

The Role of Teachers as Curriculum Developers through Classroom Action Research in Enhancing Learning Innovation at Fatahillah Senior High School Ciledug

Alini Syakira Putri

Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf, Kota Tangerang, Indonesia

Email: syakiraalini@gmail.com

Sutarman

Sheikh Yusuf Islamic University, Tangerang, Indonesia

Email: sutarman@unis.ac.id

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Abstract

The role of teachers as curriculum developers has become increasingly important in the implementation of competency-based education and the Merdeka Curriculum. However, teachers' participation in curriculum development continues to face several challenges, including limited reflective practice, insufficient professional training, and heavy administrative workloads. This study aims to analyse the role of teachers as curriculum developers through Classroom Action Research (CAR) in enhancing learning innovation at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug. The research employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design. Participants included subject teachers, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and the school principal, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, while data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that teachers play a significant role as curriculum developers by adapting learning instruments, developing teaching modules, integrating digital media, and implementing innovative learning strategies based on reflective practice. Teachers actively involved in CAR demonstrated greater innovation in applying project-based, collaborative, and contextual learning approaches. CAR also contributed to improving teachers' professional competence, reflective skills, and involvement in curriculum development. In addition, collaborative CAR supported interdisciplinary learning integration and strengthened the school's culture of innovation. Nevertheless, the implementation of CAR still faces several obstacles, such as limited time, administrative burdens, and insufficient institutional support. Therefore, schools need to provide more systematic support by strengthening reflective and collaborative cultures alongside continuous professional development.

Keywords: Teacher Roles; Curriculum Developer; Classroom Action Research (CAR); Learning Innovation; Merdeka Curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the role of teachers in curriculum development has received increasing attention in both global and national educational discourse. Traditionally,



curriculum development was viewed as a centralised process dominated by policymakers and curriculum experts. However, contemporary perspectives emphasise that teachers are not merely implementers, but also active agents who interpret, adapt, and refine the curriculum within classroom contexts. This shift is particularly relevant in secondary education, where the diversity of students' needs requires flexible and contextual learning approaches. Recent studies indicate that teachers play an important role in translating curriculum policies into meaningful learning experiences through contextual adaptation and pedagogical decision-making (Sepadi & Molapo, 2024). In many countries, including Indonesia, the implementation of school-based curricula further strengthens expectations for teachers to act as curriculum developers at the institutional level (Kobiah, 2020).

This emphasis on teachers' roles aligns with the global trend towards decentralisation and competency-based education. Educational reforms encourage teachers to design learning experiences that develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This paradigm is also reflected in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia, which emphasises teacher autonomy and innovation in lesson design (Zaenab et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the realisation of teachers' roles as curriculum developers still faces considerable complexity. Several studies reveal that although teachers are positioned as key actors in curriculum implementation, their involvement in formal curriculum design processes remains limited (Luo & Muyunda, 2021). This gap between policy expectations and classroom practice has become a critical issue in modern education systems. Furthermore, rapid curriculum changes, including the integration of digital literacy and interdisciplinary learning, increasingly add to the challenges faced by teachers (Damanik et al., 2024).

The primary issue within this context is the discrepancy between the ideal role of teachers as curriculum developers and the realities they encounter in schools. Ideally, teachers are expected to actively participate in designing, implementing, and evaluating curricula based on students' needs and local contexts. In practice, however, many teachers face constraints such as limited autonomy, inadequate training, and heavy administrative responsibilities. Research indicates that insufficient institutional support and limited opportunities for professional development significantly affect teachers' abilities to implement curriculum innovations (Sepadi & Molapo, 2024). In addition, school leadership and organisational factors also influence teachers' involvement in curriculum practices (Andriadi & Sulistiyo, 2024). These conditions contribute to the gap between curriculum policies and their classroom implementation.

Another important issue is the limited integration of reflective practices into curriculum development. Various approaches have been developed to increase teachers' involvement, yet many have not fully addressed the need for continuous improvement grounded in classroom realities. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is recognised as one of the most effective approaches to bridging this gap. CAR provides a systematic and cyclical process that enables teachers to identify problems, implement actions, and evaluate outcomes within their own classrooms. Studies show that CAR allows teachers to function as researchers within the curriculum process, thereby strengthening their roles as curriculum developers (Elliott, 2024). However, the implementation of CAR in schools remains suboptimal and has not been maximally utilised in curriculum development.

Several previous studies have proposed solutions to enhance teachers' roles as curriculum developers. One major approach is the use of CAR as a means of professional development and instructional improvement. Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that collaborative action research enhances teachers' involvement in curriculum reform through contextual problem-solving. Similarly, Abrenica and Cascolan (2022) found that CAR significantly contributes to helping teachers design more relevant and student-centred learning experiences. These findings indicate that CAR not only improves teaching practices but also promotes curriculum innovation through continuous reflection. Within the Indonesian context,

research also indicates that CAR can improve teachers' competencies in implementing curriculum changes. Wildan and Yusuf (2024) found that CAR-based interventions enhanced teachers' abilities to apply scientific learning approaches. Furthermore, CAR has been proven to improve teachers' professionalism, reflective skills, and pedagogical awareness (Thamrin, 2022). Other studies highlight that collaborative approaches in CAR can support curriculum reform and interdisciplinary learning integration (Marcussen et al., 2021). This demonstrates that CAR possesses substantial potential for integrating curriculum development with teacher professional growth.

Nevertheless, existing studies still present several limitations. First, most research focuses more on the impact of CAR on instructional practices without explicitly examining its role in curriculum development. Second, studies are generally conducted within specific contexts or subject areas, making generalisation difficult. Third, collaborative approaches to curriculum development through CAR remain underexplored. In fact, studies suggest that teacher collaboration can enhance the effectiveness of curriculum innovation (Zhang et al., 2023). These limitations indicate that the relationship between CAR, teacher professional development, and curriculum innovation still requires further investigation. Based on the synthesis of previous literature, a significant research gap can be identified. Although many studies have highlighted the importance of teachers' roles as curriculum developers and the potential of CAR as a professional development strategy, only a limited number of studies have integrated these two aspects within a comprehensive framework. Moreover, few empirical studies have examined how CAR can systematically strengthen teachers' roles in curriculum development, particularly through collaborative approaches at the school level. Therefore, this study is important in addressing this gap.

This study aims to analyse the role of teachers as curriculum developers in secondary schools and to examine how Classroom Action Research (CAR) can support curriculum development and improvement. The study also focuses on the relationship between teachers' involvement in curriculum development and their professional growth through CAR. In addition, this research seeks to identify factors influencing teachers' effectiveness in performing these roles and to explore how collaborative CAR can enhance curriculum innovation at the school level, particularly at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach that combines curriculum development, teacher professional development, and action research within a single analytical framework. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for empowering teachers as curriculum developers and improving the quality of secondary education.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

The role of teachers as curriculum developers has become a major focus in contemporary educational research, particularly within the context of secondary education and school-based curriculum implementation. Modern curriculum discourse conceptualises teachers as active agents who not only implement but also interpret, adapt, and reconstruct curricula according to contextual classroom needs. This perspective is closely associated with the concepts of teacher agency, reflective practice, and practitioner inquiry, all of which emphasise the importance of teachers' professional judgement in creating meaningful learning experiences (Priestley et al., 2021; Voogt et al., 2022). Within this framework, Classroom Action Research (CAR) emerges as a methodological approach that enables teachers to engage systematically in curriculum development through cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Elliott, 2024). Consequently, CAR functions both as a reflective tool and as a mechanism for curriculum innovation within schools.

Several empirical studies demonstrate that CAR is effective in strengthening teachers' roles as curriculum developers. These studies indicate that CAR facilitates context-based instructional improvement by enabling teachers to test and refine pedagogical strategies directly within classroom settings. For instance, Zhang et al. (2023) found that collaborative action research enhances teachers' involvement in curriculum reform through collective reflection and shared problem-solving. Similarly, Abrenica and Cascolan (2022) showed that CAR significantly contributes to the development of student-centred teaching materials and promotes curriculum practices that are more adaptive to diverse learning needs. These findings consistently demonstrate that CAR not only improves instructional quality but also encourages sustainable curriculum innovation.

Furthermore, recent studies in various educational contexts increasingly reinforce the relevance of CAR in responding to curriculum changes. Sepadi and Molapo (2024) emphasised that teachers engaged in reflective and research-based practices exhibit higher competence in interpreting and implementing curriculum policies effectively. This is particularly important in an era of rapid educational transformation, where teachers are expected to integrate digital literacy and student-centred learning approaches. Damanik et al. (2024) also highlighted that reflective practices such as CAR help teachers adapt more effectively to curriculum transformation in the digital era. Within the Indonesian context, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum further emphasises the importance of teacher autonomy and innovation, making CAR a practical strategy for achieving these objectives (Zaenab et al., 2024). Overall, the literature demonstrates an increasingly strong trend towards integrating CAR into curriculum development processes as a means of enhancing teacher professionalism and educational quality.

Nevertheless, existing literature also reveals several differences and limitations. One major issue is that many studies still focus on the impact of CAR on instructional practices without explicitly examining its role in curriculum development. As a result, the conceptual relationship between CAR and teachers' functions as curriculum developers remains insufficiently explored. Moreover, variations in research design, sample size, and educational contexts contribute to differing findings across studies. For example, although collaborative action research has proven effective in promoting curriculum innovation (Zhang et al., 2023), many studies still employ individual approaches that have limitations in terms of scalability. Contextual factors such as school leadership, institutional support, and organisational climate are also often insufficiently analysed, despite their strong influence on teachers' capacity to develop curricula (Andriadi & Sulistiyo, 2024).

Based on the synthesis of the literature, a significant research gap can be identified. Although numerous studies have acknowledged the important role of CAR in improving instructional quality and teacher professional development, there remains limited research explicitly integrating CAR within a comprehensive curriculum development framework. In particular, the role of collaborative CAR in strengthening teachers' capacities as curriculum developers at the school level remains underexplored. Furthermore, context-specific studies conducted within particular educational institutions, such as SMA Fatahillah Ciledug, are still limited. Therefore, further research is needed to examine how CAR can be systematically utilised to promote curriculum innovation through collaborative and school-based approaches.

3. METODE

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers function as curriculum developers through Classroom Action Research (CAR) in enhancing learning innovation at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug. A case study design was utilised because the research focused on the specific context of an educational institution and sought to

explore phenomena comprehensively based on participants' experiences, practices, and interactions within the natural school environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach was considered relevant for revealing the dynamics of CAR implementation, curriculum development, and the factors influencing teachers' involvement in learning innovation.

The study was conducted at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug, with research participants consisting of subject teachers, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and the school principal. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their active involvement in CAR implementation and instructional development at the school. Purposive sampling was employed because the research required informants who possessed substantial experience and understanding related to the investigated phenomenon (Sugiyono, 2022). The participant criteria included: (1) teachers who had conducted or were currently conducting CAR, (2) teachers involved in developing learning instruments or implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, and (3) school management personnel with an understanding of curriculum policies within the school.

The research utilised both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews and observations involving teachers and school administrators regarding CAR implementation and curriculum development. Secondary data were collected through document analysis, including lesson plans, CAR reports, teaching modules, operational school curricula, and relevant educational policy documents. The use of multiple data sources was intended to enhance analytical depth and strengthen the validity of the findings through source triangulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Data collection techniques consisted of three main stages: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in performing their roles as curriculum developers through CAR. This technique enabled the researcher to obtain flexible and in-depth data regarding teachers' reflective practices in learning processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participatory observation was carried out during classroom instruction and the implementation of learning innovations to directly examine how CAR was applied in teaching practice. In addition, documentation studies were used to analyse administrative and academic evidence supporting CAR implementation and curriculum development, such as teaching modules, teachers' reflective journals, and CAR reports.

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, categorised, and simplified data according to the research focus. The data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation of relationships among findings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions gradually based on patterns, themes, and relationships emerging from the research data. Data analysis was conducted continuously and simultaneously throughout the data collection process to ensure deeper and more contextual interpretation.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from teachers, school leaders, and school documents, while method triangulation involved comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking was applied by asking participants to review interview results in order to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This step was essential for enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

Conceptually, this research was grounded in the theories of teacher agency and reflective practice, which position teachers as key actors in curriculum development through reflective practices and action research (Priestley et al., 2021; Elliott, 2024). Therefore, the research methodology was designed to generate a comprehensive understanding of how CAR can

strengthen teachers' roles as curriculum developers while simultaneously encouraging learning innovation at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that teachers at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug play a significant role as curriculum developers through the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR). Based on the results of interviews and observations, teachers not only implement the curriculum established by the school, but also carry out various forms of adaptation to learning instruments according to students' needs. These adaptations include the development of teaching modules, modification of learning strategies, utilisation of digital media, and adjustment of learning evaluation methods. These findings demonstrate that teachers possess a strong level of teacher agency in translating curriculum policies into contextual learning practices. This is consistent with the view of Priestley et al. (2021), who emphasise that teachers are the primary actors in constructing learning experiences through reflective and contextual pedagogical decision-making.

Based on classroom observations, teachers who actively conducted CAR tended to be more innovative in developing learning strategies compared to those who had never implemented CAR. Teachers utilised the results of learning reflections to improve teaching methods, increase student participation, and adapt teaching materials to classroom characteristics. One form of innovation identified was the use of project-based learning models and collaborative discussions to enhance student engagement in the learning process. Teachers also began integrating digital technology, such as interactive media and online learning platforms, into classroom instruction. These findings indicate that CAR functions as a reflective tool that helps teachers continuously evaluate the effectiveness of learning. The findings support Elliott's (2024) study, which states that CAR enables teachers to develop reflective teaching practices and strengthen their professional capacity in curriculum development.

In addition to enhancing learning innovation, CAR was also found to strengthen teachers' professional competence. Based on interview results, most teachers stated that their involvement in CAR helped them understand students' needs more deeply and improved their ability to design more systematic and adaptive learning processes. Teachers became more accustomed to identifying learning problems, formulating improvement strategies, and objectively evaluating the outcomes of their actions. These conditions indicate that CAR not only contributes to improving the quality of learning, but also promotes teachers' continuous professional development. These findings are in line with Zhang et al. (2023), who assert that collaborative action research can increase teachers' involvement in curriculum reform through collective reflection and context-based problem-solving.

This study also found that the implementation of CAR at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug still faces several challenges. One of the primary obstacles is limited time due to teachers' heavy administrative workloads. Some teachers admitted experiencing difficulties in systematically preparing CAR reports because they had to divide their time between teaching activities, school administration, and other additional duties. Furthermore, some teachers still perceived CAR merely as an administrative requirement for promotion, meaning its implementation was not entirely directed towards the development of learning innovation. Another influencing factor was the limited training and guidance related to producing high-quality CAR. These findings support the research of Sepadi and Molapo (2024), who argue that limited institutional support and professional development opportunities can hinder teachers' effectiveness in performing their roles as curriculum developers.

From the organisational perspective, the study revealed that school leadership support has a considerable influence on the successful implementation of CAR. The principal and vice principal for curriculum affairs at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug provided support through teacher

discussion forums, academic supervision, and encouragement to conduct CAR. Nevertheless, such support has not yet been fully structured in the form of sustainable collaborative programmes. In fact, the findings indicate that teachers involved in collegial discussions and collaboration tend to be more active in developing learning innovations. This condition highlights the importance of a collaborative culture in curriculum development at the school level. These findings are consistent with Voogt et al. (2022), who emphasise that teacher collaboration within curriculum development teams can enhance the effectiveness of educational innovation implementation.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that collaborative CAR possesses substantial potential to improve learning innovation within schools. Teachers involved in joint reflective activities tended to be more open to the use of new learning methods and more active in sharing best practices. In several cases, teachers successfully developed more contextual learning instruments through interdisciplinary collaboration. For example, the integration of project-based learning approaches with digital literacy was implemented through collaboration between Indonesian language teachers and information technology teachers. Such practices demonstrate that collaborative CAR can serve as a means of curriculum integration that is more relevant to the demands of the twenty-first century. These findings reinforce the study by Marcussen et al. (2021), which states that collaborative approaches in action research are capable of supporting curriculum reform and interdisciplinary learning.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that CAR plays a strategic role in strengthening teachers' positions as curriculum developers at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug. CAR not only functions as a means of evaluating learning, but also serves as a mechanism for professional development and curriculum innovation based on actual classroom needs. Although several obstacles remain, such as limited time, administrative burdens, and insufficient training, institutional support and strengthened teacher collaboration can become important factors in optimising CAR implementation. Therefore, more systematic school policies are needed to support a culture of teacher research and reflection so that curriculum development can be implemented more effectively and sustainably.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teachers at SMA Fatahillah Ciledug play an important role as curriculum developers through the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR assists teachers in improving learning innovation, reflective abilities, and professional competence in designing more contextual and student-centred learning processes. In addition, collaboration among teachers through CAR contributes to curriculum development and the improvement of learning quality within the school. However, the implementation of CAR still encounters several challenges, including limited time, administrative burdens, and insufficient guidance. Therefore, more systematic school support is required to strengthen reflective and collaborative cultures so that teachers' roles as curriculum developers can be implemented optimally and sustainably.

Future studies are recommended to examine teachers' roles as curriculum developers through CAR on a broader scale, both across different educational levels and school contexts, so that the findings may become more generalisable. In addition, future research may employ a mixed-methods approach in order to obtain more comprehensive data regarding the effectiveness of CAR in improving learning innovation and curriculum development. Further studies should also explore collaborative CAR models in greater depth, particularly concerning the influence of school leadership, organisational culture, and digital technology integration on the success of curriculum innovation within schools.

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