



## **Exploring the New Social Studies Curriculum at the Third Cycle of Basic Education: Interviews with Curriculum Planners in Erbil Sulaymaniyah and Duhok in Iraq**

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**Received: 23 August 2023; Revised: 12 October 2023; Accepted: 17 December 2023**  
**DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37905/aksara.10.1.495-526.2024>**

### **Abstract**

This study examines the new social studies curriculum in Iraq's basic education system, specifically in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok. The reform, informed by constructivist learning and critical pedagogy, integrates subjects like history and geography to promote civic responsibility and global awareness. The study, based on interviews with curriculum planners, explores the motivations and theoretical underpinnings of this reform. It also addresses the practical challenges of implementation, such as resource allocation, teacher training and cultural adaptations. The curriculum aims to foster critical thinking and inclusivity, balancing global perspectives with local contexts. Challenges highlighted include financial constraints and logistical issues in dealing with sensitive topics. This study underscores the importance of continuous improvement, stakeholder collaboration and adaptive strategies in educational transformation.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Reform, Social Studies Curriculum, Curriculum Planners, Educational Transformation and Erbil.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Curriculum reform constitutes a pivotal responsibility for educational institutions and policymakers seeking to nurture new generations equipped to navigate contemporary realities. This holds especially true within the domain of social studies education, bearing the profound duty to empower young minds as engaged citizens steeped in sociocultural and geopolitical awareness (Journell, 2019). However, as Journell (2019) cautioned, for such awareness to translate into meaningful civic participation, curriculum content and delivery modes must evolve in step with shifting socio-political contexts. This alignment remains imperative but challenging, necessitating inclusive ideation and iteration grounded in current challenges and learner needs (Al Salami et al., 2017).

In Iraq, ambitious nationwide education reform efforts reflect precisely this intention to enrich curricula across foundational disciplines, including social studies, history, civics and geography (Wang, 2016). These subjects provide crucial scaffolds for identity construction, values development and contextualization within broader egalitarian participation in civil society (Biesta et al., 2009). However, as Zajda (2009) noted, realizing curriculum aspirations relies extensively on equitable resource allocation, teacher competencies, administrative oversight and assessment mechanisms tracking



learning outcomes. Hence, a nuanced examination focused specifically on elucidating ground-level experiences of educators and planners driving curriculum transformations bears invaluable insights. This research presents precisely such a qualitative exploration into the perspectives and insights of social studies curriculum planners across three key regions – Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok. Semi-structured interviews shine light on diverse facets ranging from the motivations catalyzing reform initiatives to the conceptual models shaping curriculum aspirations, the obstructions encountered during developmental and rollout phases and confidence in potential outcomes. The findings uncover crucial implications for policymakers and practitioners invested in enriching social studies education to nurture civically literate, socially conscious citizens equipped to navigate multiplicity and contribute to collective wellbeing (Journell, 2019).

### **1.1. Reinventing Social Studies Education**

Social studies education encompasses a multiplicity of disciplines, including history, legal studies, sociology, geography, political science and economics (Zarrillo, 2016). This amalgamation of diverse fields bears the monumental duty of equipping young minds with the perspectival awareness and sociocultural sensitivity to recognize humanity's shared identities beneath apparent differences (Ladson-Billings, 2003). As Ladson-Billings (2003) explained, the empathy, tolerance and conflict resolution competencies nurtured through social studies potentially catalyze ethical citizenship, civic participation and purpose-driven societal contribution.

However, merely imparting disciplinary knowledge falls inadequate in cultivating such pluralistic global citizenship (Hanvey, 1975; Merryfield & Kasai, 2004). As Hanvey (1975) emphasized, the curriculum itself must adapt to address nuanced geo-historical realities, cultural mentalities, economic conditions and sociopolitical contexts within which students are situated. This localization enriches relevance and resonance, thereby enhancing learner engagement and erudition (Singleton, 2015; Yosfiani and Nurhayati, 2024). Yet, as Merryfield and Kasai (2004) noted, equipping students as global citizens also necessitates exposure to international events, diverse worldviews and global interconnectivity.

Reconciling these simultaneous imperatives of localization and globalization remains challenging but constitute pivotal priorities driving social studies education reform worldwide (Misco & Shiveley, 2007). In Iraq, efforts to enrich curriculum content to address contemporary civic and geopolitical contexts while also nurturing appreciation of multiethnic coexistence have taken precedence (Wang, 2016). As Wang (2016) explained, innovations in instructional approaches have also gained traction, integrating participatory methodologies like peer dialogue, roleplays and cooperative projects that enhance perspective-taking and social responsibility. Ultimately, as Zajda (2009) surmised, realizing aspirational curricula requires resourcing administrators and educators with specialized expertise and surrounding students with digitized, interactive learning materials mirroring real-world complexities.

Social studies education plays an indispensable role in nurturing participatory ethics within youth as future torchbearers of civil society. However, realizing ambitious curricula requires evolving content and pedagogies attuned to contemporary realities while retaining cultural resonance and localization. In Iraq, enriching the social studies curriculum to inspire civically literate generations has become a pivotal priority. This research presents voices from the ground driving this high-stakes, nationally significant



reform agenda within the key Iraqi regions of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok. The diverse perspectives uncovered carry crucial implications for policymakers seeking to enhance social studies education through contextually relevant, ethically grounded approaches elevating learner engagement and societal contribution.

## **1.2. Problem Status**

The article examines perspectives and experiences of social studies curriculum planners across three key regions in Iraq – Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok.

**1.2.1. Main Problem:** There is a need to reform and enrich the social studies curriculum in Iraq to better prepare students to be engaged citizens equipped to navigate contemporary realities. However, realizing curriculum aspirations relies extensively on equitable resource allocation, teacher competencies, administrative oversight and assessment mechanisms.

### **1.2.1. Sub-Problems:**

- Lack of understanding of ground-level experiences of educators driving curriculum transformations in Iraq
- Need for more research focused specifically on social studies curriculum reform in Iraq

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

- To gain a nuanced understanding of the perspectives and insights of social studies curriculum planners across Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok regions in Iraq
- To uncover motivations, conceptual models, challenges and confidence levels related to social studies curriculum reform initiatives
- To derive implications for policymakers and practitioners seeking to enrich social studies education in Iraq

## **1.4. Importance of the Study**

- The research fills a gap by conducting qualitative interviews focused solely on social studies curriculum reform in Iraq
- The findings carry valuable insights for enriching social studies education through contextually relevant, ethically grounded approaches to elevate learner engagement and societal contribution
- By illuminating ground-level experiences of educators driving reforms, the study empowers policymakers to make informed decisions to realize curriculum aspirations
- It emphasizes the need for continuous training and resources for educators to effectively facilitate curriculum objectives centered on nurturing participatory ethics and civic literacy

## **1.5. Limitations**

- Time Limits:** 2022-2023 academic year
- Spatial Boundaries:** Iraq (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok cities)
- Human Boundaries:** Social Studies Curriculum Planners for the third Cycle of basic education schools.

## **2. literature review**

The curriculum is a crucial component of any education system, laying the foundation for teaching and learning. An effective curriculum aligns with the needs and values of society, provides relevant content knowledge and incorporates sound pedagogical approaches (Tyler, 2013; Nurhayati, 2015). In the context of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok Regions in Iraq, the education sector has undergone major



reforms in recent years to enhance quality and relevance. As part of these reforms, the basic education system transitioned to a new curriculum and structured academic phases. The third cycle of basic education encompasses grades 7-9 for students aged 13-15 years. This literature review examines the underpinnings and key components of the reformed social studies curriculum at this stage, drawing insights from scholarly discourse.

### **2.1. The Concept and Scope of Social Studies**

Social studies are an interdisciplinary field focused on human societies, relationships, civic participation and history. According to Barr et al. (1977), it encompasses the intensive study of human interactions across spheres like family, work, recreation, community and the nation. Scholars highlight citizenship education as the core purpose of social studies (Dubey & Barth, 1980; Obiadi, 1980). It integrates knowledge and methods from disciplines like history, geography, economics and civics to positively shape behaviors and attitudes. The scope of the social studies curriculum derives from the interrelationships between knowledge areas that influence modern society (Ross, 2006). Content and skills are structured to achieve educational goals linked to societal aspirations.

### **2.2. Key Components of Curriculum**

Curriculum theorists like Tyler (2013), Nicholls and Nicholls (2018) and Taba (1962) provide frameworks that identify needs analysis, goal setting, content selection, pedagogical approaches, resource planning and evaluation as key phases. Danladi (2006) conceptualized these elements as an integrated curriculum cycle revolving around societal culture and values. Needs assessment requires analyzing issues and deficiencies in the existing curriculum from students' and society's perspectives. The derived needs inform goal setting, which aligns educational aims with societal values (Danladi, 2006). Content determination involves planning themes, topics and learning materials to achieve set goals. Pedagogy encompasses teaching methods, technologies and activities tailored to content areas and student needs. Resources refer to human, material and physical inputs that aid teaching and learning. Finally, evaluation examines the achievement of educational goals and curriculum effectiveness (Tyler, 2013; Suharyat et.al., 2023). These components facilitate a dynamic curriculum that responds to evolving needs.

### **2.3. Social Studies Curriculum in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok Regions in Iraq**

In 2009, Iraq's Erbil Regional Government education ministry instituted reforms focusing on a student-centered basic education system. Students aged 6-15 years were grouped into three cycles spanning grades 1-9 (MoE, 2009). Social studies were emphasized as a key subject in reinforcing cultural identity and values. The reformed third cycle social studies curriculum integrates history and geography knowledge to promote citizenship, analytical abilities and national pride. It immerses teenage students in the rich history of ancient civilizations and Islamic kingdoms while exploring modern issues. The sequential content builds analytical and civic participatory capacities.

For grade seven, semester one covers ancient history from stone ages to Egyptian civilization while semester two deals with fundamentals of geography like maps, earth's layers and human settlements (MoE, 2022). Grade eight expands horizons, contrasting global history and geography. First semester traces Islamic history from Prophet Muhammad to the Abbasid dynasty and associated events in the Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok Regions. Second semester journeys across continents like Asia, Europe and



Africa. Finally, grade nine social studies curriculum reconnects students with Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok Regions in Iraq's history, culture and geography. Overall, it provides a spiral curriculum aligning with principles that Tyler (2013) emphasized for continuity and reinforcement of learning.

In terms of pedagogy, MoE (2022) social studies textbooks blend stories, maps, visuals, field visits and analytical assignments. Assessment encompasses semester exams, quizzes, presentations and peer reviews. However, scholars highlight deficiencies in aspects like teacher competencies, resources and monitoring (Danladi, 2006; Okam 2002; Musa et.al., 2022). Thus, while the reformed social studies curriculum exhibits sound conceptualization, effective implementation requires strengthening areas like teacher training, e-resources and evaluation systems.

In summary, the literature reviewed above highlights social studies as an innovative curriculum area that merges knowledge from diverse disciplines to bolster citizenship competencies. It analyses the critical phases in curriculum design, from deriving needs and goals to content selection, pedagogical principles, resourcing and evaluation procedures. The review also provides specific insights into the current status of the social studies curriculum for grades 7-9 in Iraq's Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok Regions education system. It demonstrates a thoughtful realignment of curriculum to regional values and societal needs. However, further enhancements in domains like teacher professional development, digital tools and assessment mechanisms could enrich practical application. Overall, the research indicates a progressive transformation towards a student-centric social studies curriculum that has strong potential to build analytical abilities, cultural awareness and civic engagement.

### **3.Methodology:**

The following details the methodology and procedures employed in a qualitative research study focused on Social Studies curriculum planners. The research process, from design to data analysis, is meticulously outlined to ensure clarity and transparency.

#### **3.1. Design**

In the "Research Design Selection" segment of the questionnaire, a qualitative methodology was chosen. Qualitative research, as highlighted by Creswell & Creswell (2017), excels at uncovering intricate insights and delving into deep, contextual perspectives of specific phenomena. The choice of structured interviews was strategic. As noted by Bernard (2017), structured interviews, given their design, contribute to ensuring methodological consistency and reliability across participants. This design approach underscores the importance of rigorous and systematic data collection, emphasizing the essence of a thorough understanding in research pursuits.

#### **3.2. Translation and Adaptation:**

**-Source:** The questionnaire was based on the study by Lee (2003) titled "An evaluation of the new junior secondary science curriculum in Hong Kong."

**-Initial Translation:** The questionnaire was translated into Arabic to align with the context of the Social Studies Curriculum in the specified regions, ensuring cultural relevance and appropriateness.

**-Back-Translation:** A subsequent step involved back-translation. A translator, unfamiliar with the original document by Lee (2003), translated the Arabic version back into English. This procedure is a standard approach in cross-cultural research, essential for confirming the accuracy and integrity of the initial translation.



**-Final Translation:** Based on insights from the back-translation, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic once more. This iterative process ensured both contextual relevance and the preservation of the original questionnaire's intent and meaning.

### 3.3. Validity and Reliability

- **Face Validity (Apparent Honesty):** In the pursuit of rigorous research standards, the researcher took the initiative to consult with a panel of experts. These experts were proficient in areas such as curricula development, teaching methodologies and broader educational sciences. Their insights and feedback were instrumental in the process of establishing the face validity of the instrument. After this procedure, it was ascertained that the scale possessed a high degree of face validity. This consultative approach, as suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2017), ensured that the questionnaire not only resonated with the intended audience but also measured the anticipated constructs accurately.

- **Consistency in Data Collection:** Recognizing the paramount importance of consistency in data collection, the researcher personally undertook the role of the interviewer. By being the sole interviewer, the researcher could maintain a uniform approach in posing questions, thereby ensuring that potential biases or variations that might arise with multiple interviewers were mitigated. After this methodological approach, the reliability of the scale was confirmed. This approach is consistent with the guidelines set by Neuman (2013), emphasizing the significance of consistency in qualitative research.

- **Reliability through Comparative Analysis:** To bolster the reliability of the adapted questionnaire, the researcher conducted a comparative analysis. Given the relatively smaller size of the research community, it was deemed essential to align the instrument with established measures and findings in the domain of curriculum development. Drawing inspiration from Trochim & Donnelly (2010), the researcher juxtaposed responses and themes against existing literature. Following this comparative analysis, the reliability of the scale in the specific context of the study was reaffirmed.

- **Reliability through Triangulation:** One of the paramount methods to ensure the reliability of research findings is through the application of triangulation. Triangulation, as delineated by Stake (1995), involves the use of multiple methods, sources, or perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. In the context of this research, the data derived from the questionnaire was juxtaposed with other sources of data, such as field notes, classroom observations and secondary sources related to curriculum planning. This multifaceted approach was pivotal in ensuring that the findings remained consistent and reliable across diverse data sources. After employing triangulation, the reliability of the scale was further substantiated. The application of triangulation, as per the guidelines set by Stake (1995), is instrumental in countering potential biases or inconsistencies that might arise from a singular data source, thereby providing a more robust and holistic understanding of the research topic.

### 3.4. Population and Sample

- **Population Definition:** The designated population for this study comprised eight individuals affiliated with the Social Studies Curriculum Department at the Ministry of Education in the specified region.



**-Sample Selection:** From this population, a sample of six individuals was judiciously chosen. The selection process prioritized a diverse representation across various factors, including experience in the field, age groups and academic qualifications.

**-Sample Demographics:** The demographic characteristics of the selected sample are detailed below:

**First participant:** The first participant is a male with 5 to 10 years of experience in curriculum development. His educational background includes a PhD in Islamic History. Over the course of his career, he has been involved in four or more curriculum reform initiatives. He falls within the age bracket of 50 to 59 years.

**Second participant:** The second participant is a male who has less than five years of experience in the field of curriculum development. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography. He has participated in three curriculum reform projects during his tenure. His age is between 50 and 59 years.

**Third participant:** The third participant is a male with an experience range of 5 to 10 years in curriculum development. His academic qualification is a Bachelor of Arts in History. He has been a part of four or more curriculum reform projects. He is in the age range of 50 to 59 years.

**Fourth participant:** The fourth participant is a male who has accumulated 11 to 15 years of experience in curriculum development. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. Throughout his career, he has engaged in four or more curriculum reform efforts. He belongs to the age group of 50 to 59 years.

**Fifth participant:** The fifth participant is a male with 16 to 20 years of experience in curriculum development. He possesses a Master's degree in the Arts of Sociology. He has been involved in four or more curriculum reform projects. His age lies between 50 and 59 years.

**Sixth participant:** The sixth participant is a female with less than five years of experience in curriculum development. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. Over her career, she has participated in three curriculum reform initiatives. She is in the age bracket of 40 to 49 years.

### **3.5. Data Collection Procedures**

- The interview schedule, as adapted from Lee (2003), was distributed to six of the eight identified individuals within the population.
- Interviews were conducted in-person to facilitate a more direct and engaged interaction, adapting to both the participants' and the researcher's convenience.
- Prior to initiating the interviews, participants were ensured confidentiality. Informed consent was also obtained, emphasizing their voluntary participation and the purpose of the research.
- With the consent of the participants, all interviews were audio-recorded. This was instrumental for ensuring accurate transcription and subsequent analysis of the data collected.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

- All recorded interviews were meticulously transcribed to ensure a verbatim representation of the participants' responses.
- A thematic analysis approach, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed for the examination of the transcribed data. This method is particularly advantageous for its flexibility and comprehensive nature, enabling



researchers to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within data. In the current study, thematic analysis was invaluable in discerning recurring patterns, emergent themes and insightful narratives from the participants' responses. The systematic approach of thematic analysis ensures a rich, detailed and complex account of data, making it especially suited for exploratory research such as this, where nuanced understanding is paramount.

- Throughout the analysis process, direct quotations from the participants were extracted and utilized to validate and support the derived findings, ensuring the authenticity and credibility of the research results.

#### **4. Findings**

Figure 4.1, titled "Perspectives and Experiences of Planners in Social Studies Curriculum Reform," provides a comprehensive analysis of various critical aspects related to social studies curriculum reform. The figure begins by examining the factors that contribute to the reform and initiation of the social studies curriculum, shedding light on the underlying reasons and motivations behind this process. It further explores the theoretical foundations and perceived educational needs that inform the development of the new curriculum. The figure then delves into the problems encountered during the developmental process, acknowledging the challenges and obstacles that may arise. It also highlights the distinctive features of the new curriculum, emphasizing how it differs from the previous one and the potential benefits it brings.

Additionally, the figure addresses the factors that influence the implementation of the curriculum in pilot schools, considering both internal and external influences. It further explores the training strategies implemented to facilitate the successful implementation of the curriculum, ensuring that educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Furthermore, the figure discusses the additional resources provided or planned for schools, recognizing the importance of supporting schools with the necessary tools and materials to effectively implement the curriculum. It also anticipates difficulties that may arise during the first year of implementation, allowing for proactive planning and problem-solving. Moreover, the figure examines the assessment of congruence between the intended and implemented curricula, evaluating the extent to which the actual implementation aligns with the original intentions. Lastly, it considers the confidence level in the success of the new curriculum, reflecting the optimism or caution regarding its potential outcomes.

Overall, Figure 4.1 offers a comprehensive overview of the perspectives and experiences of planners in social studies curriculum reform, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers and researchers involved in the curriculum development process.

In examining the perspectives and experiences of planners in Social Studies Curriculum Reform, categories were identified from the coded data. These categories and their linked themes were interpreted by reviewing the figures associated with each theme and through analysis of planners' perspectives and experiences in Social Studies Curriculum development. The following figures present the code, category and theme related to the examination of perspectives and experiences of planners in Social Studies Curriculum Reform.



**Figure 4.1:** Perspectives and Experiences of Planners in Social Studies Curriculum Reform

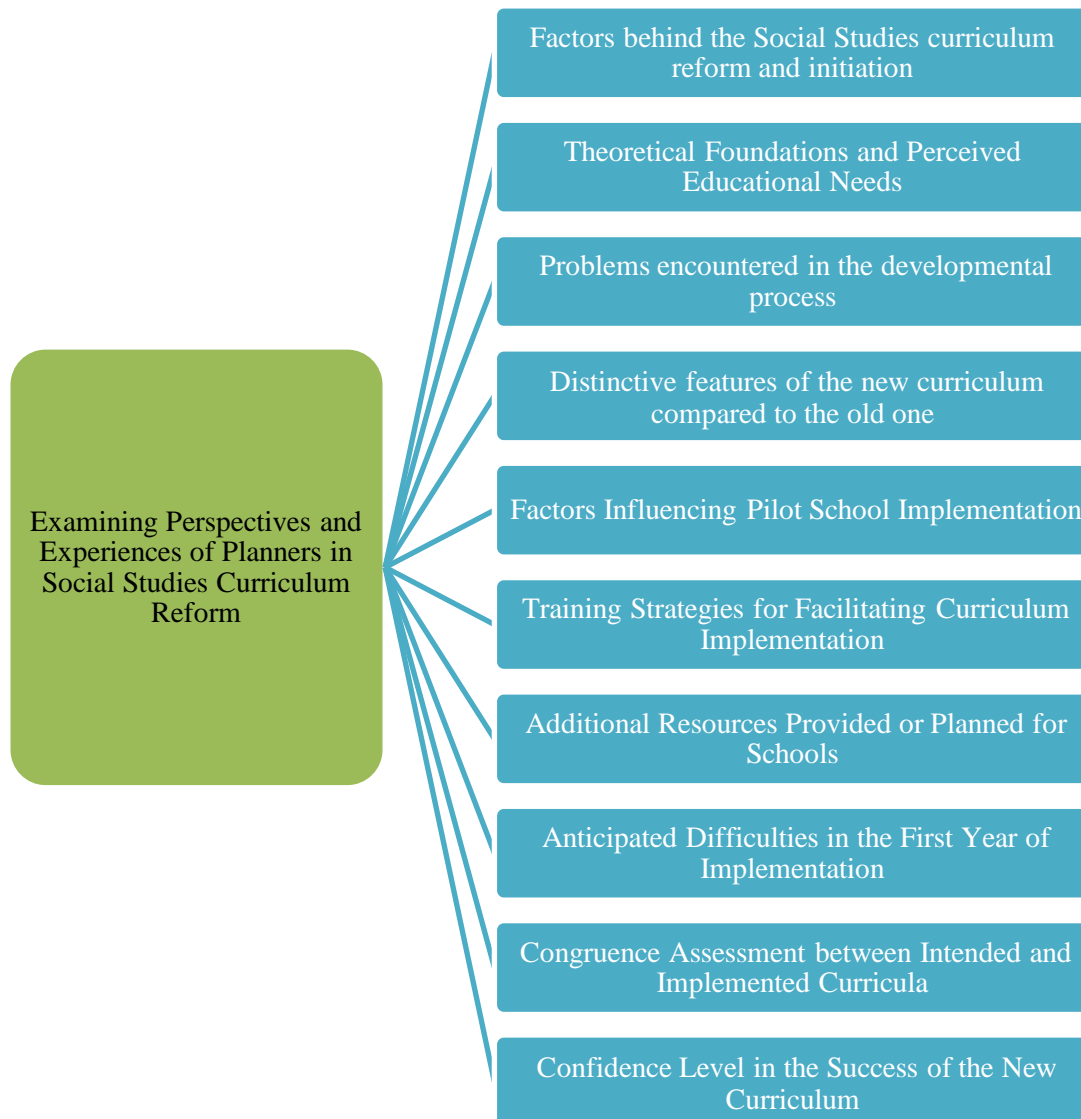
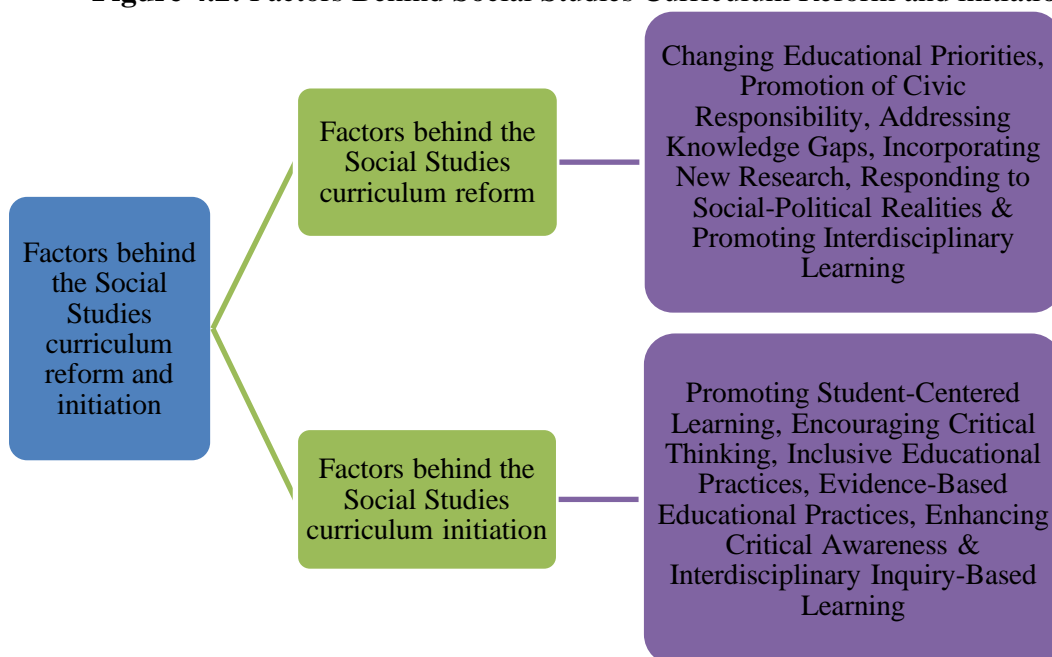


Figure 4.1, titled 'Perspectives and Experiences of Planners in Social Studies Curriculum Reform,' illustrates the varied perspectives and experiences of planners involved in the reform of the social studies curriculum. The figure aims to shed light on the multifaceted challenges and considerations that educators and administrators encounter during the process of curriculum transformation.

**Factors behind the Social Studies curriculum reform and initiation:** The process of reforming and initiating a Social Studies curriculum is driven by a myriad of factors, each playing a crucial role in shaping the content, delivery and overall impact of the curriculum. We will explore these various influences, delving into the specific factors behind both the reform and initiation of the Social Studies curriculum, to better understand the dynamics at play in modern educational development.

**Figure 4.2:** Factors Behind Social Studies Curriculum Reform and initiation



**Factors Behind Social Studies Curriculum Reform:** Factors behind social studies curriculum reform, as illustrated in Figure 4.2, include "changing educational priorities," "promotion of civic responsibility," "addressing knowledge gaps," "incorporating new research," "responding to social-political realities," and "promoting interdisciplinary learning." These factors collectively drive the need for an updated and comprehensive social studies curriculum. Figure 4.2 graphically represents these factors, providing a visual guide to the various influences shaping curriculum reform in social studies.

perspectives and fosters critical thinking, adding depth to students' understanding. The reform of the Social Studies curriculum was catalyzed by several interconnected factors. For instance, a responder stated that:

*"The Changing Educational Priorities was the impetus for the reform as educators and policymakers recognized that the old curriculum did not adequately prepare students for the demands of the 21st century."*

Similarly, another responder highlighted:

*"The Promotion of Civic Responsibility as a major driving force behind the reform. It was noted that the prior curriculum fell short in preparing students for active and informed participation in democratic society."*

Other critical factors include Addressing Knowledge Gaps to fill in the educational lacunae left by the previous curriculum; Incorporating New Research to modernize and enhance the curriculum based on the latest findings; Responding to Social-Political Realities to make the curriculum more relevant and reflective of current societal and political issues; and Promoting Interdisciplinary Learning to foster a more holistic and integrated approach to learning. These collective insights underscore the multifaceted nature of the Social Studies curriculum reform.

**Factors behind the Social Studies curriculum initiation:** The initiation of social studies curriculum reform is driven by various factors, as depicted in Figure 4.2. These



include "promoting student-centered learning," "encouraging critical thinking," "implementing inclusive educational practices," "utilizing evidence-based educational practices," "enhancing critical awareness," and "incorporating interdisciplinary inquiry-based learning." Collectively, these factors underscore the need for an updated and comprehensive social studies curriculum. Figure 4.2 visually represents these driving forces, offering a clear illustration of the motivations behind the reform of the social studies curriculum.

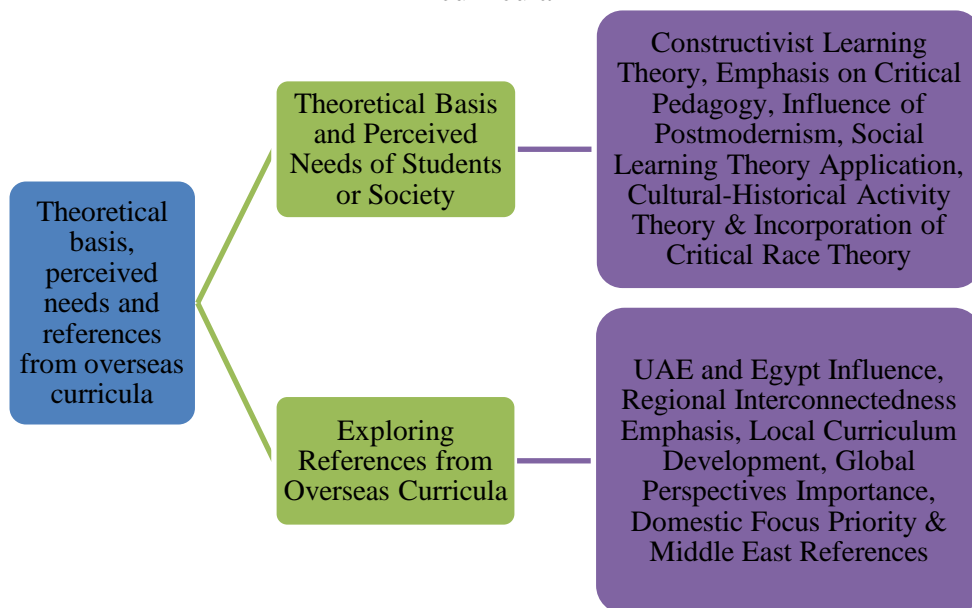
Important key aspect was Encouraging Critical Thinking, which sought to nurture students' abilities to scrutinize, evaluate and create knowledge independently. Inclusivity and equity in the educational process also found emphasis in the reform. As one responder noted, the initiation of the reform was specifically to "*promote more inclusive and equitable educational practices*", ensuring every student, regardless of their background or abilities, could benefit from quality education.

The curriculum reform also put significant weight on Evidence-Based Educational Practices. As highlighted by another responder, the reform was initiated to promote "*evidence-based and research-driven educational practices*". This approach implies integrating scientific research and proven methods into the curriculum design and teaching methodologies, enhancing the effectiveness of learning outcomes.

Enhancing Critical Awareness among students and fostering their active engagement with societal and political issues were also key goals of the reform. Lastly, the reform underscored the importance of Interdisciplinary Inquiry-Based Learning. This approach encourages students to draw connections across different subjects, fostering their curiosity and exploration.

**Theoretical basis, perceived needs and references from overseas curricula:** In the journey towards developing an effective and relevant curriculum, understanding the theoretical basis, identifying perceived needs and drawing insights from overseas curricula become pivotal. This involves establishing a strong pedagogical foundation and addressing the needs of students or society, while also exploring and integrating valuable insights from foreign curricula.

**Figure 4.3:** Theoretical basis, perceived needs and references from overseas curricula



**Theoretical Basis and Perceived Needs of Students or Society:** As illustrated in Figure 4.3, the theoretical basis and perceived needs of social studies curriculum reform include the "constructivist learning theory," "emphasis on critical pedagogy," "influence of postmodernism," "social learning theory application," "cultural-historical activity theory," and "incorporation of critical race theory." These elements, collectively represented in Figure 4.3, form the foundations of a comprehensive and relevant social studies curriculum.

Figure 4.3, presents a graphical representation of the educational theories shaping students' learning processes and their perceived societal and personal needs. One such theory is the Constructivist Learning Theory, as highlighted by one of the respondents:

*"The theoretical basis of the new Social Studies curriculum reform is grounded in constructivist learning theory. This perspective emphasizes the importance of active learning and student-centered approaches and recognizes that learners construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with others. there is a perceived need to promote lifelong learning and to prepare students for ongoing education and training throughout their lives, in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world and to remain competitive in the job market."*

In addition to this, as the other responder pointed out:

*"the new Social Studies curriculum reform is also shaped by the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. This theory recognizes the importance of cultural and historical contexts in shaping learning experiences and human development. It emphasizes societal needs for equity, diversity and inclusion in education, urging the curriculum to address critical issues such as systemic racism, gender inequality and other social injustices."*

**Exploring References from Overseas Curricula:** As depicted in Figure 4.3, references for social studies curriculum development were extracted from overseas curricula, notably the "UAE and Egypt influence." Emphasis is given to "regional

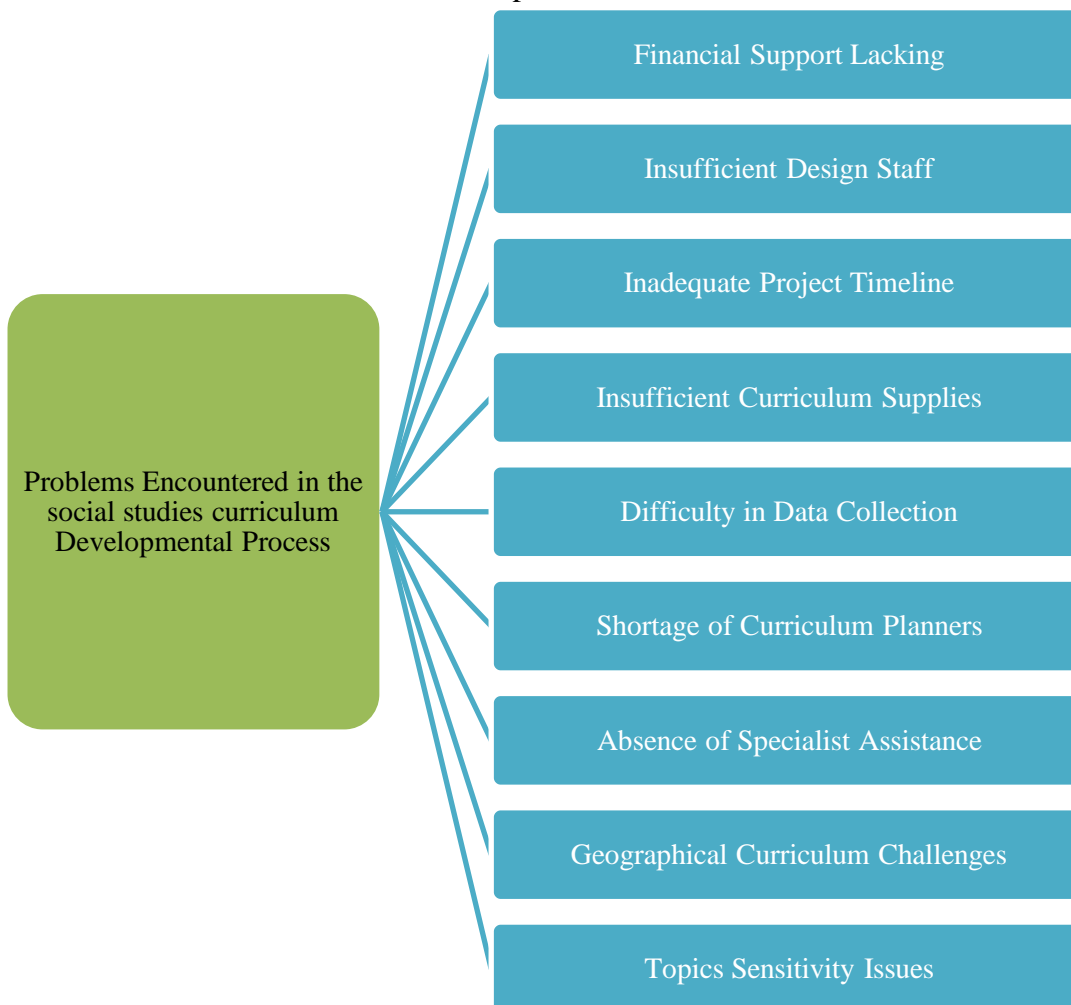
interconnectedness" and "local curriculum development," yet the significance of "global perspectives" is also recognized. The curriculum foregrounds a "domestic focus," complemented by "Middle East references." Figure 4.3 visually encapsulates these diverse influences that shape the social studies curriculum.

On the other hand, the other responder's answer contradicts this notion, "*stating that the new curriculum reform did not draw references from overseas curricula. Instead, it prioritized a domestic focus, emphasizing the history, geography and social sciences of the students' own country while excluding external influences.*"

These diverging responses showcase different approaches taken in relation to incorporating overseas references into the Social Studies curriculum reform.

**Problems encountered in the developmental process:** In the process of developing a social studies curriculum, educators and policymakers often encounter a range of challenges. This discussion will delve into these issues, shedding light on the specific problems that arise during the curriculum developmental process and their implications on educational quality and efficacy

**Figure 4.4:** Problems Encountered in the social studies curriculum Developmental Process





As detailed in Figure 4.4, the curriculum developmental process encountered several problems. These include "lacking financial support," "insufficient design staff," "inadequate project timeline," "insufficient curriculum supplies," "difficulty in data collection," "shortage of curriculum planners," "absence of specialist assistance," "geographical curriculum challenges," and "topics sensitivity issues." Each of these challenges, visually encapsulated in Figure 4.4, formed obstacles that impacted the smooth progression of the curriculum development.

One of the respondent affirms these complications by providing a more detailed perspective. The respondent highlights:

*"The scarcity of time as a critical factor hampering the change in curricula. This aligns with the aforementioned concern about an insufficient project timeline. Similarly, the reported lack of necessary supplies such as designs, color printers, shapes, maps and approved data mirrors the problem of insufficient curriculum supplies."*

The respondent also emphasizes: *"The deficiency of financial support as a significant hindrance, resonating with the issue of lacking financial backing."*

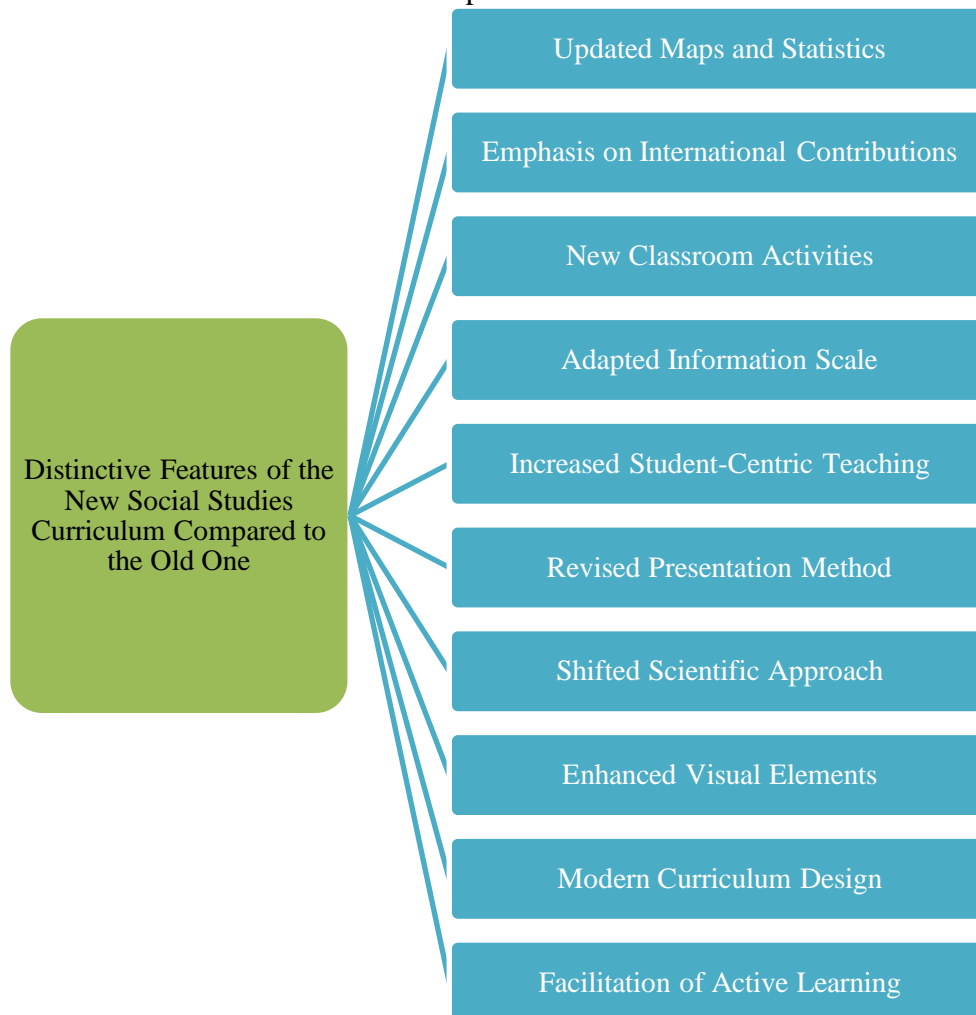
Furthermore, other respondent account contributes to a broader understanding of the encountered issues. The respondent points out:

*"The difficulty in addressing sensitive topics related to the history of civilizations, religions and different nationalities that exist in the region."*

This challenge resonates with the issues of topic sensitivity and geographical curriculum challenges delineated in above Figure These issues indicate that curriculum reform is not just about resources and logistics but also involves navigating complex cultural, historical and societal dynamics.

**Distinctive features of the new curriculum compared to the old one:** The evolution of educational paradigms often leads to significant shifts in curriculum design and the social studies curriculum is no exception. We'll delve into a comparative analysis to understand the unique features of the new social studies curriculum, highlighting how it differentiates from its predecessor.

**Figure 4.5:** Problems Encountered in the social studies curriculum Developmental Process



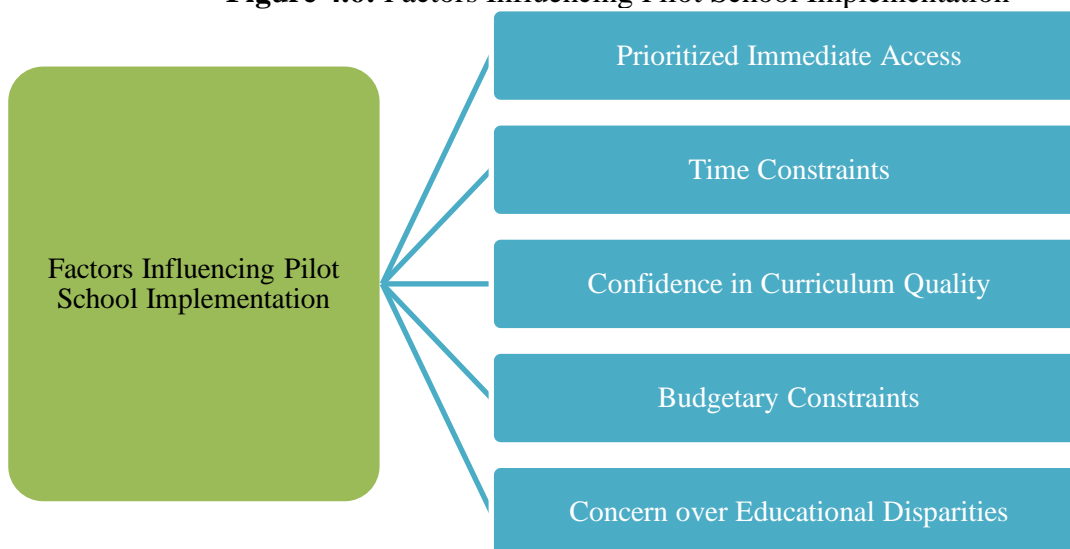
As demonstrated in Figure 4.5, the new curriculum is distinct from the old one in several ways. These include "updated maps and statistics," an "emphasis on international contributions," "new classroom activities," an "adapted information scale," "increased student-centric teaching," a "revised presentation method," a "shifted scientific approach," "enhanced visual elements," "modern curriculum design," and "facilitation of active learning." These modifications, collectively represented in Figure 4.5, aim to foster a more dynamic and engaging learning environment for students.

Building upon this overview, one of the respondents offers a detailed perspective, stating, *"This program differs greatly from the old curriculum in terms of the content of the materials and the way they are presented. It gives attention to the teacher's plan, learning objectives, class activities, assessment and homework."* This commentary reflects several features mentioned in Figure 4.5, such as the emphasis on new classroom activities, the student-centric approach and the modern curriculum design. Interestingly, the respondent also mentions the structured inclusion of different subjects in the curriculum, specifying, *"History is included in the first semester and geography in the second semester."*

Further illustrating the distinctive features of the new curriculum, another respondent comments, *"The new curriculum is designed scientifically and modernly. The focus of teaching is on the student. There is development in activities, information, classroom activities and homework. The design of the new curriculum has been changed and its size has been reduced."* This response underscores the aspects of a modern curriculum design, the enhancement of student-centric teaching and the facilitation of active learning, all of which align with Figure 4.5's listed features. In addition, this respondent highlights the incorporation of updated resources such as *"pictures, maps, statistics and data used in the new curriculum"*, pointing out the implementation of updated maps and statistics as a notable update.

**Factors Influencing Pilot School Implementation:** Implementing a new curriculum in pilot schools is a multifaceted process, influenced by a wide array of factors. We will explore these influences in depth, seeking to understand how they shape and impact the successful introduction of curriculum changes in a pilot school setting.

**Figure 4.6:** Factors Influencing Pilot School Implementation



The implementation of pilot school programs is influenced by several factors, as illustrated in Figure 4.6. These factors include the "prioritization of immediate access" to the curriculum, "time constraints" for effective implementation, "confidence in curriculum quality," "budgetary constraints" that impact resource allocation and the "concern over educational disparities" to ensure equitable access and outcomes for all students. These factors play a significant role in shaping the successful implementation of pilot school initiatives.

One respondent, when asked about their decision not to conduct a pilot program, referred specifically to time constraints, echoing one of the influential factors outlined in Figure 4.6. The respondent stated, *"No, we decided not to conduct a pilot program in schools due to time constraints and the urgency of implementing the new curriculum."* This aligns with the identified urgency of granting immediate access to the new curriculum. It also illustrates how time constraints can impact the roll-out strategy of significant educational reforms.

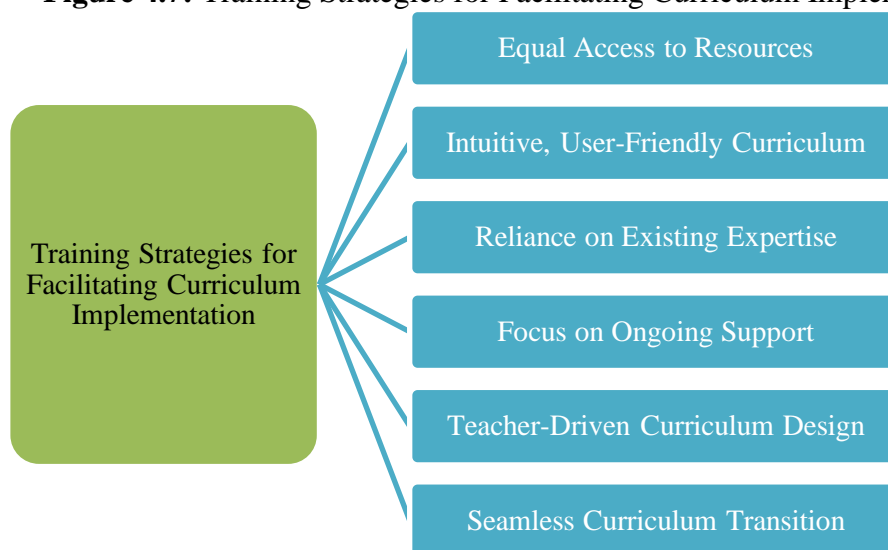
Another respondent shed light on the financial aspect of the decision-making process, which is another critical factor listed in Figure 4.6. The respondent shared, *"No,*



due to budgetary constraints, we were unable to conduct a pilot program in schools before releasing the new curriculum. We believed that a pilot program would not provide significant benefits compared to the risks and costs involved, so we released the new curriculum directly to all schools." This statement underscores the potential limitations imposed by budgetary constraints and reflects the organization's confidence in the quality of the new curriculum to directly implement it without a pilot phase.

**Training provided for schools to facilitate implementation:** Understanding the types and effectiveness of training provided to schools is crucial for the successful implementation of a new curriculum. This section explores the various training methods that have been employed or will be introduced to facilitate a seamless transition and integration of the new curriculum into the existing educational system.

**Figure 4.7:** Training Strategies for Facilitating Curriculum Implementation



To facilitate the implementation of the new curriculum, schools have been or will receive training on various aspects, as depicted in Figure 4.7. These aspects include "equal access to resources," an "intuitive, user-friendly curriculum," "reliance on existing expertise," a "focus on ongoing support," "teacher-driven curriculum design," and ensuring a "seamless curriculum transition." These training efforts aim to support schools in effectively adopting and implementing the new curriculum.

As one respondent stated, *"The decision not to provide training for the new curriculum was made based on the belief that teachers already possess the necessary skills and expertise to implement the changes effectively. The curriculum is designed to build on existing best practices and teachers have been trained in these approaches as part of their initial education and ongoing professional development."* This reflects the strategy of leveraging existing expertise and best practices, meaning that the curriculum was designed with the teachers' existing skill set in mind, ensuring a smooth transition with minimal additional training needed.

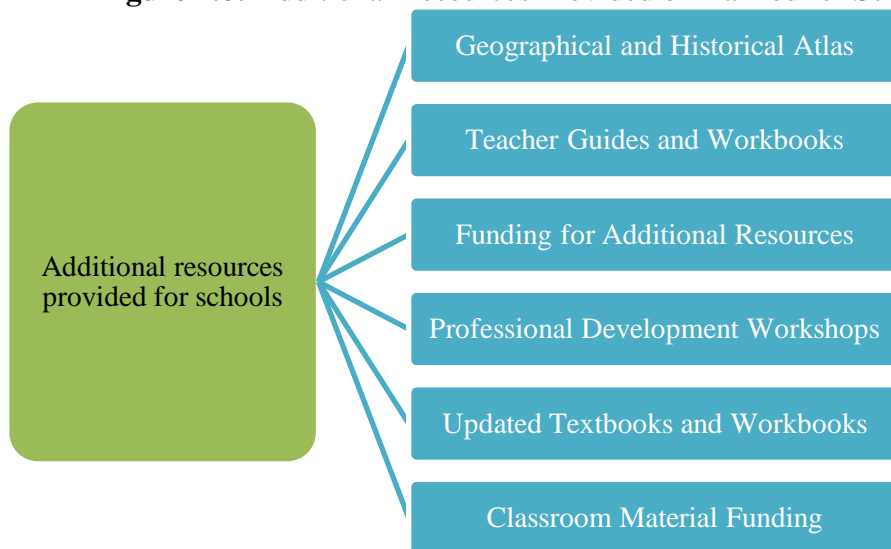
Supporting this approach, another respondent stated, *"The new curriculum was designed with input from teachers and educators, ensuring that it is both practical and effective. As a result, no additional training is needed for teachers to successfully implement the new approach. However, ongoing support will be provided to ensure that teachers have access to the resources and information they need to incorporate the new"*



*curriculum into their teaching practices.*" This statement further highlights the teacher-driven design process and the commitment to ongoing support, ensuring that while the teachers are trusted to implement the new curriculum based on their existing knowledge and skills, they will not be left without a support system throughout the transition.

**Additional resources provided for schools:** In response to the introduction of the new social studies curriculum, a range of additional resources have been made available or are planned for implementation in schools. These resources are specifically designed to support the integration of this new curriculum, ensuring that educators and students are equipped to engage with the fresh academic content effectively.

**Figure 4.8:** Additional Resources Provided or Planned for Schools



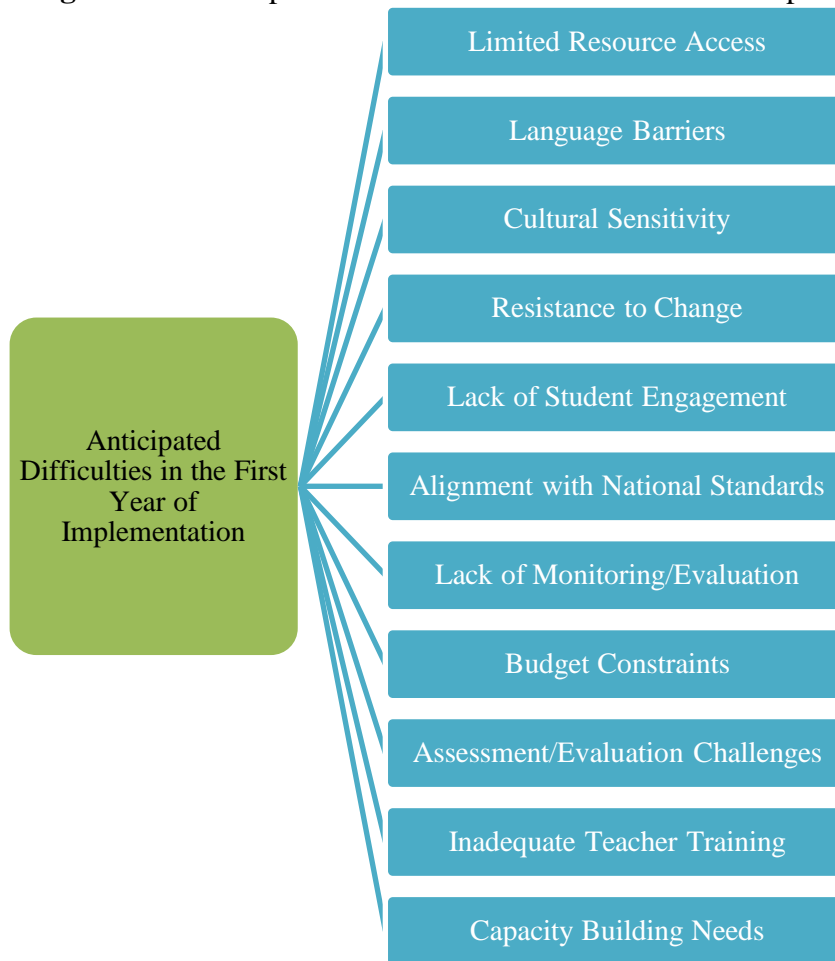
As demonstrated in Figure 4.8, to support schools, additional resources provided or planned include a "geographical and historical atlas," "teacher guides and workbooks," "funding for additional resources," "professional development workshops," "updated textbooks and workbooks," and "classroom material funding." These resources aim to enhance teaching and learning in the implementation of the new curriculum.

One of the respondents elaborated on the impact of these resources, stating, *"Geographical and Historical Atlas: Many schools have received or will receive a new geographical and historical atlas for their classrooms. These resources can be incredibly helpful for teachers, as they provide maps, charts and other visuals that can help students better understand important concepts in geography and history."* This testament showcases how resources like atlases serve as vital tools in enhancing the learning experience by visually representing key geographical and historical concepts.

Continuing on this theme, another respondent shed light on the significance of the funding provided for additional resources, noting, *"To ensure that all students have access to the same resources, schools were provided with funding to purchase additional classroom materials, such as globes, maps and the geographical and historical atlas for teachers. These resources will help teachers create a more immersive and engaging learning environment for their students."* This feedback emphasizes how equipping classrooms with adequate materials, supported by funding, contributes to creating a more equal and engaging learning environment, thus facilitating the new curriculum's successful implementation.

**Anticipated difficulties in the first year of implementation:** When implementing a new system or curriculum in an educational environment, there are often numerous challenges that may arise during the initial year. This topic explores potential difficulties, ranging from resistance to change, logistical issues, to resource allocation, which could be expected in the first year of implementing a new curriculum or program.

**Figure 4.9:** Anticipated Difficulties in the First Year of Implementation



As illustrated in Figure 4.9, during the first year of implementation, difficulties that may arise include "limited resource access," "language barriers," "cultural sensitivity," "resistance to change," "lack of student engagement," "alignment with national standards," "lack of monitoring/evaluation," "budget constraints," "assessment/evaluation challenges," "inadequate teacher training," and "capacity building needs." Addressing these challenges will be crucial for a successful implementation of the new curriculum.

One respondent highlighted this by saying, *"Lack of resources: Implementing a new curriculum can require significant investments in resources such as textbooks, materials and technology. In our country, where there may be limited resources available for education, schools and teachers may struggle to obtain the necessary resources to effectively implement the new social studies curriculum."* Additionally, budget constraints further exacerbate the situation as highlighted by the same respondent, *"Budget*

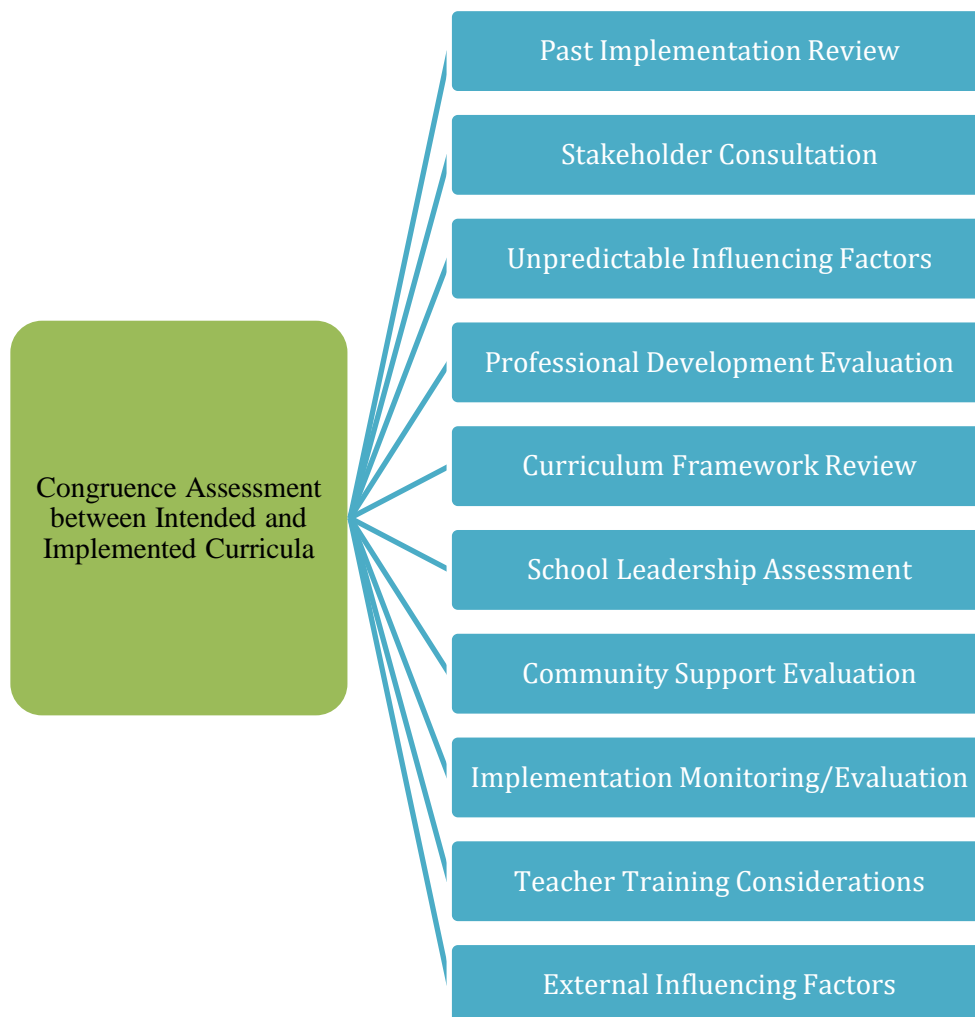


*constraints: There are budget constraints for purchasing new resources or providing professional development opportunities for teachers."*

Addressing the above challenges, another set of respondents presented their perspectives. One respondent mentioned, "*Cultural sensitivity: The curriculum may need to be sensitive to the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, which could require additional research and collaboration with local stakeholders.*" This highlights the need for the curriculum to be relevant and inclusive. Another respondent mentioned, "*Resistance to change: Teachers and administrators may be resistant to change, particularly if they are comfortable with the current curriculum or do not have the necessary support to implement a new one.*" This indicates the importance of adequate support for teachers during the transition. Additionally, maintaining student interest is crucial, as one respondent pointed out, "*Lack of student engagement: The new curriculum may not be engaging for students, particularly if it does not reflect their interests or experiences.*" It emphasizes the importance of aligning the curriculum with students' perspectives and experiences.

**Congruence between intended and implemented curricula:** The degree of congruence between intended and implemented curricula in Social Studies Curriculum Reform is an important factor in assessing the success of the reform. This raises the question of whether or not planners could predict the extent to which the actual delivered curriculum aligns with the intended design, a crucial consideration for accurate planning and effective implementation.

**Figure 4.10:** Congruence Assessment between Intended and Implemented Curricula



As indicated in Figure 4.10, predicting the degree of congruence between the intended and implemented curricula can be challenging due to factors such as "past implementation review," "stakeholder consultation," "unpredictable influencing factors," "professional development evaluation," "curriculum framework review," "school leadership assessment," "community support evaluation," "implementation monitoring/evaluation," "teacher training considerations," and "external influencing factors." These elements must be carefully considered to assess and ensure alignment between the intended and implemented curricula.

One respondent noted:

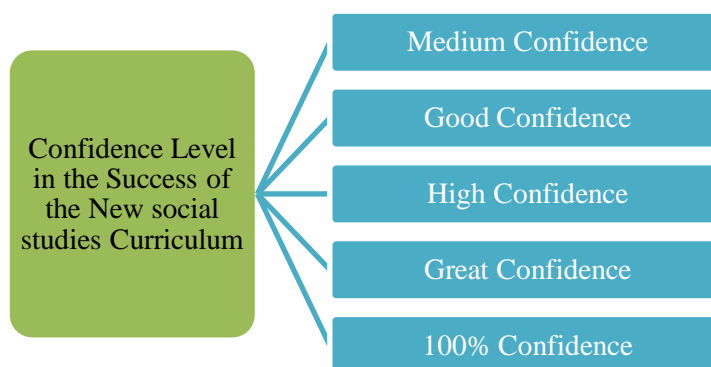
*"No, it's impossible to predict the degree of congruence between the intended and implemented curricula with certainty, as there are many factors that can influence this, such as teacher interpretation, resource availability and student engagement. However, we can use data from previous implementations of the curriculum to make an informed prediction about its degree of congruence in the current context. This can be interpreted as the emphasis on 'Past Implementation Review'. The mention of a 'monitoring and evaluation system' links directly to*

*'Implementation Monitoring/Evaluation', demonstrating how these factors can guide an informed yet not definitive prediction."*

Another respondent echoed this uncertainty, stating, *"No, it is impossible to predict the degree of congruence between the intended and implemented curricula with absolute certainty. There are many factors that can impact the implementation of a curriculum and it is difficult to predict how each of these factors will affect the degree of congruence."* This perspective acknowledges the complex interplay of factors like 'Teacher Training Considerations', 'External Influencing Factors' and shifts in 'School Leadership'. The respondent added, *"It is possible to make informed predictions based on factors such as teacher training, available resources and support from school administrators. Also because it is often influenced by factors outside of the curriculum planner's control, such as changes in school leadership or funding priorities."* This reinforces the point that despite rigorous 'Stakeholder Consultation' and 'Professional Development Evaluation', external factors can dramatically shape curriculum implementation.

**Stakeholders' confidence in the success of the new curriculum:** Evaluating the confidence level of planners in the successful implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum Reform is a key aspect of gauging its potential impact. This topic seeks to understand how assured the planners are that the newly designed curriculum will meet its intended objectives and be regarded as successful within the educational community.

**Figure 4.11:** Confidence Level in the Success of the New Curriculum



The level of confidence in the success of the new curriculum can vary, ranging from "medium confidence" to "good confidence," "high confidence," "great confidence," or "100% confidence," depending on various factors and assessments.

As presented in Figure 4.11, the level of confidence in the success of the new curriculum can vary, ranging from "medium confidence" to "good confidence," "high confidence," "great confidence," or "100% confidence," depending on various factors and assessments.

For instance, one respondent's perspective aligns with the notion of medium confidence, stating, *"The extent of confidence is medium because the initial observations made by the teachers regarding the new curriculum are not encouraging and indicate their limited scientific capabilities."* This statement reflects reservations about the teachers' abilities to effectively deliver the new curriculum, thus potentially impacting its success.



On the other hand, another respondent expressed greater confidence, stating, *"I have great confidence in the success of the new curriculum when teachers are properly trained to use it, along with modern teaching methods and how to effectively implement the daily plan developed within the new curriculum."* This viewpoint highlights the importance of effective teacher training and curriculum implementation strategies, reinforcing the belief that these elements are crucial to the success of the new curriculum.

## Discussions

Reforming the Social Studies curriculum is indeed a nuanced process and the factors behind Social Studies Curriculum Reform play a pivotal role in this transformation. The process necessitates the amalgamation of various influential elements, each offering unique contributions to the evolution of the educational landscape. The reform is often driven by a crucial need to align with evolving educational paradigms, reflective of the dynamic global knowledge economy. Respondents echo this sentiment by pointing out the inadequacy of the former curriculum in fulfilling the demands of the 21st century, an era marked by rapid technological developments and societal transformations. Simultaneously, the reform emphasizes the pivotal role of civic responsibility in education. This approach, resonant with John Dewey's philosophy, aims to shape active citizens capable of significantly contributing to democratic processes.

The reform also stresses the importance of addressing knowledge gaps and integrating fresh research findings to ensure the curriculum's relevance and comprehensiveness. It aligns with contemporary academic knowledge, a principle underscored by Westheimer's (2015) work emphasizing the importance of civic responsibility in nurturing democratic participation among learners. Additionally, the reform's response to socio-political realities highlights the curriculum's crucial role in reflecting societal changes, thereby instilling learners with profound social awareness and understanding. This concept aligns with the 21st-century emphasis on holistic education, promoting interdisciplinary learning and the integration of knowledge across diverse fields. The principles driving the reform mirror crucial tenets of contemporary education, including those proposed by renowned educational theorists like John Dewey and Paulo Freire. These principles accentuate the need for a curriculum capable of preparing students for a rapidly changing world, promoting civic responsibility and fostering lifelong learning.

Initiating the Social Studies curriculum reform is grounded in fundamental principles and the factors behind the Social Studies Curriculum Initiation highlight the importance of a modern, student-centered learning approach. Key factors, such as encouraging critical thinking, are vital as they foster independent inquiry and empower students to actively engage with the knowledge, echoing Paul & Elder's (2006) emphasis on critical thinking for knowledge engagement.

The impetus for implementing inclusive educational practices also plays a pivotal role in this initiation. It accentuates the need for a fair and inclusive learning environment, enabling students of diverse backgrounds to flourish, a sentiment that aligns with Schweisfurth's (2013) call for pedagogical shifts towards inclusivity and diversity. The application of evidence-based educational practices aligns the design of the curriculum with empirical research findings, ensuring effective teaching strategies. This mirrors Phillips' (1995) assertions on the value of constructivist perspectives in contemporary



education, suggesting a link to empirically supported models like Constructivist Learning Theory and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.

Further enriching the curriculum through enhancing critical awareness and fostering interdisciplinary, inquiry-based learning allows learners to explore connections across different subjects and engage critically with societal and political issues. All these factors contribute to the initiation of the reform, inherently aligning with the educational philosophy of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes student-centered learning, critical thinking and inclusivity. Such alignment finds resonance with theories like Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, underscoring the importance of social interaction in cognitive development and grounding the reform in a sound scientific context.

The theories underpinning the curriculum reform and the theoretical basis and perceived needs of students or society lend substantial credibility to the initiative. The Constructivist Learning Theory primarily guides the reform, emphasizing the importance of student-centered learning, wherein students actively engage with their learning experiences to construct knowledge. This alignment with a well-established educational theory underscores the significance of grounding educational reforms in empirically supported models, ensuring the reform is based on reliable, tested principles.

The incorporation of the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory demonstrates the curriculum's acknowledgment of societal needs for equity, diversity and inclusion. It signifies an understanding of the impact cultural and historical contexts have on learning, thus emphasizing the need to address systemic social injustices through curriculum design. This perspective aligns with the principles of social constructivism and underscores the view that learning is an active, ongoing process, shaped significantly by learners' interactions with their environment.

The exploration of references from overseas curricula presents a unique opportunity to gain insights into diverse educational landscapes and exploring references from overseas curricula thereby enriches the curriculum development process. It fosters the interplay between local and global perspectives, facilitating the creation of a comprehensive curriculum that appreciates regional interconnectedness while remaining cognizant of domestic realities. Nonetheless, the extent to which overseas curricula should influence the reform is a subject of debate, with diverging viewpoints underscoring the complexity and subjectivity inherent in curriculum development.

A comparative perspective offered through the exploration of overseas curricula can shed light on various approaches to Social Studies education. This process, which includes drawing references from external sources such as the UAE and Egypt curricula, can expose different educational philosophies and practices. Even while maintaining a domestic focus, the curriculum can leverage these global educational trends and strategies to enhance its relevance and comprehensiveness. This perspective aligns with the insights from Priestley & Biesta (2013), who suggested that external curricula examination could significantly enrich the curriculum development process. However, they also noted that the degree of influence from overseas curricula could be both subjective and complex.

The development of a curriculum is a multifaceted endeavor often characterized by a plethora of challenges and when considering the problems encountered in the developmental process, we find that these range from logistical difficulties to more intricate conceptual problems. These challenges manifest particularly within the context of social studies curriculum development, with obstacles including financial constraints,





inadequate project timelines and a shortage of necessary supplies. The hurdles, graphically represented, pose substantial impediments to the curriculum's development, impacting its evolution and final design. Respondents have highlighted time constraints and supply shortages as prevalent issues, resonating with common problems experienced in project management and resource allocation. This accentuates the need for robust planning and resource management strategies to facilitate smooth execution of curriculum reform endeavors.

In addition to logistical challenges, respondents underscored the complexities associated with addressing sensitive topics, pointing towards broader challenges in social studies education. Curriculum developers must navigate intricate historical, societal and cultural dynamics to establish a comprehensive, balanced and inclusive curriculum. These challenges, ranging from logistical obstacles to sophisticated ones like sensitive topics and managing curriculum scale, underline the inherent complexities of educational reform and the criticality of thorough planning, collaboration and efficient resource management. Addressing these issues may necessitate innovative solutions, extensive stakeholder engagement and a flexible approach adaptable to shifting circumstances and unforeseen obstacles. This viewpoint is consistent with Odden & Picus's (2008) emphasis on the requirement of innovative solutions, collaboration and adaptability, underscoring these elements' importance in the scientific context of curriculum development.

The newly reformed social studies curriculum, as outlined by respondents, integrates numerous distinguishing features and when analyzing the distinctive features of the new curriculum compared to the old one, we observe that it stands distinct from the preceding model. These features include updated maps and statistics, a heightened focus on global contributions, new classroom activities, a revised information scale, increased emphasis on student-centric instruction, restructured presentation methods, a transformed scientific approach, enhanced visual elements and a modern curriculum design. The incorporation of fresh classroom activities, student-focused pedagogy and an adapted information scale signifies a shift towards a more interactive, engaging and learner-centric educational experience.

Moreover, the commitment to providing learners with a comprehensive, diverse and relevant knowledge base is evident through the inclusion of updated resources and a greater emphasis on international perspectives. The curriculum aims to foster a holistic understanding of the world, aligning with evolving 21st-century educational trends. The updated presentation methods and augmented visual elements enhance the curriculum's accessibility, making it more appealing and navigable for learners.

The unique attributes of this updated curriculum mirror the shifting priorities of modern education. The inclusion of current resources, an emphasis on global perspectives and a contemporary curriculum design all underline a commitment to equipping students with a contemporary, varied and comprehensive learning experience. Pedagogical strategies that prioritize student engagement, active learning and the integration of new classroom activities underscore the shift towards a more dynamic and interactive educational approach. This progression resonates with Zhao's (2018) emphasis on contemporary educational approaches that prioritize student engagement and up-to-date resources, particularly within the scientific context. This aligns with the overarching goal to prepare learners to navigate and contribute to a rapidly evolving world effectively.



Several factors influence the implementation of the curriculum in pilot schools and delving into the factors influencing pilot school implementation, we find that these include immediate access to the curriculum, time constraints, confidence in the curriculum quality, budgetary constraints and concerns over educational disparities. As visually represented, these factors play a crucial role in shaping the rollout and eventual adoption of the new curriculum in pilot schools. Respondents revealed that time constraints significantly influenced the decision not to conduct a pilot program, highlighting the pressing need to introduce the new curriculum expeditiously. In addition to this, budgetary constraints were another critical consideration that emphasized the financial implications associated with initiating a pilot program.

On the other hand, the necessity for confidence in the curriculum's quality became apparent to justify the associated costs. The factors impacting the pilot school implementation elucidate the complexities of deploying a new curriculum. Striking a balance between time constraints, financial resources and the desire for immediate curriculum access presents a substantial challenge. These challenges underline the importance of effective project management, strategic resource allocation and robust support mechanisms in the implementation process.

The successful introduction of a new curriculum necessitates careful planning, stakeholder collaboration and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. These facets influencing pilot school implementation, such as time constraints, budgetary constraints and the desire for immediate curriculum access, echo Remillard's (2005) discourse on the challenges encountered in the rollout of new curriculum. Concurrently, the training strategies employed for school facilitation, including ongoing support and leveraging existing expertise, align with the best practices suggested by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017) for efficient professional development within the scientific context. This underscores the importance of effective professional development in facilitating the smooth implementation of curriculum reform.

The training provided for schools to facilitate the new curriculum's implementation forms a critical aspect of the reform process and when we delve into the training provided for schools to facilitate implementation, we see that this training encompassed a variety of measures. These measures include ensuring equal access to resources, offering an intuitive, user-friendly curriculum, leveraging existing expertise, emphasizing ongoing support, promoting teacher-driven curriculum design and ensuring a seamless curriculum transition. The respondents underscored the significance of capitalizing on existing best practices and extending ongoing support, reflecting a clear understanding of the teachers' current competencies and the importance of sustained assistance throughout the transition.

Such training strategies showcase a recognition of teachers' existing expertise and the essentiality of continual support. This approach indicates a departure from conventional top-down training methodologies, veering towards a more cooperative and supportive model. This model acknowledges teachers' capabilities and prioritizes continuous professional development. Additionally, the emphasis on providing equal resource access, an intuitive curriculum and promoting teacher-driven design illuminates the importance of creating a conducive and engaging learning environment for both teachers and students.



These strategies are instrumental in ensuring a smooth transition, facilitating effective curriculum implementation and enhancing the overall success of the curriculum reform. The aim is to equip teachers with the necessary resources and skills to confidently navigate the new curriculum, while also cultivating an environment that fosters continuous learning and professional growth. This ultimately enhances the curriculum's effectiveness and its ability to fulfill its educational objectives.

To ensure effective integration of the new social studies curriculum, schools have been provided or are planned to receive additional resources and when we consider the additional resources provided for schools, we find that these resources, including geographical and historical atlases, teacher guides and workbooks, funding for additional resources, professional development workshops, updated textbooks and workbooks and classroom material funding, are critical tools to support educators and enhance the student learning experience. As respondents indicated, geographical and historical atlases play a significant role in visually illustrating key concepts and providing an engaging learning tool. Allocated funding for resources facilitates the acquisition of classroom materials, fostering a rich, immersive educational environment.

This provision underscores the recognition of the multifaceted nature of curriculum implementation. Classroom materials like atlases visually enhance the teaching process and make concepts more tangible for students, enriching the learning experience. Similarly, resources like teacher guides and workbooks provide invaluable support for educators, aiding their understanding and delivery of the new curriculum. However, it's essential to note that mere provision of resources may not automatically translate into effective usage. Schools and educators must be adequately trained on how to best utilize these resources to enhance the teaching-learning process.

This discussion reiterates the importance of comprehensive teacher training and continuous professional development in ensuring successful curriculum implementation. A significant part of this is equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to effectively use the resources provided to them. These practices align with the resource provision strategies highlighted by Erden (1998). This process, which includes providing resources, training teachers and continual professional development, ultimately contributes to creating a rich and supportive educational environment conducive to effective learning.

The first year of implementing a new curriculum often brings numerous challenges and delving into the anticipated difficulties in the first year of implementation reveals that among those expected during the first year of the social studies curriculum are limited resource access, language barriers, cultural sensitivity, resistance to change, lack of student engagement, alignment with national standards, lack of monitoring/evaluation, budget constraints, assessment/evaluation challenges, inadequate teacher training and capacity building needs. Respondents highlighted a range of challenges, including resource limitations, budget constraints, cultural sensitivity and resistance to change. These challenges illuminate the intricacies of curriculum implementation and emphasize the necessity for robust planning, continuous support and flexible adaptation strategies.

Anticipating these potential challenges is crucial for effective planning and problem-solving. Resource limitations, budget constraints, cultural sensitivity and resistance to change underscore the need for strategic planning, collaborative decision-making and continuous support throughout the transition phase. This approach aligns with



Fullan's (2007) findings on effective change management in education. While these challenges underscore the complexities of implementing a new curriculum, they also offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers.

By understanding potential difficulties, stakeholders can develop targeted strategies and interventions to navigate these obstacles, ensuring a smoother and more successful curriculum implementation. Challenges such as assessment and evaluation, inadequate teacher training and capacity building needs underscore the importance of continuous professional development, monitoring and evaluation systems. This way, schools can ensure that they are meeting their educational objectives and continue to enhance their curriculum implementation practices over time.

Predicting the degree of congruence between the intended and implemented curricula can be challenging due to a variety of factors and when we consider the congruence between intended and implemented curricula, we find that these factors include past implementation reviews, stakeholder consultations, unpredictable influencing factors, professional development evaluations, curriculum framework reviews, school leadership assessments, community support evaluations, implementation monitoring/evaluation, teacher training considerations and external influencing factors. As respondents highlighted, the task of predicting this congruence can be fraught with uncertainty, largely due to the dynamic nature of educational environments and the myriad factors that can influence curriculum implementation. Nonetheless, informed predictions can be made by leveraging data from past implementations, conducting thorough evaluations and closely monitoring implementation processes.

The uncertainties discussed by Priestley & Biesta (2013) about predicting implementation outcomes align with the findings here. The level of congruence between the intended and implemented curriculum serves as a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of curriculum development and implementation processes. Although it can be challenging to predict this level of congruence with certainty, using data from previous implementations, thorough evaluations and implementation monitoring can help in making informed predictions. Confidence in the success of the new curriculum is influenced by assessments of its design, implementation strategies and responses from the educational community. These factors highlight the importance of communication, collaboration and alignment among curriculum developers, educators, school leaders and other stakeholders. Ensuring that all parties share a common understanding of the curriculum's intentions can help reduce potential discrepancies between the intended and implemented curriculum, thus fostering a more successful implementation process.

Stakeholders' confidence in the success of the new curriculum can significantly vary, with levels ranging from medium to full confidence. When we delve into stakeholders' confidence in the success of the new curriculum, we understand that the confidence level is influenced by a plethora of factors, such as assessments of the curriculum's design, the effectiveness of implementation strategies and responses from the educational community. As indicated by respondents, factors including teacher competencies, training and adoption of modern teaching methods have a significant influence on confidence in the curriculum's success. These insights underscore the crucial role of equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, providing effective training and implementing supportive teaching strategies in enhancing confidence in the successful implementation of the new curriculum.



Zhao's (2018) assertion that stakeholder confidence plays a critical role in the successful implementation of new educational initiatives resonates with these findings. The level of confidence that stakeholders hold in the success of the new curriculum reflects their assessment of its quality, relevance and applicability. Perceptions of the curriculum's design, the effectiveness of teacher training and the feasibility of implementation strategies are among the factors affecting this confidence level. Despite variations in confidence levels, there is a shared optimism about the potential success of the curriculum. This optimism, when combined with a commitment to addressing potential challenges, forms a crucial foundation for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. It further emphasizes the value of comprehensive teacher training, continuous support and regular evaluation in building confidence and ensuring the curriculum's success.

The results presented here provide a multifaceted exploration into the dynamics of social studies curriculum reform, echoing certain findings from Lee's 2003 research. Both studies underscore the intricate nature of curriculum reform, emphasizing the need for comprehensive teacher training, continuous support and the value of stakeholder collaboration. Challenges like resource limitations, resistance to change and cultural sensitivity emerge as recurrent themes in both research pieces. However, while this study delves deeper into the nuances of 21st-century education trends, focusing on student engagement, modern educational approaches and the integration of global perspectives, Lee's 2003 research offers a more general perspective on curriculum reform challenges and strategies. The emphasis on stakeholder confidence and the alignment between intended and implemented curricula in the present study provide additional layers of understanding, drawing a more complex picture of the curriculum reform landscape than the one painted by Lee in 2003.

### **Recommendations:**

- A curriculum should be developed through a collaborative process, involving a diverse range of stakeholders such as educators, students, parents and domain experts. This approach ensures a curriculum that is balanced, inclusive and adaptable to the diverse needs of the community.
- Educators should receive continuous training and professional development opportunities to equip them with the latest skills, methodologies and resources pertinent to the evolving curriculum. Regularly updating these training programs will ensure educators are prepared to facilitate optimal learning outcomes.
- Establish mechanisms to gather regular feedback from educators, students and other stakeholders about the curriculum's effectiveness. This feedback can identify areas that may require refinement or adjustment to better serve educational goals.
- Schools and educational institutions should be adequately equipped with the requisite resources, from updated textbooks to innovative digital platforms, to ensure the seamless delivery of the new curriculum. This includes providing the necessary infrastructure, technological support and training.
- Before implementing wide-reaching curricular changes, test the new curriculum in a phased manner, starting with pilot schools or select regions. Analyzing results



from these initial implementations can identify potential pitfalls and allow for refinements before a broader rollout.

- The content, methodologies and delivery modes of the curriculum should cater to the diverse needs, backgrounds and abilities of all students, ensuring every student feels represented and valued in their educational journey.
- Integrate digital tools and methodologies into the curriculum to prepare students for the intricacies of the digital age. This ensures they have the skills and knowledge to thrive in a technologically-driven future.
- While grounding students in their local histories and contexts, also expose them to global events, cultures and perspectives. This approach fosters a comprehensive worldview, preparing students to be both local and global citizens.
- Establish clear and measurable evaluation metrics to ascertain the efficacy of the curriculum. These metrics, whether assessing academic performance or stakeholder satisfaction, offer insights into the curriculum's strengths and areas of potential improvement.
- Keep a pulse on emerging trends, technologies and global developments to ensure that the curriculum remains agile, relevant and adaptable to the ever-evolving landscape of education.

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