

The Role of Collaborative Principles in Curriculum Development for Improving Educational Quality at St. Gabriel Foundation Catholic Schools

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ABSTRACT

The principle of collaboration is one of the important principles in curriculum for developing a contextually relevant curriculum that meets student needs. However, in its implementation, it faces various challenges such as as weak coordination and a limited understanding of stakeholder inclusion, especially foundations, parents, students, and the community, resulting in a process dominated by internal school personnel such as the principal, teachers, and school committee. This has an impact on diminishing stakeholders' sense of ownership over the school's educational curriculum. This literature study analyses the role of the collaborative principle in curriculum development through a systematic analysis of articles (2020–2024) from the SINTA, Scopus, Google Scholar databases and theoretical literature and policy documents. The data collected and identified relates to the collaborative principle in curriculum development, factors that support and hinder implementation, and collaboration that affects quality in educational units. The results show that that a deeply understood collaborative principle is a vital mechanism for improving educational quality at multiple levels within the St. Gabriel Maumere Foundation. A deep understanding of the collaborative principles discussed in this article is expected to be key for curriculum developers at St. Gabriel Foundation Educational Units in building focused and accountable cooperation with stakeholders, thereby improving overall education quality.

Keywords: *Catholic schools, collaborative principles, curriculum development, educational quality St. Gabriel Foundation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education is a top priority for every educational institution, including Catholic schools under the St. Gabriel Maumere Foundation. In this era of scientific and technological development and 21st-century competency requirements, schools are required to provide a curriculum that is relevant, adaptive and contextual to the needs of students and the dynamics of society. A number of studies show that the development of a quality curriculum must be responsive to social and technological changes (Setiadi, 2023; Al-Salmani, 2022).

The curriculum development process is not only technical and administrative in nature, but is also a social process that requires the participation of various stakeholders. This is confirmed by Rizqi and Abidin (2021), who state that a curriculum will be effective if it is developed through the participation of various educational actors. Thus, a comprehensive and effective curriculum document is born from balanced and dialogical collaboration (Ghavifekr, 2020). In this context, the principle of collaboration

becomes one of the fundamental principles in curriculum development. Collaboration enables schools to gather the perspectives, needs and aspirations of all stakeholders, including educators, school principals, foundations, students, parents and the community. Halili et al. (2021) emphasise that the involvement of multi-level stakeholders increases the relevance and acceptability of the curriculum.

However, the reality in several schools within the St. Gabriel Foundation shows that collaborative practices are not yet optimal. Curriculum development is still dominated by internal school elements, particularly the head teacher and teachers. A similar phenomenon was also found by Nastiti (2021), who identified that private schools often face a lack of participation from foundations and parents in the curriculum planning process. The lack of involvement of other stakeholders results in a curriculum that does not reflect the real needs of the school community and a low sense of ownership of the curriculum implementation, as also noted by Susanto (2023).

The challenges that arise include weak coordination, limited understanding of the role of collaboration, irregular communication mechanisms, and the absence of a systematic and sustainable collaborative model. These obstacles are in line with the findings of Yuliani (2020) and Fathurrohman (2022), who mentioned that the implementation of collaborative principles is often hampered by miscommunication, unbalanced roles, and a top-down culture. This situation has the potential to reduce the overall quality of education, because a good curriculum can only be developed through a participatory, inclusive and accountable process (Hikmah, 2023).

Theoretically, the collaborative principle in curriculum development emphasises the active involvement of all stakeholders in education. The collaborative approach encompasses a process of dialogue, negotiation and joint decision-making to develop curriculum documents that are appropriate to the context and needs of the school. This view is in line with modern curriculum development theory, which positions schools as synergistic learning communities (Morrison, 2024).

From an educational management perspective, collaboration is one of the factors that contributes significantly to improving the quality of education. Li and Chen (2021) assert that collaborative leadership can strengthen commitment to curriculum implementation and encourage learning innovation. Meanwhile, an OECD study (2022) shows that partnerships between schools and parents are important predictors of the quality of the learning process.

In the context of Catholic schools, the principle of collaboration is in line with the Catholic educational vision that emphasises community participation, respect for human dignity and cooperation for the common good (*Bonum Comune/Common good*). Kurian (2021) and Boeve (2023) emphasise that modern Catholic education can only thrive in strong community relationships through dialogue between educators, foundations, families and society. In Catholic schools under religious orders, including SSpS,

collaboration with the foundation is essential to maintain consistency in educational values and spirituality (FSPSS Education Study, 2022).

However, a number of literature (2020-2024) identifies common obstacles in the implementation of collaboration, such as differences in perception between parties (Alverz, 2021), imbalance of roles (Hapsari, 2022) and weak communication and coordination capacity between institutions (Florensia, 2023). Therefore, a systematic review is needed to understand how the principles of collaboration can be effectively applied in curriculum development at both the foundation and educational unit levels.

This analytical approach was adopted in this study to provide strategic recommendations for the St. Gabriel Maumere Foundation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a descriptive quantitative approach with a literature review method. Data collection involved various information and references, including journal articles and several other teaching materials (Rijal Fadli, 2021). Data was collected systematically through databases from Sinta, Google Scholar, and Scopus. The search strategy was carried out using specific keywords: collaborative principles, curriculum development, and education quality. From the search results, 24 journal articles and 5 relevant reference books were selected based on the inclusion criteria, namely scientific works published between 2020 and 2024. The collected data were analysed using content analysis and thematic analysis techniques. The analysis stages included 1. Identification and categorisation: data collected based on main categories: definition of collaborative principles, supporting factors, and implementation barriers. 2. Synthesis of findings: linking modern collaboration theory with specific Catholic school values such as spirituality and *bonum commune* (common good). 3. Contextual analysis: the results of the literature synthesis were used to formulate recommendations for accountable and targeted curriculum development strategies for educational units under the auspices of the St. Gabriel Foundation. Based on the results of brief interviews with the heads of educational units under St. Gabriel, the collaborative principle was not being implemented. The development of educational units is dominated solely by internal units. Therefore, this paper aims to show that the principle of collaboration is an important principle whose meaning needs to be explored and which can be used as a means of improving the quality of multilevel education at the St. Gabriel Maumere Foundation. A deep understanding of the collaborative principle examined in this article is expected to be the key for curriculum developers in the Educational Unit at the St. Gabriel Foundation to build focused and accountable cooperation with stakeholders. In other words, the quality of education will improve if the collaborative principle is developed in curriculum development in the Educational Unit at the St. Gabriel Foundation.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Collaborative Principle

The collaborative principle is understood as the principle of cooperation between various parties in the entire process of curriculum planning, development and evaluation. Print (1993) emphasises that curriculum development must involve various stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, committees, foundations and the community, so that the curriculum is more relevant and can be implemented effectively. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2018), the collaborative principle is defined as a process of joint curriculum decision-making rather than top-down decision-making. This means that a good curriculum is born from a dialogical and collaborative process between decision-makers, especially between teachers as the main implementers and school management. According to Fullan (2007), the collaborative principle is understood as collective cooperation in managing educational change, including curriculum change. This means that curriculum change will be successful if there is professional collaboration between teachers, head teachers and external parties. Haile, T. M and Mekonnen, E. A (2024) define the collaborative principle as the active involvement of stakeholders in curriculum implementation and that this involvement has a significant impact on the effectiveness of implementation.

The collaborative principle emphasises the involvement of multi-level stakeholders at every stage of curriculum development. Halili et al. (2021) assert that systematic stakeholder involvement can increase the relevance, acceptability and sustainability of the curriculum. Curricula that are not developed participatively tend to be unsuited to the real needs of learners and the social context of schools. An analysis of academic literature (2020-2024) in this study shows that the collaborative principle is not merely a technical instrument, but rather an 'educational social contract' that guarantees curriculum accountability. Based on data synthesis, there are three unique contributions that highlight the urgency of this study:

1. Transformation of the teacher's role (from implementer to architect): This analysis found that effective collaboration changes the position of teachers from mere implementers of technical curricula to architects of curricula that are responsive to changing times. Without this principle, teachers lose their professional autonomy, which has an impact on the low quality of learning in the classroom.
2. Multilevel synergy as risk mitigation: The unique contribution of this research lies in identifying that multilevel collaboration (Foundation – School – Community) functions as a mitigation system against a rigid curriculum. Through dialogue between parties, schools are able to dynamically revise the curriculum according to emergency situations or the urgent needs of students without having to wait for instructions from the centre.

3. Spiritual-collaborative dimension (unique to the St. Gabriel Foundation): Unlike general literature, this study found that for schools under the auspices of the St. Gabriel Foundation, the principle of collaboration is a manifestation of the value of *bonum commune* (common good). This finding makes a unique contribution in that collaboration in the context of Catholic schools has a spiritual dimension that strengthens the character of students, rather than merely pursuing administrative academic standards.

Thus, academic literature emphasises that the principle of collaboration is an essential component in producing an adaptive, contextual and quality-oriented curriculum. Therefore, it can be concluded that the collaborative principle is very important in curriculum development. The collaborative principle is defined as cooperation between various parties in planning, applying and evaluating the curriculum in each educational unit, including revising the curriculum in accordance with the situation or conditions and needs of the students.

3.2. Collaboration as a core principle in curriculum development

Social, technological and 21st century competency changes demand a curriculum that is more flexible, adaptive and relevant to the needs of students. The modern curriculum is no longer content-oriented, but must be able to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and digital literacy competencies (Triling and Fadel, 2020). Setiadi's (2023) research confirms that the development of a technology-responsive curriculum has a significant contribution to improving the quality of learning in schools. Similar findings were presented by Al-Salmani (2022), who stated that schools that carry out curriculum reforms based on community needs and global developments tend to have better academic performance. Contemporary literature views curriculum development not merely as a technical activity, but as a social-collaborative process. Rizqi and Abidin (2021), in a grounded research-based study, state that an effective curriculum must be developed through dialogue and participation of various stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, foundation managers, parents, and the community. This is reinforced by Ghavifekr (2020), who found that collaboration between parties in curriculum development increases a sense of ownership and facilitates the implementation of curriculum policies in schools. In the Indonesian context, community involvement in curriculum development is a regulatory mandate through the School-Based Management (SBM) policy, which has been confirmed by various studies that stakeholder participation strengthens the effectiveness of curriculum implementation (Widyastono, 2021).

Thus, collaboration is a prerequisite for the designed curriculum to be able to respond to the demands of the 21st century in a relevant and contextual manner or to meet the needs of the community or students. Curriculum development is a social

process, not merely a technical one. An effective curriculum must be developed through dialogue between stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, foundations, parents and the community. Curriculum changes based on community needs can improve the quality of learning and academic achievement. In Indonesia, this approach is in line with the School-Based Management policy, which requires community participation in curriculum formulation.

In Nastiti's (2021) research, it was found that private schools still face challenges in the form of suboptimal involvement from foundations and parents. The imbalance of roles between teachers, principals and other stakeholders is an obstacle to producing an inclusive curriculum. Susanto's (2023) study shows that a lack of collaboration often results in low. From a Catholic education perspective, collaboration is understood as an integral part of spirituality and educational vision. Kurian (2021) emphasises that modern Catholic schools can only grow in mutually supportive, dialogical, and cooperative community relationships for the sake of *bonum commune* (the common good). Boeve (2023) states that Catholic education in the 21st century requires the active involvement of families, communities, and church institutions in order to maintain the relevance of faith, moral, and humanitarian values. The FSPSS Education study (2022) highlights that in Catholic schools managed by religious orders, including the SSPS, a collaborative relationship between the school and the foundation is the foundation for ensuring spirituality, character and education.

Contemporary literature from 2020 to 2024 consistently shifts the paradigm of curriculum development from merely a 'technical document' to a 'social-collaborative process.' However, an in-depth analysis of this point reveals several crucial findings that go beyond mere school management theory:

1. Synthesis of the relevance of convergence between the demands of 21st-century skills according to Trilling and Fadel (2020) and school-based management (SBM) policies in Indonesia. The contribution that emerges here is that collaboration is no longer merely a managerial option, but rather an existential necessity. While Setiadi (2023) and Al-Salmani (2022) emphasise technology and academic performance, this analysis expands on this by arguing that for schools under the St. Gabriel Foundation, collaboration is a tool for contextualising the curriculum. In other words, collaboration is how schools translate national standards into the real needs of the Maumere community.
2. Sense of ownership as a catalyst for implementation. Comparing Ghavifekr's (2020) findings on ownership with the challenges portrayed by Nastiti (2021), this study identifies that the main obstacle in private schools is often not the curriculum design, but organisational psychology. The unique contribution of this discussion highlights that when the St. Gabriel Foundation involves parents and the community not as administrative complements, but as dialogical partners,

resistance to curriculum change will decrease dramatically. This positions collaboration as a risk mitigation strategy against the failure of new curriculum policy implementation.

3. Differentiation of collaboration in Catholic educational spirituality. Unlike general studies that focus on the technical efficiency of findings in the context of the St. Gabriel Foundation's Educational Units, general literature views collaboration as a means of system efficiency. At the St. Gabriel Foundation's educational units, collaboration is based on the foundation of communal spirituality.
 - Comparison: While Boeve (2023) emphasises the relevance of faith values, this analysis finds that in SSpS schools (St. Gabriel Foundation), the collaborative relationship between schools and foundations is a form of 'pastoral care'.
 - Unique contribution: the contribution here is not merely a division of tasks, but the realisation of bonum commune (common good). This finding confirms that the success of the curriculum at the St. Gabriel Foundation is not only measured by academic scores (as in Al-Salmani's study), but also by the extent to which faith and moral values are reflected in the synergy between stakeholders.

Based on the above comparison, this analysis concludes that for the St. Gabriel Maumere Foundation, strengthening collaborative practices must go beyond formal mechanisms (meetings/SOP). There must be a transition from administrative collaboration to transformative collaboration, where parents, foundations and the community are involved in defining the quality that the school wants to achieve.

3.3. Barriers to Collaboration in Curriculum Development

Although collaboration is theoretically regarded as a prerequisite for data quality, the literature indicates a wide gap in its implementation. Analysis of these obstacles has yielded the following critical findings:

1. Cognitive conflict and fragmentation of expectations

Alvazer (2021) found that conflicts in perception between school administrators, teachers and parents were a major challenge in curriculum planning. Comparing Alvares' findings with the context of the St. Gabriel Foundation, the first obstacle was not merely technical but rather cognitive. The difference in perception between administrators (who often focus on efficiency) and teachers (who often focus on workload) creates a 'psychological wall'. This study found that if these differences in perception are not bridged through initial dialogue, collaboration will only become an administrative formality without any deeper meaning (pseudo-collaboration). The unique contribution of this point is the need to align the Catholic spiritual vision as a meeting point to unite these differences in expectations.

2. Top-down structural hegemony and the crisis of autonomy.

Haspari (2022) explains that the top-down curriculum planning model limits the participation of teachers and parents. According to him, this imbalance of roles shows that the top-down model is still a chronic 'disease' in education management. This analysis emphasises that the limited space for participation for parents, foundations and the community is not caused by their reluctance, but by the school's bureaucratic structure, which tends to be closed. At St. Gabriel Foundation, the unique contribution of this finding is that the transition to a collaborative curriculum requires humility on the part of school leaders to share authority with other stakeholders.

3. Communication Malfunction: between technology and formal mechanisms.

Florensia (2023) highlights the lack of clarity in inter-institutional communication mechanisms as the cause of weak implementation of collaborative curriculum policies. However, the analysis in this article goes beyond these findings by highlighting that in the digital age, communication barriers are no longer a matter of a lack of tools (such as mobile phones or WhatsApp), but rather a lack of formal communication protocols. The author's analysis found that many institutions consider informal communication to be sufficient without formal mechanisms, resulting in the distortion of curriculum information. This finding highlights that the effectiveness of collaboration at the St. Gabriel Foundation is highly dependent on the formalisation of communication flows so that every curriculum decision can be accounted for (accountable).

4. The Urgency of Standardisation through SOPs (Institutional needs)

Many schools do not yet have clear SOPs or collaboration guidelines for curriculum development (Yuliani, 2020). In line with Yuliani's observation regarding the absence of a systematic model, this study found that without SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), collaboration will always be incidental (occurring only when there is a project or a change in the national curriculum). The collaboration proposed in this discussion is the need for a 'St. Gabriel Foundation collaboration model' as a technical guideline that integrates national academic standards with the distinctive values of the Foundation. This will transform the obstacle of 'no model' into an opportunity to create a strong and unique curriculum identity.

Overall, analysis of the various obstacles above shows that the constraints faced by schools in the St. Gabriel Foundation are a reflection of systemic challenges in private education in Indonesia. However, by identifying that these obstacles are rooted in communication, roles and procedures, the Foundation has the opportunity to carry out targeted interventions. This article's unique contribution emphasises that the solution to these obstacles is not simply a matter of increasing the budget, but rather of changing the organisational culture to be more inclusive and collaborative.

The author has created a table to make it easier for readers to understand the comparison between common obstacles in the literature and the empirical conditions at the St. Gabriel Foundation.

Table 1. Comparison Between Common Obstacles and The Empirical Conditions

Literature Review (2020–2024)	Empirical Conditions of the St. Gabriel Foundation	Synthesis Analysis
Perception Conflict: Differences in expectations between schools and parents (Alvarez, 2021).	The dominance of internal elements (principals and teachers) in curriculum development.	There is a disregard for external perspectives, which risks reducing stakeholders' sense of ownership.
Role Inequality: A top-down model that limits participation (Hapsari, 2022).	Lack of systematic active involvement of the Foundation in technical curriculum development.	The collaboration model is still coordinative in nature, not yet reaching the stage of substantive-professional collaboration.
Communication Weaknesses: Lack of clear SOPs or collaboration guidelines (Yuliani, 2020; Florensia, 2023)	The absence of a systematic and sustainable collaborative model.	The absence of formal guidelines meant that collaboration only occurred incidentally.

3.4 Factors Supporting the Implementation of Collaboration in Curriculum Development

From an educational management perspective, collaboration is seen as one of the factors that contributes significantly to improving the quality of education. According to Li and Chen (2021), collaborative leadership strengthens teachers' commitment to curriculum implementation, enhances learning innovation, and encourages a collective work culture. The unique contribution of this discussion is the affirmation that St. Gabriel Foundation's participatory leadership must be able to transcend traditional hierarchies. When school leaders open up space for dialogue, this not only increases teachers' technical commitment, but also creates psychological security for teachers to experiment with more creative curriculum content. This changes the face of leadership from instructor to facilitator of collective growth.

Meanwhile, the OECD report (2022) and the study by Erfiana et al. highlight the importance of partnerships with parents, showing that school partnerships with parents, among others, are strong predictors of the quality of the learning process, the effectiveness of curriculum interventions, and student academic success. Collaboratively developed curricula are easier to implement consistently and have a positive impact on school culture and learning outcomes. Furthermore, in the study 'School strategies in building collaborative partnerships with stakeholders' by Erfiana, Fradito and Yetri, it was found that the use of parenting programmes, two-way communication (e.g. via WhatsApp) and skills training are important for creating

partnerships with parents. This analysis provides a new perspective that the use of digital platforms (such as WhatsApp) and parenting programmes or parent classes are not merely a means of information but a tool for curriculum democratisation. The contribution of this research unit emphasises that for the St. Gabriel Foundation, parental involvement helps ensure that the curriculum not only pursues academic targets but is also in line with character education at home. This makes the curriculum a 'bridge' that connects family values with school education standards.

Based on research by Rohid Refaldo Syah Putra, it is evident that the transformation of school management towards a collaborative model fosters a culture of organisational participation, collaborative leadership, open communication, and continuous training and evaluation. This discussion reinforces the argument that the formation of a **multilevel curriculum team** (comprising elements from the Foundation and Education Unit) is the most crucial supporting factor. Its unique contribution lies in the idea of a '**Continuous Evaluation Cycle**.' With a formal curriculum revision team, revisions no longer have to wait for the end of the school year but are carried out dynamically based on field data. This gives the St. Gabriel Foundation the flexibility to remain responsive to local challenges in the NTT region.

Although the literature mentions digital platforms in general, this analysis points to the unique contribution of technology as '**organisational memory**'. The use of digital platforms in the collaborative curriculum development of the St. Gabriel Foundation to document every dialogue process ensures the continuity of knowledge, so that even if there is a change in leadership or teachers, the 'spirit' of collaboration in the curriculum is not lost.

Overall, these supporting factors are interlocked. Participatory leadership provides space, collaborative teams provide structure, and communication platforms provide the means. This article's unique contribution concludes that for the St. Gabriel Foundation, these factors must be integrated into a **formal participatory strategy**. Thus, collaboration is no longer considered an additional burden, but rather a daily working mechanism that automatically improves quality and relevance to education on an ongoing basis.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that the principle of collaboration is crucial in curriculum development because the involvement of various stakeholders can produce a curriculum that is more relevant, contextual and adaptive to local needs and the needs of students. The systematic involvement of stakeholders has a positive impact on curriculum management and school effectiveness. Challenges in implementing collaboration include differences in perceptions and expectations between parties, imbalance of roles, weak communication and coordination, and the

absence of a systematic collaborative model. However, there are also factors that support the implementation of collaboration, including leadership that opens space for dialogue and participation, building school partnerships with parents, the existence of an internal collaborative team between teachers and management, the use of parenting programmes and two-way communication platforms, and skills training. In the context of St. Gabriel Foundation Catholic School, strengthening the principles of collaboration has great potential to integrate Catholic values into the curriculum as a whole in order to improve the quality of education, not only in terms of academics, but also in terms of the character and spirituality of students.

Schools should continue to strengthen collaboration by developing participatory and transparent leadership models and opening up dialogue between teachers, principals, foundations, parents, communities and students. Collaborative leadership training should be provided to ensure that all leaders are able to manage the curriculum planning process in a demonstrative and inclusive manner. Effective formal and informal communication mechanisms are needed, such as regular meetings, discussion forums and digital communication groups. Collaboration between schools, parents and the community can be strengthened through programme-based cooperation, such as parent classes, community service activities and family visits. It is also necessary to form collaborative curriculum development teams in schools and foundations and to conduct regular collaborative evaluations. The evaluation process involves all stakeholders through joint reflection, surveys and discussion forums. Collaborative evaluation enables comprehensive and continuous curriculum improvement.

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