

CHALLENGES OF GRADE 1 TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING NEW CURRICULUM

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Abstract

The main aim is to study of the challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collected data for this study. The participants of this study were 103 grade 1 teachers from South Dagon Township, Yangon Region. The valid response rate was 100%. Descriptive statistics, One-way ANOVA and independent samples *t* test were used to analyze the data. According to findings, 62% of participant teachers had above satisfactory level and 38% of teachers had satisfactory level of knowledge about grade 1 children development. The participant grade 1 teachers had challenges slightly in implementing new curriculum. There were significant differences in implementing new curriculum between the groups of grade 1 teachers classified by number of students in class who directly joined grade 1. The findings from open-ended responses and interview revealed that there were some challenges for teachers in implementing new curriculum.

Keyword: new curriculum

Introduction

Education is a very important tool to change something better. To be a good education, curriculum plays as one of the main concerns in the education system. As a part of the basic education reform program of the Ministry of Education, a new basic education structure of KG+12 system was introduced since 2016-17 Academic Year. Not only the curriculum but also curriculum implementation plays an important role in education reform process. Curriculum implementation is the process of putting the curriculum into work for the achievement the goals for which the curriculum is designed (Garba, 2004). Adaptation of the curriculum to meet the learning needs of students and to achieve the aim of education is the responsibility of teachers and not of the curriculum itself. In addition, knowledge about early childhood development is also essential for teachers in implementing process. Teachers have to take up the roles of facilitators, motivators and supporters to help children learn and grow. Besides, teachers are the ones who bring theory into practice in real class settings. They have many issues to deal with in their practice. So, they may have challenges in implementing new curriculum. To be successful curriculum implementation, it is a necessity to provide the supportive network to teachers. The better the teachers implement the curriculum, the better for our society.

Significance of the Study

In Myanmar, as a developing country, education reform is crucial to develop human resources. In this process, curriculum is also a necessity to accomplish the desired goals of education. So, the Ministry of Education has started to transformed to a new KG +12 system since 2016-17 Academic Year. Curriculum implementation is also the interactive stage of the curriculum process which takes place in the class room through the combined effort of teachers, learners, school administrators and parents. Teachers are the most important person in the program of curriculum implementation. If the teachers have challenges in curriculum implementation, they may have great impact on the accomplishment of the objectives of new

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curriculum. Therefore, it is a must to study the challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum since it can provide stakeholders feedback for better plan and preparation for curriculum implementation. Thus, the study was designed to investigate the challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum. It will provide the relevant information about challenges of grade 1 teachers. It can help them minimize their challenges for successful curriculum implementation.

Aims of the Study

Main Aim

- To study the challenges of grade1 teachers in implementing new curriculum

Specific Aims

- To identify the levels of the teachers' knowledge concerning with grade 1 children development
- To investigate the challenges faced by teachers in preparing, teaching and assessing new curriculum
- To investigate the differences in the challenges for teachers grouped by age, teaching service, qualification, class size and number of students in class who directly joined grade 1

Research Questions

1. What are the levels of the teachers' knowledge concerning with grade 1 children development?
2. What are the challenges faced by teachers in preparing, teaching and assessing new curriculum?
3. Are there any significant differences in the challenges for teachers grouped by age, teaching service, qualification, class size and number of students in class who directly joined grade 1?

Limitation of the Study

This study investigated the challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum in thirty-six schools of South Dagon Township, Yangon Region.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was established based on the review of related literature. To be a successful curriculum implementation, teachers should know early childhood development. So, the following theories were used as the basic for this research.

According to Jean Piaget's cognitive theory, grade 1 students are at preoperational (ages 2–6 years) stages of cognitive development. In the preoperational stage, language becomes the hallmark of development. Children begin to engage in pretend play and will take on roles. Children construct knowledge and develop their reasoning abilities through interactions with people and the environment as they seek to understand the world and how it works. However, they are still *egocentric*, or unable to take the view of another person. Piaget believed that from birth, children are driven to explore and master their own environment, take pleasure in mastery, and develop self-confidence through doing.

According to sociocultural theory of cognitive development, zone of proximal development means the ideal level of adult/older child support or assistance that a child needs to learn a new skill. Scaffolding refers to the adjustment that one must make with supports, in order to enhance the child's independence and confidence in learning new skills. Play becomes the vehicle through which children learn and internalize social rules, which develops self-regulation, and relationships with others.

According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theories, grade 1 students are at the stage four, industry vs inferiority. Children encounter the challenges of school, functioning as a member of a family and relating to peers. A child who experiences failure at tasks, or is denied the opportunity to discover and develop their own capabilities and potential, might possibly develop an inferiority complex in comparison with his peers. On the other hand, children who are encouraged and commended by parents and teachers develop a feeling of competence. Those who receive little or no encouragement from parents, teachers, or peers will doubt their ability to be successful and develop an inferiority complex.

In implementing new grade 1 curriculum, grade 1 teachers should know the new curriculum well. The grade 1 curriculum consists of 10 learning areas. They are Myanmar, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Life Skills, Art, Moral and Civics and Local Curriculum.

Lesson preparing

To be able to plan effective lesson preparing, teachers should follow the followings.

- Review a lesson thoroughly and make sure to fully understand the learning plan and learning activities for each lesson.
- Identify objectives after knowing exactly what are intended to gain students from the lesson.
- Identify the learning activities in detail and prepare required teaching aids
- Plan the lesson introduction and conclusion to be able to assess students' learning
- Study carefully how to use time for learning activities (Grade 1 Teachers Training Manual, 2017)

Teaching Learning Approaches

In utilizing effective teaching learning methods, including child centered approach; children will become competent as long as the following methods can be implemented.

- Create a supportive learning environment
- Encourage reflective thought and action
- Enhance the relevance of new learning
- Facilitate shared learning
- Make connections to prior learning and experience
- Provide sufficient opportunities to learn
- Inquire into the teaching-learning relationship (Grade 1 Teachers Training Manual, 2017)

Assessment

Assessment involves informal assessment and formative assessment. In assessing process, teachers have to supervise learning development and reflect the learning procedures, types of learning and exercises of each student.

Definition of Key Term

Curriculum - systematically written programs for all fields in formal and non-formal education, which are designed to achieve educational objectives and which include learning, outcomes, instructional methods and evaluation. (National Education Law, 2014)

Operational Definition

New Grade 1 Curriculum: in this study, the word 'new grade 1 curriculum' refers to the systematically written programs developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) with support of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and introduced in Basic Education Schools, on June 1, 2017.

Methodology

This chapter provided information concerning with the overall design of the study, research method, population and sample, instrumentation, procedures and data analysis. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study.

Quantitative Methodology

Descriptive research method was used to collect the required data for the study.

(i) Sample

There are one hundred and three grade-1 teachers in thirty-six Basic Education Schools in South Dagon Township, Yangon Region. By using census survey method, all grade-1 teachers were chosen as the participants in this study.

(ii) Instrumentation

In the study, the questionnaire was used to collect the data for challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum. It was divided into three parts, demographic data and school related factors, ten true or false items for teacher's knowledge about grade 1 children development and 59 items for lesson preparing, teaching and assessing which were rated on four-point Likert scales (1= not at all challenging, 2= slightly challenging, 3= moderately challenging, 4= very challenging).

(iii) Procedure

Expert validity of the questionnaire was obtained from nine experienced educators from Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education. The samples for pilot testing are 30 grade 1 teachers from Dagon Seikkan Township, Yangon Region on the third week of September. The internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) of grade 1 teachers' challenges was 0.95. Next, after taking the permission from the South Dagon Township Education Officer, the questionnaires were distributed to Basic Education Schools on the first week of November, 2018. Distributed questionnaires were recollected by the researcher after one week later. The respondent rate was 100%.

(iv) Data Analysis

Descriptive statistic, One-way ANOVA, independent samples *t* test and Post Hoc Tukey HSD were used to analyze the data. Item percentage correct (IPC) was used in order to describe the teacher's knowledge about grade 1 children development.

3.2 Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative Methodology was used to investigate the challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum qualitatively. Open-ended questions and interview were used as the qualitative research methodology to collect more information about grade 1 teachers' challenges.

(i) Sample

One hundred and three grade 1 teachers were responded in answering open-ended questions. Among them, nine grade 1 teachers from three schools were randomly selected for interviews.

(ii) Instrumentation

As the instruments, open-ended questions and interview form were used to obtain in-depth information. Fifteen open-ended questions and eight interview questions were included in qualitative study. Interview was conducted with structured questions.

(iii) Procedure

Interview was conducted with nine grade 1 teachers from three schools on the second week of December.

Findings

The analysis of data collected from grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum in South Dagon Township, Yangon Region, is presented as research findings in this chapter.

Quantitative Findings

For the quantitative study, the levels of teacher's knowledge concerning with grade 1 children development were evaluated.

Grade 1 Children Development Knowledge of Grade 1 Teachers

In scoring those true-false item, '1' mark was given for one correct answer and '0' mark for one incorrect answer. The percentage was calculated based on how many marks a teacher could obtain out of total marks. If a teacher could give correct answer for 5 items out of 10 items, the score would be 5 marks and the average score percentage would be 50%.

Table 1 Numbers and Percentages of Grade1 Teachers Showing the Levels of Knowledge on Grade 1 Children Development (N=103)

Variable	No. of Teachers (%)	Remark
Grade 1 Children Development Knowledge	-	Below Satisfactory Level
	39 (38%)	Satisfactory Level
	64 (62%)	Above Satisfactory Level

According to the Table 1, it was found that 64 (62%) was above satisfactory level on the early childhood development knowledge and that of 39 (38%) was satisfactory level.

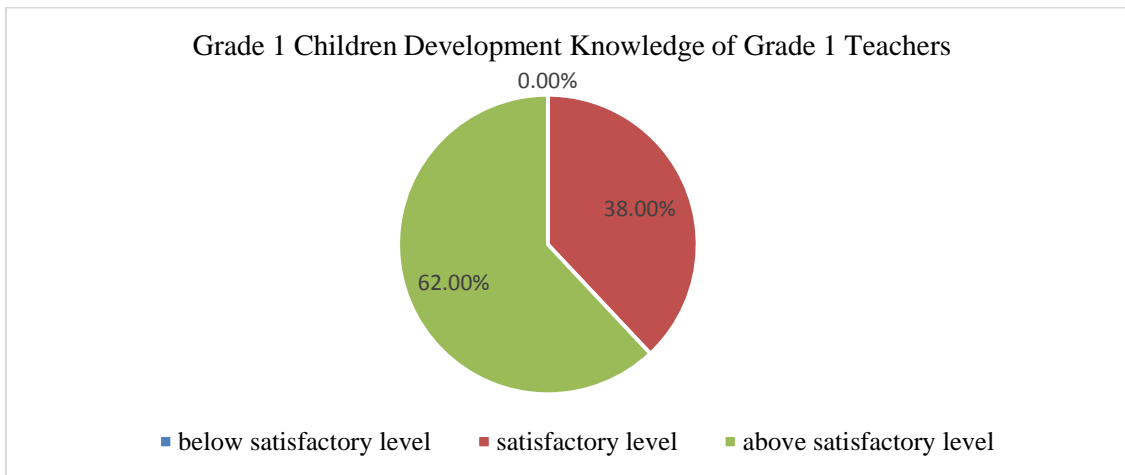


Figure 1 Average Percentage of Teacher’s Knowledge of Grade 1 Children Development

Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers in Implementing New Curriculum

Table 2 shows mean values and standard deviations for challenges of grade 1 teachers in preparing, teaching and assessing new curriculum.

Table 2 Mean Values and Standard Deviations for Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers in Implementing New Curriculum (N=103)

No.	Variables	Mean	SD
1.	Preparing new curriculum	1.70	.52
2.	Teaching new curriculum	1.70	.46
3.	Assessing new curriculum	1.50	.48
	Implementing new curriculum	1.68	.44

Scoring Direction:

- 1.00-1.49 =Not at all challenging
- 1.49-2.49 =Slightly challenging
- 2.50-3.49 =Moderately challenging
- 3.50-4.00 =Very challenging

In Table 2, Mean values for challenges of teachers in preparing and teaching new curriculum were 1.7 and that of assessing new curriculum was 1.5. The mean value for challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum was 1.68.

Again, the description of mean values of challenges of grade 1 teachers in preparing, teaching and assessing new curriculum was presented in the figure 2 below.

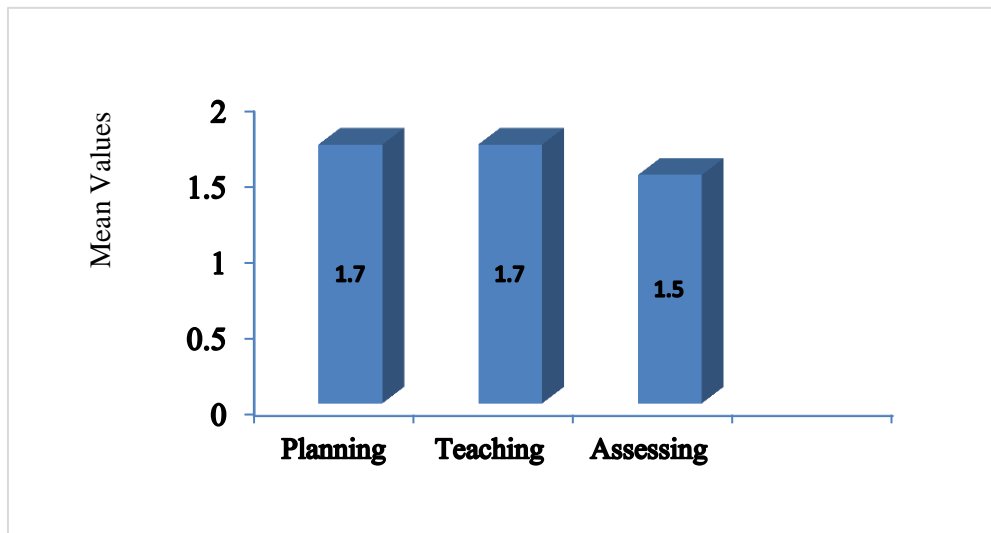


Figure 2 Comparison of Mean values for Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers in Planning, Teaching and Assessing New Curriculum

Differences in Teachers’ Challenges Grouped by Age, Teaching Service, Qualification, Class Size and Number of Students in Class who Directly Joined Grade 1

Mean values and standard deviations of teachers grouped by age are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Age (N=103)

Variable	N	Age	Mean	SD
Implementing new curriculum	34	20-29	1.66	.42
	32	30-39	1.70	.50
	15	40-49	1.62	.41
	22	50-59	1.74	.43

Scoring Direction:

1.00-1.49 =Not at all challenging

1.49-2.49 =Slightly challenging

2.50-3.49 =Moderately challenging

3.50-4.00 =Very challenging

One-way (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze whether there were significant differences in challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum among four groups of teachers classified by their age. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 One-Way ANOVA Result Showing Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Age (N=103)

		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p
Implementing new curriculum	Between Group	.15	3	.05	.24	ns
	Within Group	19.61	99	.19		
	Total	19.75	102			

ns = no significance

Table 4 shows that no significance was found between groups.

Then, mean values and standard deviations of teachers grouped by teaching service are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Teaching Service (N=103)

Variable	N	Teaching Service	Mean	SD
Implementing new curriculum	22	<5 years	1.58	.34
	29	5yrs-10yrs	1.69	.44
	25	11yrs-15yrs	1.64	.52
	27	>15yrs	1.79	.43

Scoring Direction:

1.00-1.49 =Not at all challenging

1.49-2.49 =Slightly challenging

2.50-3.49 =Moderately challenging

3.50-4.00 =Very challenging

More, One-way (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze whether there were significant differences in challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum among four groups of teachers classified by their teaching service. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 One-Way ANOVA Result Showing Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Teaching Service (N=103)

		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p
Implementing new curriculum	Between Group	.41	4	.10	.52	ns
	Within Group	19.34	98	.19		
	Total	19.75	102			

ns = no significance

Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference between groups.

Mean values and standard deviations of teachers grouped by qualification are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Qualification (N=103)

Variable	N	Qualification	Mean	SD
Implementing new curriculum	27	DTEd	1.61	.382
	76	B.A., B.Sc.	1.71	.459

Scoring Direction:

1.00-1.49 =Not at all challenging

1.49-2.49 =Slightly challenging

2.50-3.49 =Moderately challenging

3.50-4.00 =Very challenging

More, independent sample *t* test was conducted to analyze whether there were significant differences in challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum among two groups of teachers classified by their qualification. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 The Independent Sample *t* Test Result Showing Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Qualification (N=103)

Variable	Qualification	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Implementing new curriculum	DTEd	-1.022	54.499	ns
	B.A., B.Sc.			

**p*<.05, ns = no significance

Table 8 shows that there was a significant difference between two groups of teachers grouped by their qualification.

Then, mean values and standard deviations of teachers grouped by class size are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Class Size (N=103)

Variable	N	Class Size	Mean	SD
Implementing new curriculum	38	30-45	1.65	.458
	52	46-60	1.70	.444
	10	61-75	1.77	.415
	3	>75	1.78	.093

Scoring Direction:

1.00-1.49 =Not at all challenging

1.49-2.49 =Slightly challenging

2.50-3.49 =Moderately challenging

3.50-4.00 =Very challenging

More, One-way (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze whether there were significant differences in challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum among two groups of teachers classified by Class Size. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 One-Way ANOVA Result Showing Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Class Size (N=103)

Variables		Sum of Square	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Implementing new curriculum	Between Group	.38	3	.13	.65	ns
	Within Group	19.37	99	.19		
	Total	19.75	102			

**p*<.05, ns = no significance

Table 10 shows that there was no significant difference in challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum.

Then, mean values and standard deviations of teachers grouped by presence of students in class who directly joined grade 1 are shown in Table 11.

Table 11 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Number of Students in Class who Directly Joined Grade 1 (N=103)

Variable	N	Students who directly joined grade 1	Mean	SD
Implementing new curriculum	65	Absence	1.64	.388
	38	Presence	1.76	.512

Scoring Direction:

1.00-1.49 =Not at all challenging

1.49-2.49 =Slightly challenging

2.50-3.49 =Moderately challenging

3.50-4.00 =Very challenging

More, independent sample t test was conducted to analyze whether there were significant differences in challenges of teachers in implementing new curriculum among two groups of teachers classified by number of students who directly joined grade 1. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 The Independent Sample t Test Result Showing Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers Grouped by Number of Students in Class who Directly Joined Grade 1 (N=103)

Variable	Students who directly joined grade 1	t	df	p
Implementing new curriculum	Absence	-1.323	62.001	.012*
	Presence			

* $p < .05$, ns= no significance

Table 12 shows that there were significant differences between teachers whose classes had students who directly joined grade 1 and teachers whose classes did not have those students.

Qualitative Findings

To gather the qualitative data, open-ended questions and interview questions were used.

Responses to Open-ended Questions

Teachers were asked fifteen open-ended questions to present their challenges in planning, teaching and assessing ten learning areas, teachers' perception on grade 1 curriculum and needs to be able to implement new curriculum more effectively. They were presented in descending order.

Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers in Preparing New Curriculum

- There are difficulties in managing time for learning activities depending on the different rates of learning of children. (n=8, 7.7%)
- There are difficulties in preparing teaching aids. (n=7, 6.7%)

Challenges of grade 1 Teachers in teaching ten subjects

- There are difficulties for students in reading Myanmar stories. (n=9, 8.7%)
- There are difficulties for students in reading, writing and memorizing Myanmar consonants, vowels and medials. (n=7, 6.8%)
- There are difficulties for teachers in teaching pronunciation in English. (n=9, 8.7%)
- Children are not able to use structures what they have learned in class to communicate feelings, thoughts and information. (n=7, 6.7%)
- There are difficulties in teaching hundred numbers in mathematics. (n=10, 9.7%)
- Students usually use the old methods in mathematics as they are taught by their parents or others. (n=7, 6.7%)
- There are no difficulties in teaching moral and civics but students cannot use their knowledge in real life. (n=3, 2.9%)
- Life skills text books are not sufficient for students. (n=5, 4.8%)
- It is necessary to have playground or enough space for students. (n=14, 13.6%)
- There are difficulties for teachers to play the flute well. (n=19, 18.4%)

Challenges of Grade 1 Teachers in Assessing New Curriculum

- Time is insufficient for teachers to assess the children individually. (n=20, 19.4%)
- Class size are large to assess the achievement of the children individually. (n=15, 14.6%)

Teachers' perception on Grade1 Curriculum

- New curriculum can develop knowledge, intelligence, good manners, language skills, critical thinking and creative skills of students. (n=21, 20.4%)
- It is a good curriculum for students. (n=20, 19.4%)

Needs for Teachers

- Teaching aids are needed for teachers. (n=19,18.4%)
- Teachers want to learn more about effective teaching methods, music, drawing, English speaking, English poems in rhyme and racial language. (n=12, 11.7%)
- It is needed to appropriate student-teacher ratio. (n=8, 7.8%)

Findings from Teachers' Interview

In order to find out deeply the challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum, nine teachers from three selected schools participated in interview and observation. Three teachers from each school were interviewed and their teaching practices are observed. Findings from each school are presented.

Challenges found in preparing new curriculum: Researcher investigated about challenges of teachers in planning new curriculum. All nine teachers said there was no difficulties in lesson planning. Lesson plans were already presented in teacher's guide. So, they responded that they did not need to prepare lesson plans. Among them, a teacher said lesson plans in teacher's guide were sometimes not convenient for her because there were too many students in class.

Challenges found in teaching new curriculum: Researcher investigated challenges of teachers in teaching ten subjects. In teaching Myanmar, teachers had to correct the writing styles of students who are already taught in wrong way. Students absenteeism is also a difficulty for teachers. There was no definite instruction for Myanmar alphabet writing exercise book. In teaching English, students had difficulties in pronunciation. They could not memorize the vocabularies well. They also did not know the meanings of words. In teaching Mathematics, there are too many students in class. More time was needed to be effective teaching. Teachers had to use teaching aids and teach students by repetition. In teaching life skills, teachers had difficulties because text books were not sufficient for students. To do exercises, teachers could only provide one per a group. If not, they copied exercises from text book to be able to deliver each student. In moral and civics, students paid little interest to this subject. They knew how to behave but they did not behave in their daily life. In physical education, they needed enough spaces. In art, teachers also could not play flute well so that they had difficulties in teaching playing flute. Moreover, flutes were not provided to each student. In class, all students might not play flute because of large class size and time limit. There were also difficulties for teachers in teaching Myanmar traditional dance. Local curriculum was not taught in these schools.

Challenges found in assessing new curriculum: Researcher investigated challenges of teachers in assessing new curriculum. All teachers identified the grades of students according to the

teacher's guide. A teacher said that there were difficulties in assessing students who did not attend the class regularly. Parents could not collaborate with the school to improve the achievement of students. Moreover, a teacher reported that time was not enough to assess the students individually.

Challenges in creating teaching aids: Researcher investigated about challenges of teachers in creating teaching aids. All nine teachers had created teaching aids for themselves. They said that they created teaching aids as much as they can but could not provide enough teaching aids for each student or group. They have financial difficulties.

Teacher training for new curriculum: Researcher investigated the teachers about the teacher training for new curriculum. They said that they learnt teaching methods from training but they needed more time to use some methods in real class. Other three teachers responded that training was not effective for them. They wanted to learn new teaching methods in training but it gave them general points and only explained guidelines from teacher's guide. Among them, a teacher said that training was too short.

Other challenges besides preparing, teaching and assessing ten subjects: Researcher investigated other challenges faced by teachers besides planning, teaching and assessing ten subjects. Teachers said that they had difficulties because of large number of students in class, low parent collaboration and students who did not attend the class regularly.

Needs of teachers to perform more effectively: Researcher investigated the needs of teachers to implement the new curriculum more effectively. They said that all primary teachers should attend the teaching trainings. They also wanted seminars and workshops for grade 1 new curriculum experience sharing, assessment criteria and teaching aids. They also wanted to teach grade 1 continuously.

Teacher's perception on grade 1 curriculum: Researcher investigated teacher's perception on grade 1 curriculum. Teachers said that this new curriculum was suitable for students. Four teachers mentioned that there were too many students in class to be effective curriculum implementation.

Conclusion

Discussion

Education can be considered as the foundation to catch a rapidly changing society. The standard of living changes and develops through education. So, curriculum implementation also an important part of education reform process, especially in Myanmar.

In this study, concerning the level of the teacher's knowledge about grade 1 children development, the participant teachers had different levels of knowledge. Sixty-four teachers were above satisfactory level, thirty-nine teachers at satisfactory level and no teacher below satisfactory level. They had challenges in understanding that six-year-old children cannot control all of their physical movement, that six-year-old children can think rationally and from different perspectives, that children can improve their learning by comparing and criticizing with others and that knowledge and rational thinking of children can develop naturally without any aids. Most teachers had knowledge of child development to some extent and so there was no teachers below satisfactory level. Besides, in qualitative findings, most of the participant teachers did not

read books related to children development and learning. Only a few teachers (n=13, 12.6%) had read books like 'Pyin-nyar-dazaung', 'Cultivating learning and development of children', 'Teaching Primary Education' by Daw Thazin Khine, 'Playing with Mathematics' by Daw Nwe Ni Win and '500 Tips for TESOL' by Sue Wharton and Pill Race. As six-year old children, they are learning so much more than number and letters and social and emotional skills are also important for them. So, it is essential for first grade teachers to understand early childhood development. Thus, teachers at satisfactory level of knowledge should keep trying to improve their knowledge. Moreover, teachers above satisfactory level also need to sustain their level of knowledge.

In implementing new curriculum, grade 1 teachers had challenges slightly in planning new curriculum. They had more challenges in preparing plan B, teaching methods and teaching aids based on different rates of learning of students. They also had challenges in managing time because there were large number of students in class. In creating teaching aids, they had financial difficulties. On the other hand, even though lesson plans were already presented in teacher's guide, teachers needed necessary preparation, such as choosing appropriate class activities and managing time for each activities.

In teaching new curriculum, teachers had challenges slightly in teaching Myanmar. The reasons were that there were too many students in class, that teachers had to correct the students as they were taught in wrong ways by their parents or others and that there were students in class who directly joined first grade. To be effective teaching-learning situation, there should be appropriate student-teacher ratio in class. Moreover, parents need to collaborate with teachers to be effective curriculum implementation.

In teaching English, there were challenges slightly for teachers, especially in pronunciation, speaking lessons, teaching children to use structures (e.g. I like) learned in class to communicate feelings, thoughts and information and teaching children to understand and use stories, short talks, classroom English and vocabularies. According to quantitative and qualitative findings, students could not use what they have learnt in class. This is because students have little opportunities to apply them in real life situation. In addition, English curriculum of first grade intended students to improve Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skill (BISC) through listening and speaking. So, teachers need to create class environment in which students can apply their knowledge.

There were challenges slightly for teachers in teaching Mathematics. They had difficulties in teaching hundred numbers, adding and subtracting, interpreting time and measuring and comparing the lengths of objects. This was because of large class size and different pace of learning of students. Therefore, time was insufficient for them to teach each student. Teaching aids are also essential to be effective mathematics teaching. Besides, as students were taught in old methods by their parents or tuition, it became difficulties for teachers. Therefore, parents should understand the vision, mission and value of new curriculum.

Grade 1 teachers had no challenges in teaching science. According to the open-ended responses and interview results, it was difficult for teachers to get clay. Grade 1 science curriculum aims to practice students the habits of investigation. So, teachers need to motivate the inquisitiveness of students.

There are challenges slightly for teachers in teaching social studies. Teaching children to observe the relationship between the environment and their life styles was difficult for teachers. In the open-ended responses, teachers said that students were not interested in it. This was because students could not relate the lessons with their daily life. This curriculum purposes to change rote learning and to achieve diverse thinking, creation, rational thinking, systematic thinking, problem solving and collaboration with others. So, teachers need to relate the lessons with everyday life.

Teachers had challenges slightly in teaching moral and civics, especially in teaching children to know the rights and responsibilities of oneself. According to the open-ended responses and interview, students knew how to behave but they did not apply what they know in their daily life. The four values of moral and civics are ethics, right and responsibilities, discipline and living in peace and harmony. To achieve learning objectives, teachers should practice students to know their rights and responsibilities. They should also create a supportive environment in which students could develop right behaviours and habits.

In teaching life skills, grade 1 teachers had challenges slightly. In teaching life skills, students' knowledge, skills and attitudes were improved by the process of inquisition, learning and practicing. Parents involvement was also important to achieve the learning objectives. Besides, in open-ended responses, teachers said they needed text books for students to be more convenient in doing exercises.

In physical education, there were challenges slightly for teachers. The reason was that there was not enough playground or space for students. By learning physical education, students will not only become physically and mentally strong but also gain self-esteem, mutual respect and team spirit. So, teachers need to put more emphasis on achieving learning objectives rather than identifying winner and loser.

In art, there were challenges slightly for teachers. They had difficulties in playing flute and dancing. This was because teachers themselves could not play flutes well and could not dance systematically. Besides, flutes are not enough for students.

In local curriculum, teachers had challenges moderately. The schools that the research was conducted did not teach local curriculum because there was no ethnic group in class. However, it is better if teachers tell about the history, culture and habits of ethnics groups of Myanmar in the period of local curriculum. By this way, students can recognize the diversity of ethnics groups.

In assessing ten learning areas, teachers had challenges slightly. Teachers had difficulties in assessing the achievement of children in each lesson. The reason was because there were too many students in class. Therefore, teachers need more time to assess each student.

Apart from preparing, teaching and assessing new curriculum, creating teaching aids became a difficulty for teachers. This was because they could create teaching aids for themselves but they had financial difficulties. They had also challenges in class room control because of large class size. Thus, time and class management became challenges for them. According to the qualitative research finding, in this case, teachers who had experience of teaching grade 1 had less challenges than the ones who had no experience. This was because experienced teachers were more familiar with new curriculum and can overcome the challenges more easily than before. Teaching and assessing students who directly joined grade 1 was also challenges for

teachers. They had difficulties especially in teaching Myanmar and mathematics. Moreover, teachers pointed low parent collaboration with school. The reason was that parents did not understand the objectives and benefit of new curriculum well. So, they taught their children in wrong ways and sent them to tuition.

Concerning to the needs of teachers to perform more effectively, most teachers wanted to be supplied with enough teaching aids. They also needed to have appropriate teacher-student ratio. Some teachers wanted to learn more about music, dancing, effective teaching methods, English speaking skills, drawing, racial languages and English poems in rhymes. They mentioned to hold seminars and workshop for grade 1 new curriculum experiences sharing and to provide enough spaces, multimedia and life skill text books. Some teachers suggested that six-year-old students should attend kindergarten first instead of directly joining grade 1. Related to grade 1 teachers training, they also mentioned that all teachers should attend teacher training and teacher training was too short.

Related to the teachers' perception on grade 1 curriculum, most teachers accepted that grade 1 curriculum was suitable for 21st century students. However, there are large number of students in most class. So, teachers had some unexpected difficulties in implementing new curriculum.

In implementing new curriculum, there was no significant difference in overall challenges of grade 1 teachers grouped by age, teaching service and qualification. However, there are significant difference in assessing new curriculum between two groups of teachers classified by their qualification. This was because DTED certificate holders had more educational training rather than B.A. or B.Sc. degree holders. According to the quantitative finding, there was no significant difference in overall challenges of teachers in terms of their class size. However, in open-ended responses and interview, most teachers said that they had challenges in preparing, teaching and assessing new curriculum because of large class size. Large class size is one of the obstacles for effective curriculum implementation. Therefore, the student-teacher ratio is an important indicator for teachers. How teachers use time and give attention to their students depends on the class size. Moreover, there was a significance difference between two groups of teachers classified by the number of students in class who directly joined first grade. According to the research, 5.9% of grade 1 students were not attended kindergarten and joined grade 1 directly. Teachers with students who directly joined grade 1 had more challenges than teachers without these students. According to qualitative findings, teachers said they needed to pay more attention to these students. Learner entry behaviour can influence the development and result of a teaching-learning process. So, all children should attend kindergarten first because it aids children for smooth transition from home to school life. It also improves five developmental areas of children by the process of learning by playing through five senses.

5.3 Recommendations

This study revealed that challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum from the finding of questionnaires. According to the quantitative findings, they had moderately low challenges in implementing this curriculum. However, based on both quantitative and qualitative findings, the followings are the suggestions to be able to implement the curriculum more effectively and successfully.

- More in-service teacher training, workshops and seminars for grade 1 new curriculum experience sharing should be offered occasionally for effective curriculum implementation.
- Teachers should create a supportive environment in which students can apply what they had learnt in class.
- Appropriate teacher-student ratio, enough time, teaching aids and spaces should be provided to teachers for effective curriculum implementing.
- Six-year-old children should attend kindergarten first because kindergarten education is education that promotes children holistic development by using appropriate methods to ease their transition to first grade.
- Principals and teachers should share community the vision, mission, value and pedagogical approaches of new curriculum so that they can actively collaborate with schools.

Need for Further Study

This study was conducted to investigate the challenges of grade 1 teachers in implementing new curriculum in South Dagon Township, Yangon Region. Therefore, research works should be conducted in other areas. Moreover, as there are many challenges faced by grade 1 teachers, it is needed to investigate curriculum implementation more details.

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