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Teachers' Voices and Curricular Change: A Critical View

Federica Castro

Nature of the Problem

Over the last decades, the issues of teachers' voice, participation and involvement, and teachers' marginalization in the processes related to educational changes have increasingly been recognized in the existing literature (Abudu & Mensah, 2016; Bao, 2016; Carl, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Gozali, Claassen Thrush, Soto-Peña, Whang, & Luschei, 2017). This lack of voice is clearly perceived in the lack of personal commitment and involvement arising from a common situation that teachers experience in their daily lives at their workplaces: that of having to follow dicta devised by others (Day, 2000). Teachers are instructed to carry out the curricula that they took no part in designing (Abudu & Mensah, 2016).

Curricular innovation, change and implementation are in teachers' hands since they are, in effect, the agents of change (Carl, 2005). Teachers

F. Castro (✉)
Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra,
Santiago De Los Caballeros, Dominican Republic
e-mail: fcastro@pucmm.edu.do

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are key players in the educational sector; therefore, it is critical that they play a central role in curriculum development (Abudu & Mensah, 2016). Quality participation and involvement by teachers is essential, not only in curriculum development but also for recognizing and nurturing teachers' personal and professional growth, their identity with the institution, and to strengthen their sense of agency. Teachers possess unique knowledge about the classroom that is key to successful policy formation and implementation (Gozali et al., 2017). Studies conducted in different settings reveal that changes in curriculum development are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account (Jessop & Penny, 1998; Modipane & Themane, 2014). As Jessop and Penny (1998, p. 393) argue: "one of the main reasons for the 'spectacular lack of success of change initiatives' may be traced to the neglect of teacher's voice."

At the time this investigation began, the institution was in the process of restructuring its English Language Curriculum. The existing curriculum at the time consisted of four courses (two courses at the introductory level and two at the intermediate level). The New English Curriculum (NEC) consisted of nine courses (two courses at the introductory level, two at the intermediate level, two courses at the advanced level, one Conversation course, one Academic Writing course, and one English for Specific Purposes course). Among the reasons for this change were the dissatisfaction with the results in students' language competency, the role of the institution in today's society, and the external needs for learning English because of its role in a constantly changing world. Obviously, if the role of English is now considered as entrenched worldwide (Phillipson, 1992) and as a powerful tool that can provide access to all types of professional opportunities (Troudi, 2005), two English courses did not fulfill this role.

The task of developing the NEC was the responsibility of the Head of the Applied Linguistics Department (ALD) and a team of four EFL teachers. The other 25 EFL teachers that comprised the ALD did not participate in the design process. The NEC represented a significant shift compared to the previous English curriculum, not only because more courses were added, but also and most importantly because it required a paradigm shift in teaching methodology; this shift, of course, had clear and profound implications for teachers. They necessarily had to make

changes and adjustments, especially to their own beliefs and practices. Initially, teachers complained about not understanding the reasons for a change, they did not understand clearly what was expected from them in this new curriculum. One possible reason for the mismatches between the new curriculum's principles and teachers' beliefs (Orafi & Borg, 2009) was the exclusion of teachers during the design stage. Consequently, when it came to the implementation stage, the team had to deal with teachers' feelings of fear, uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity about their capabilities to meet the challenges of a completely new way of teaching English as a foreign language.

Critical Agenda

Since the study was conducted from a critical theory stance, which purpose as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005, p. 28) express: "is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to change them," the theoretical framework was situated within the areas of what being critical means, critical applied linguistics (CALx), and the issues of teachers' voice, participation and involvement in curriculum development.

Being critical is the ability to look for hidden assumptions and fallacies in arguments (Benesch, 1999). Being able to do it implies constantly questioning and challenging the status quo to uncover, examine, and debate the taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions (Benesch, 1999) in order to be able to problematize the "givens" in a specific situation in order to transform it. In the words of Pennycook (1999, p. 343): "Thus, a crucial component of critical work is always turning a skeptical eye toward assumptions, ideas that have become naturalized, notions that are no longer questioned." Moreover, being critical implies a self-reflexive attitude, an engagement with political critiques and social relations; in other words, engaging with questions of power and inequality (Pennycook, 2001).

Central to being critical is the feature of awareness. Awareness arises from a reflexive process of how I and others think and act. We become critical thinkers when we learn to pay attention to the context in which our actions and ideas are generated, when we become skeptical of

quick-fix solutions, of single answers to problems, and of claims to universal truth (Benesch, 1999). Adopting a critical approach involves an attitude, a way of acting, thinking, and working. Therefore, this research project was aimed at investigating change and transformation.

Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx)

In order to explicitly make connections of the present work with the critical element which guides it, it is important to understand that CALx is not merely the addition of a critical element to a specific domain of applied linguistics, in this case curriculum development; such argument is limiting. Critical applied linguistics goes beyond this; it tries in its practice to move toward change (Pennycook, 2001). It is a more dynamic and productive position, more than, as Pennycook (2004, p. 785) expresses: "just the sum of related critical approaches to language domains."

CALx, critical teaching, and critical pedagogy all entail adopting a critical and self-reflexive stance toward questioning common assumptions—starting with our own. It has to do with revising teachers' beliefs of what education is and what it should be for. It also has to do with working and teaching toward transformation and change for the well-being of others. It means engagement in and problematizing our work, our context; working outside our comfort zone, developing a sensitive attitude toward others, moving away from the certainties, the taken-for-granted in traditional approaches to education.

CALx, critical teaching, and critical pedagogy mean also being aware of the power structures within ourselves and in the context where we work, to be aware of where power and control are and where they should really be.

Teachers' Voice, Participation, and Involvement

Teachers are, in effect, the principal role-players of curriculum change; therefore, they should be given the opportunity for their voices to be heard before the actual implementation takes place. In other words, they should be given the opportunity to have input during the initial curriculum development process (Carl, 2005). Unluckily, in many contexts, such as that in which this study took place, teachers' functions in the process of curriculum changes remain limited to the application of what has been developed by others. As other similar studies report (Carl, 2005; Jessop & Penny, 1998; Lasky, 2005; Orafi & Borg, 2009), teachers´ exclusion from the planning and designing of curriculum innovation and change is detrimental to the process of taking ownership of the curriculum. By ignoring teachers' voices, the outcomes of new thinking on curriculum development may in fact be thwarted, prolonging the dangerous situation that teachers, as potential curriculum agents, simply remain "voices crying in the wildernesses" (Carl, 2005). Moreover, teachers' lack of voice in decision-making processes has been identified as one of the causes of teacher burnout, understanding burnout as the physical and emotional exhaustion and anxiety caused by failure to derive a sense of existential significance from work (Pines, 2002).

Studies conducted in different settings reveal that changes in curriculum development are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account. Similarly, Jessop and Penny (1998, p. 393) in their study on teacher's voice, state that: "[O]ne of the main reasons for the 'spectacular' lack of success of change initiatives may be traced to the neglect of teachers' voice." Given such a reality, personal commitment and involvement are likely to be limited. Moreover, the uptake of an educational innovation can be inadequate if teachers' lived experiences and realities are not taken into consideration (Orafi & Borg, 2009). Undoubtedly, the omission of teachers' voice in policy-making processes resonates in the achievement of sustainable educational change and development (Jessop & Penny, 1998). Teachers' voice, as Jessop & Penny (1998, p. 401) argue: "is such a strategy that, for change to be implemented and sustained, teachers need to own the educational innovation and the process of

change." In other words, teachers have to be informed about the reasons for curriculum change, understand and believe in it. For changes to occur, shared understandings, values and goals need to exist (Lasky, 2005). Obviously, this is more beneficial if done at the planning stage, not immediately before the implementation phase, as was done in the case of the NEC.

If teachers are the people who ultimately have to implement the curriculum, they have the right to be involved in the process right from its beginnings. If we want committed teachers, the diminishing sense of agency or control that many teachers report must be replaced by a sense of accountability with trust (Day, 2000), of participation and involvement through hearing their voices and bringing them into the educational processes that occur outside the classroom walls. This is also supported by Day (2002, p. 422) when he expresses that: "Externally imposed curricula, management innovations and monitoring and performance assessment systems have often been poorly implemented, and have resulted in periods of destabilization, increased workload, and intensification of teachers' work and a crisis of professional identity."

In spite of the recognition of teachers' roles and their contributions in curriculum change, research has shown that teachers are neglected in the process (Abudu & Mensah, 2016). There seems to be a large gap between theory and what happens in real life. Furthermore, if teachers are only regarded as implementers of other people's plans, the power of pedagogy is probably lost. They become merely technicians and, instead of feeling responsible for successfully implementing a new curriculum, they are simply its deliverers (Jessop & Penny, 1998). Unfortunately, in many contexts such as that in which this study took place, teachers' role in the process of curriculum changes remains limited to the correct application of what has been developed by others. Previous studies (Carl, 2005; Jessop & Penny, 1998; Lasky, 2005; Orafi & Borg, 2009) report that teachers' exclusion from the planning and designing of curriculum innovation and change is detrimental to the process of taking ownership of the curriculum.

If educational change is to be sustained (Jessop & Penny, 1998), prior consultation should form an important part of any curriculum reform, and the acknowledgement of teachers' voices would ensure that teachers'

participation is incorporated at the appropriate time. This opportunity will serve as a means to ensure that teachers gain access to and take ownership of the new curriculum in a more significant way (Carl, 2005). They must know that their voices are heard and must be brought into the educational processes that occur outside the classrooms walls.

From the previous observations, it is clear that quality teachers' participation and involvement are essential, and change leaders must ensure that teachers are involved in all of the decisions, plans and activities related to curricular change implementation if it to be successful. Teachers more willingly can become more active agents able to influence their environment to change the context. Needless to say, allowing teachers' voices to be heard should bring positive results. Such is the case of the study conducted by Modipane and Themane (2014) in which they found that teachers' participation improved their commitment to curriculum development. They also found that when teachers are active participants in the implementation and when the new intervention is integrated in their everyday teaching, this improves its success. Done this way, teachers' satisfaction, professional self-esteem and status seem to be reinforced and put in the place where they should be, at the heart of the educational enterprise. In that respect, Carless (1998, p. 355) advises that: "Dissemination of innovation… is often insufficient… Instead, what is often needed is the negotiation of meaning between developers and teachers." In line with Carless' previous quote is the fact that imposed change will not be successful, as curriculum change is inexorably linked to personal change and we alone have the ultimate power to change ourselves (Lamie, 2005). Undeniably, successful implementation lies in the hands of teachers; at the end of the day, it is they who will determine whether innovations will eventually be carried out inside the classroom (Lamie, 2005). As Brown (1995, p. 206) puts it: "Involving teachers in systematic curriculum development may be the single best way to keep their professionalism vital and their interest in teaching alive."

Research Framework

From a critical stance, the purpose of this small-scale research study was to investigate how a group of seven EFL teachers perceive their voices having been heard during the design process of the New English Curriculum (NEC) in an English Department of a higher education institution in the Dominican Republic. Based upon the results of the investigation, any necessary adjustments and changes should be made.

For this study, curriculum development was regarded as the encompassing and continual process during which any form of planning, designing, dissemination, implementation and assessment of curricula take place (Carl, 2005) and as a process where teachers take an active role in its design and implementation (Modipane & Themane, 2014). The constructs of voice, participation, and involvement are understood as being able to articulate one's interests and aspirations by negotiating a space through the competing discourses of domination and control; being able to develop and exercise a sense of agency (Canagarajah, 1999).

Research Questions

1. Do teachers perceive that their voices are being heard during the design process of the New English Curriculum?
2. Can teachers' perceptions influence their involvement in the implementation phase of the New English Curriculum?
3. What actions can the leaders of this process take, at this stage, to allow teachers´ voices to be heard?

Methods

The methods used to collect the data were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview—as a way to construct knowledge in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Methods such as open-ended interviews, must be included if richer and more accurate inferences are to be made (Pajares, 1992).

The questionnaire was designed as an initial stage to inform the interview design and to gather, from a critical stance, participants' ideas and opinions about their voices having been heard during the English curriculum design process, and how this situation would have an influence in the implementation phase. The questionnaire consisted of five questions: the first two were open-ended and the last three yes/no questions. In order to get more information from the last three questions, participants were asked for the reason they made their choices by answering the question "Why?" The first three questions were designed to discover the participants´ general perceptions and opinions about the means and timeframe in which they were informed about the changes in the English curriculum; the fourth and fifth questions were designed to elicit their opinions about the importance of teachers' voice and participation in a curriculum design process and how this might affect the way in which they will approach the implementation phase. Due to the critical perspective guiding this study, the last two questions were designed to uncover possible hidden perceptions of power and control. The answers to these two questions were fundamentally important because the interview questions will originate principally from those answers.

The interview consisted of five questions addressed to uncover hidden issues of power and control, exclusion, voice and choice from the teachers' points of view. In accordance with a critical position, the questions were aimed at getting the information needed to make the adjustments and changes to include teachers as active participants in the process of the new curriculum´s implementation.

The teachers' interviews provided an in-depth exploration into the ways teachers understood and experienced the opportunities they had to express their voices during the curriculum design phase.

Participants

For time-limitation reasons, a purposive sample was selected. The participants were seven part-time EFL teachers who work in the Language Department of a higher education institution in the Dominican Republic. The teachers participating in the study had been working for the Language

Department for at least five years. Their work load ranged from 15 to 25 hours of class weekly. Two of them held BAs in TESOL, two of them held Master's Degrees in Education, one a Bachelor's Degree in Education, and two of them held TESOL certificates. Four of the participants were women and three were men.

Piloting

Piloting the instruments was a key element in the present study. This process helped to uncover research bias toward the topic under study due to involvement throughout the curriculum planning and designing processes.

Two EFL teachers who were not participating in the study validated both the questionnaire and the interview. Originally, the questionnaire consisted of eight questions, but after piloting it some questions were rephrased and others were changed so that they reflected a neutral position in order to get the information that would guide in constructing the interview.

The interview was piloted by the same people who piloted the questionnaire. The piloting resulted in changing the wording of some questions to better focus their purpose. This process was extremely useful and helped to improve the research tools, clarifying the path to follow during each interview, to get the right information.

Data Collection and Analysis

Since the purpose of this study was to understand the inner thoughts and feelings of the participants, words and not numbers were considered to be the primary sources of data. Data were collected through a questionnaire and a semi-structured individual interview. The teachers initially completed a questionnaire that elicited information on their perceptions of their role during the New English Curriculum (NEC) design process. The analysis of the data generated provided the framework for the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted individually over a one-week period.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed personally to the participants at the research site a week before the interviews. All participants returned the completed questionnaire the same day it was given to them. This was highly valued and they were all thanked for doing so. In order to deepen the analysis of the why question within the last two questions and to better organize the data yielded, Radnor's (2002) six-step process of data analysis was followed.

The Interviews

The interviews with the participants used semi-structured, open-ended questions. They were conducted individually over a one-week period, a week after completing and returning the questionnaires. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed for data analysis. Each of them lasted approximately 35 minutes. For the interviews, Radnor's (2002) six-step process for data analysis was also followed. This six-step process was extremely useful because it helped to organize and summarize the information and to visually focus on the most salient information.

The data yielded from both instruments were analyzed with reference to the research questions. The original questions in both instruments gave access to the themes. A code for each theme was created and then the data were organized into categories. Findings are presented according to the research questions and the themes, with samples from the transcripts as evidence.

Findings and Discussion

Centrally, this study argued that teachers' voice through participation and involvement needed to inform policy-making if educational change is to be sustained (Jessop & Penny, 1998). A critical barrier to teachers' participation in curriculum development is their lack of information about the change and about the role they are to play (Abudu & Mensah,

2016). Prior consultation should form an important part of any curriculum reform, and the acknowledgement of teachers' input would ensure that teachers' participation is incorporated at the appropriate time. This opportunity will serve as a means to ensure that teachers gain access to and take ownership of the new curriculum in a more significant way (Carl, 2005). When the curriculum changes result from teachers' involvement in the curriculum development process, teachers will feel more assured in their classrooms, figuring out that their students will benefit from the changes (Bao, 2016).

In this section, I will present and comment on the most salient themes and categories that emerged from the questionnaires and the interviews that refer directly to each research question. As Schostak and Schostak (2008, p. 9) recommend: "a key demand of radical research is that any discussion of 'findings' is in the context of what is at stake in adopting particular perspective-shaping methodologies."

Teachers' Perceptions about the Design Process of the New English Curriculum

Analyzing the data, it was obvious that teachers value being included, especially in the decision-making processes that affect them directly, such as the implementation of a new curriculum. This is also noted by Troudi (2009, p. 64): "What teachers value is recognition of their experience and professionalism." Participants were of the opinion that they could have made relevant contributions and that they should, therefore, have been involved accordingly. Not one of the seven teachers participating in the study considered that they were given any kind of participation at the design stage. They expressed the view that at that stage there was a lack of communication, and that they should have known about the coming changes in advance. As two of the participants expressed: "If I would have been given the chance to participate in the design of this project, it would have given me certain sense of identity with the project" and "Had I been informed, I could have started to experiment in my classes." Another participant said: "I did not participate, I was just informed."

One unexpected theme that emerged in this section was the issue of "change." They complained about not knowing the reasons for this curriculum change. One of the participants expressed that: "We should have been asked about what changes were needed and should have been informed about the reasons for those changes." The previous comment has also been noted by Orafi and Borg (2009, p. 251), who remarked: "if teachers are to implement an innovation, it is essential that they have a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of the proposed changes." Another participant also expressed: "When we talk about changes, we should not only take into account what we are going to change, the new things we are going to adopt. We have to think of the good things we do and that we are going to keep." This response goes in line with what Pennycook (1989, p. 608) expressed: "The construction of the Method concept in language teaching has been a typical example of the attempt to validate current forms of knowledge at the expense of past forms." Pennycook (1989, p. 600) also argues, however, that: "while there certainly are trends and shifts in language teaching, these tend to be a reordering of the same basic options." In this respect, it was explained to the English teachers of the ALD that following the basic principles of the Communicative Approach did not, by any means, mean that they would have to leave out what has proved to work for them and their students. It seemed that more work was needed to develop teachers' trust and understanding.

Influence of Teachers' Perceptions on Their Involvement in the Implementation Phase of this New Curriculum

Even though in the questionnaire all participants answered affirmatively to the question asking if they thought that teachers' participation in a curriculum design process influences the way in which changes would be implemented; in the interviews, only two of the seven participants provided straight answers. One of the two participants expressed that: "Knowing about the new curriculum structure and goals in advance, would have helped to avoid some insecurities they [the English teachers]

feel now." The other honestly said: "If the program fails, everybody is responsible to make the appropriate changes."

All of the participants expressed that their participation in a curriculum-design process is important for a number of reasons, namely: they feel part of the whole process, they can give their opinions and suggestions, they develop a higher sense of responsibility, and there is more commitment because, after all, they are who will ultimately be responsible for implementing it. Furthermore, as indicated in the research literature, teachers' involvement in curriculum development increases their effectiveness as teachers, feeling that one's contributions and suggestions are helpful and satisfaction from participating in decision-making that affects one's work (Abudu & Mensah, 2016). Similar results are presented in studies conducted on teachers' voice in curriculum development. As Carl (2005, p. 225) observes: "it is the teachers who ultimately have to implement the curriculum and therefore teachers, as professionals, ought to be involved in all these processes." Moreover, to make education meaningful and relevant to the society it depends on how the curriculum is developed and implemented by teachers (Abudu & Mensah, 2016).

Leaders' Actions to Allow Teachers' Voices to Be Heard

From the critical perspective guiding this study, this question became crucial; the answers obtained will fulfill the goals of any critical approach that aims to change a situation in which issues of power and voice are conflicting (e.g. teachers' voice and participation in the process of curriculum design). In this particular case, participants' recommendations were used to guide the curriculum implementation phase.

Among the participants' recommendations were: that if more participation was desired, the leaders of the process should assign teachers more responsibilities to involve them in the process through specific tasks; this would, in turn, create more commitment, identity, and ownership of the project. One of them expressed: "If we would have been assigned certain responsibilities during that process, all of us would have been more committed. We would have started to know how the new curriculum was going to work." A similar suggestion was presented in Abudu and

Mensah's (2016) study on teachers' perception about curriculum design; they concluded that one alternative to improve teachers' participation was to decentralize curriculum design and make teachers key stakeholders in curriculum construction.

Participants also expressed the view that they needed more information about the new program and about the communicative approach in terms of teaching methodology, classroom activities and materials; in this respect, they asked for workshops and training using this approach. One of the participants noted: "We need to have more training courses focused on communicative activities." They also recommended identifying teachers' interests. From a critical point of view, this can be translated as giving them choices rather than dictating what they have to do. These findings are also similar to those presented in previous studies related to teachers' voices, teachers' participation and involvement in curriculum reforms (Carl, 2005; Jessop & Penny, 1998; Lasky, 2005; Orafi & Borg, 2009).

Participants in the study clearly stated that they have an important role to play in the educational processes that originate at their work place, especially processes that have to do with curriculum reform; however, they stated that their voices were never heard. This is also supported by Day (2002, p. 422) when he notes that:

> Externally imposed curricula, management innovations and monitoring and performance assessment systems have often been poorly implemented, and have resulted in periods of destabilisation, increased workload, and intensification of teachers' work and a crisis of professional identity.

This is also expressed by Carl (2005, p. 228): "By ignoring teachers' voices, the outcomes of new thinking on curriculum development may in fact be thwarted, prolonging the dangerous situation that teachers, as potential curriculum agents, simply remain 'voices crying in the wilderness'." Quality participation and involvement by teachers is essential, not only in curriculum development but also for recognizing and nurturing their personal and professional growth, their identification with the institutions where they work, and also to contribute to strengthen their sense of agency.

Critically analyzing these answers necessarily moved to serious reflection and required that immediate actions were taken to include teachers in the subsequent stages of this curriculum change. The findings presented in this section definitely helped to re-direct the way in which this curriculum change continued to develop, and teachers' recommendations were introduced. Most importantly, a change in the attitude of the people directing this process shifted toward inclusion and integration of teachers' voice to maximize their participation, involvement and commitment.

Pedagogical and Theoretical Contributions

In any process of educational change, teachers are active agents, able to influence their environment to change a context. Moreover, it has become widely accepted that high-quality teachers are the most important asset of schools (Hanushek, 2011). For changes to occur, there needs to be shared understandings, values and goals. These are developed through individuals' participation in joint-productive or co-joint activities (Lasky, 2005). Certain paths of action need to operate as the meditational system to create the conditions that will allow and increase teachers' sense of agency. These mediational systems need to incorporate teachers' voice and participation if reform policies are to be adopted and not ignored. Furthermore, nowadays, there is a need to push for an understanding of curriculum as involving what teachers do with learners, rather than only what policy-makers instruct should be done (Modipane & Themane, 2014). The uptake of an educational innovation can be limited if teachers' lived experiences and realities are not taken into consideration (Orafi & Borg, 2009). Teachers have to be informed about the reasons for, in the case of this study, curriculum change, and they need to understand and believe in it through involvement and participation. If teachers are only regarded as implementers of other people's plans, the power of pedagogy is lost. They become merely technicians and, instead of feeling responsible for successfully implementing the new curriculum, they are simply its deliverers (Jessop & Penny, 1998).

The initial action to be taken by change leaders and policy-makers, with a view toward acting for change (Auerbach, 2001), is to acknowledge the situation by reflecting on the assumptions that guided previous practices and later on questioning those practices. Moreover, in the context where this study took place, it was an urgent matter to recognize and act with the firm determination that teachers are in effect the executors of change (Carl, 2005). In that sense, perhaps the most significant contribution that this study generated was the need to involve teachers in decision-making processes from the initial stage of the change process; that is, the planning of the curricular change, and throughout the change implementation. Teachers' voices need to be and should be recognized and heard by taking into account their suggestions for adjustments necessary at the design and implementation stages of the curricular change. Teachers' voices can also be given a place in educational processes by creating opportunities where teachers are integrated and participate with an active role from the very beginning of curricular change. One way to hear the voices of teachers is by supporting them through participation and involvement in all the work and academic activities that a curricular change requires. In this sense, if educational change is to be sustained (Jessop & Penny, 1998), prior consultation should form an important part of any curriculum reform, and the acknowledgement of teachers' input would ensure that teachers' voices are incorporated at the appropriate time. This will serve as a means to ensure that teachers gain access to and take ownership of the new curriculum in a more significant way (Carl, 2005). These opportunities operate as the mediation systems to create the conditions that would allow and increase teachers' sense of agency. These mediation systems need to be developed through processes of consultation with teachers in order to incorporate their voices and participation and ensure that reform policies are adopted not ignored. On the same token, Gozali et al. (2017, p. 45) assert that: "In addition to opportunity, the expression of teacher voice requires…. reactions from authority figures. Teachers will be more likely to voice their perspective when they feel listened to, supported and taken seriously by authority figures."

Allowing teachers' voices to be heard can bring positive results, and the teachers' professional self-esteem and status will be reinforced and put in

the place where they should be, at the heart of the educational enterprise. Among the possible ways that institutions could explicitly put teachers at the heart of the educational enterprise, from the planning stage, is by consulting them about change plans, assuring their participation in decision-making meetings, and assigning group work to develop drafts of the document containing the proposed changes. In this respect, teachers need to be assured that the curriculum change is not because they are not doing a good job. Education reforms must recognize teacher voice as part of the solution rather than marginalizing them as a problem (Gozali et al., 2017). Curricular changes should not be based on a deficit model, rather, as a different approach to achieving teachers' goal of effective EFL teaching (Iemjinda, 2007).

Another implication arising from this study is that institutions need to create learning spaces for teachers that are more conducive to learning and growth so that they can handle the challenges of time and workload more easily. Recognizing this fact implies a review of the policies and practices related to the professional development of teachers (Poulson & Avradamis, 2003). This revision should start from the everyday working conditions at educational institutions, where teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time coping with the immediate demands of their job, to the personal and institutional vision as part of the daily life of the teacher. The time teachers invest in class preparation, attendance at meetings and other activities in which teachers are involved outside the classroom should count as part of their workloads and should be included in their salaries, regardless of the type of contract they have. This way, teachers would not have to overload themselves by teaching more classes than they should in order to earn enough money to live on. The unavailability of adequate time at the disposal of the teachers and the painstaking efforts and energy required to develop new curricula serves as a barrier to teachers' participation in curriculum design (Abudu & Mensah, 2016). Tertiary education institutions should allocate specific times during the week just for teachers' preparation; that is, time within the working schedule of teachers and not during teachers' personal time.

Besides teachers' understandings and preparation, it is important to take into account that teaching is an emotional practice as well as a cognitive and technical endeavor (Lasky, 2005). This study also revealed that

change leaders in general should be sensitive and aware of the feelings and attitudes teachers develop before and throughout a curriculum change process. The importance of teachers' attitudes during a process of change has also been stressed by others (e.g. Hazratzad & Gheitanchian, 2009; Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010), who argue that attitudes are such important factors that they can be considered the cause of teachers' success or failure in a classroom. Knowing teachers' attitudes is beneficial because any investment in a curricular change seems to be a waste of time and energy if teachers' full support is missing (Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010). In this respect, change leaders need to develop an awareness of how much an educational change can have an impact on teachers' professional and, most importantly, personal lives. Teachers' days are filled with preparing lessons, teaching, and grading which limits teachers' willingness to get involved in all the activities a curriculum change requires Abudu & Mensah, 2016). With regard to this, collected data revealed that the demands an educational change poses on teachers, both at the professional and personal levels, need to be made step by step so that teachers' time and workloads are respected. Done this way, teachers are more likely to commit to the new situation and do their jobs with joy and satisfaction.

It has been obvious in this study that conflicts and challenges inevitably arise in a process of change; however, and as Fullan (2007, p. 123) points out: "… conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change." A conflicting issue that most of the participants in this study highlighted was the fact that their personal lives have been greatly affected by the time demands the NEC has imposed on them and no remuneration for their effort was considered. Changes that are not accompanied by incentives will necessary produce psychological barriers, which can raise serious problems (Abudu & Mensah, 2016).

In sum, bringing about a curriculum change takes time; nevertheless, working on changing the infrastructure (policies, incentives) is necessary if valued gains are to be sustained and built upon (Fullan, 2007). In that respect, and probably the most important fact, is that as Fullan (2007, p. 124) emphasizes: "Assume that changing the culture of institutions is the real agenda, not implementing single innovations." Therefore, institutional initiatives that upgrade the professionalism of teachers, in

addition to being desirable in their own right, should help to provide a climate conducive to the development of curriculum changes (Carless, 1998).

Finally, it is important for teachers, administrators, and researchers to focus their attention on the following questions: "What conditions are necessary to create engaged teachers who are reflective of their practice?" "What conditions do institutions have to provide teachers to encourage their motivation in continuing their professional growth and development?" "What are the risks and responsibilities that teachers might face when given opportunities to voice their thoughts and ideas?" And, "What are the risks and responsibilities that teachers might face when given the opportunity to act against their own status quo?"

Further Reading

Benesch, S. (2012). *Considering emotions in critical English language teaching: Theories and praxis*. New York: Routledge.

Considering emotions in critical English language teaching: Theories and praxis presents the author's findings about ways of theorizing emotions and affect critically and applying those theories to English language teaching (ELT) and learning. The author proposes that emotions could be theorized as social constructs, rather than private feelings or cognitive structures, and integrated into research on critical teaching.

Carl, A. (2009). *Teacher empowerment through curriculum development: Theory into practice*. Cape Town, South Africa: Juta and Company Ltd..

Arend Carl acknowledges the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development processes. Teacher participation, teacher freedom, democracy in the classroom are at the heart of his work. This book is a synthesis of extensive research not only on teacher empowerment but also on the link between this notion and the process of successful curriculum development and implementation.

Thomas, S., Farrell, C., & Baecher, L. (2017). *Reflecting on critical incidents in language education: 40 Dilemmas for Novice TESOL professionals*. USA: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

The authors emphasize that most research on curriculum design and development is not carried out from the teacher's perspective, and very little atten-

tion has been given to the particular challenges of curriculum in English as a Second Language/ English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teaching contexts. The chapter devoted to curriculum development details four problems of curriculum development and its place in the life of teachers. These problems refer to (1) working with mandated curricula, (2) integrating content and language, (3) aligning lessons to standards, and (4) facing a lack of resources. It stresses the ability of TESOL educators to adapt, modify, and create curricula as key to their success in the classroom.

Wedell, M. (2009). *Planning for educational change: Putting people and their contexts first*. London: Continuum.

Wedell highlights the place of human factors in influencing curriculum change. The book also offers recommendations on the teacher's role to determine the rate and route of a change process. It is of great value to practitioners responsible for planning and implementing educational change.

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