. Investments in team building seminars, on-site work-related visits, and long-term stays can contribute to the development of project team members' intercultural competences. Furthermore, these investments may stimulate project team members to increase their interpersonal and cross-cultural awareness and to keep learning from each other and each other's contexts.

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