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Involving Teachers in the Change Process: One English Language Teacher's Account of Implementing Curricular Change in Philippine Basic Education

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1 Introduction

In contrast to the many gloomy accounts of how curriculum change affects teachers reported in the literature (e.g. in Waters and Vilches 2008; Murray 2008; Karavas 2014; Song 2015), this chapter provides an example of an exceptional and dedicated teacher who is successfully dealing with a new curriculum and textbook. The case provides a particular example of some conditions that are likely to promote successful curriculum change implementation as noted in the literature (e.g. Markee 1997; Waters and Vilches 2013). It highlights how involving teachers in the change process (Kirk and MacDonald 2001; Priestley et al. 2012) through awareness-raising initiatives and textbook design appears to make a difference to how they make sense of the changes required of them. The chapter points to the importance of communication in the curriculum reform process as a way of empowering teachers to bring about change in the classroom. The teacher's story also raises issues of the importance of viewing national curriculum change as a process not an event and the concomitant need to provide ongoing support to those tasked with implementing change.

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1.1 English Language Policy in the Philippines

English in the Philippines was introduced with the establishment of the public school system and became the language of instruction during the American colonization, which began at the turn of the twentieth century and spanned almost five decades. Since then, in a country with over 170 languages, the role of English has frequently been at the centre of the medium of instruction debate resulting in a series of major policy changes: (a) bilingual education (1987–2009) mandating the use of English for English, maths and science subjects and Filipino for other subjects; (b) the 'English Only' legislation in 2003; (c) the 2009 Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) policy advocating mother tongue medium of instruction from Grades 1 to 3 and English for English, maths, the sciences, technology, music, health, etc. from Grades 4 to 10; and more recently (d) the K-12 Reform as contained in the Enhanced Basic Education Act signed into law in 2013 (Republic Act No 10533 2013). This reform, the focus of this chapter, regards language as 'the basis of all communication and the primary instrument of thought', recognizing it as being a rule-governed system at the service of communicating meaning, and as:

> defin[ing] culture which is essential in understanding oneself (personal identity), forming interpersonal relationships (socialization), extending experiences, reflecting on thought and action, and contributing to a better society. (Department of Education 2013: 3)

1.2 The K-12 Curriculum Reform

One of the key objectives in the K-12 Reform (Alberto and Gabinete 2014) is to make Filipinos globally competitive, and consequently, the development of learners' English proficiency for international communication and professional opportunities is a salient feature in classroom teaching.

Communicative language teaching through the teaching of the four macro-skills was already an element of the old curriculum. In the new, it is better contextualized and delineated. The emphasis on English for communication is supported by new congruent assessment practices as described in the 'Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program' (2015). The guidelines discuss two kinds of assessment: formative (regular and mostly collaborative such as simulation activities) and summative (periodic and could be collaborative such as group performance

tasks). On formative assessment for oral communication in the classroom, the DepEd Chief of Curriculum and Implementation Division explains:

> The learner… designs and performs effective controlled and uncontrolled oral communication activities based on context. The teacher needs to come up with a situation, identify the audience and the relationship of the speaker to the listener and purpose. Then the teacher needs a rubric to rate the student. (Elizabeth Meneses, Personal Communication, 7 July 2016)

This extract highlights the role that the teacher is asked to play in implementing oral assessment.

In contrast to previous reforms, it seemed that the Department of Education had more proactive and forward-looking leaders at the helm of the K-12 reform. They initiated an extensive involvement of many stakeholders in providing relevant and appropriate input to curricular content and design—a way of supporting key players in the curriculum change process (Wedell 2003). The 'Briefer on the Enhanced K-12 Basic Education Program' (2010) specifically states: 'An open and consultative process will be adopted in the development and implementation of K to 12'. This might have been a result of learning from general criticisms in educational circles of previous educational reforms that lacked such consultation.

The spirit of multiple stakeholder collaboration was also evident in the involvement of teachers (such as the one in this case study) in the writing of the new textbooks. As a textbook writer, she also became part of the team of trainers that facilitated nationwide teacher training for the use of the new textbooks. This training had the full support of the school principals, who had been given prior orientation to the textbook and the curriculum.

While the K-12 Reform is generally considered a positive initiative, some resistance was expressed at a few of the public consultations attended by educators. This was perhaps understandable since the government presented implementation as urgent and compulsory for all schools despite the limited preparation time—a case of lack of grounding in the innovation context (Waters and Vilches 2013). Thus, at the fora, some stakeholders viewed the K-12 reform as overambitious and complex for the context. Others felt there had been a lack of information about the new curriculum despite the nationwide public consultations mentioned above. Such concerns were not entirely misplaced. Implementing the new curriculum is a challenge for many teachers, since the textbooks assume that teachers are able to flexibly interpret materials and approaches to the needs of their students. In addition, the curriculum challenges deep-rooted conceptions of 'language as

grammar' and requires teachers to experiment with methods, materials and activities with which many might be unfamiliar. There are also issues around the availability of the textbooks due to both logistic and financial aspects. The curriculum was implemented before the government was able to produce the required number of textbooks for all schools/learners as a result of a lengthy textbook-bidding process and a subsequent delay in the actual writing of the textbooks. Schools in the Manila area or other big urban centres were the first to receive the textbooks, while those located away from these areas received their copies later.

The next section describes the implementation experiences of a state English secondary school teacher with Grade 10 students. Firstly, it examines the teacher's background and understanding of the new curriculum. Secondly, it describes how the teacher deals with the challenges posed by the new textbook, and the support provided to help her.

2 Kathy and Her Story

Kathy (not her real name) is a master teacher whose role extends from classroom teaching to mentoring new teachers and facilitating teacher training workshops within the school and at inter-school seminars. Kathy belongs to a select group of master teachers who were chosen to take part in co-authoring a textbook that was designed for use in the K-12 reform. Kathy was chosen because she had been involved in preparing instructional materials for use in the DepEd schools in collaboration with other master teachers. The DepEd saw samples of her work and thought that they could effectively use her skills and knowledge in a bigger project.

2.1 Her Professional Role and School

Kathy is 38 and has 18-years experience of teaching English. She currently teaches English to students aged 14–16. Her school is successful and has over 4600 students from lower-middle-class families and below. Kathy says, 'Among all public schools in Pasig City, we rank second next to Science High School because of projects and support of parents'. Students win many competitions, and some are admitted to prestigious local universities, some even obtaining scholarships. The school principal is very proactive and enlists the support of parents and local government units for school projects such as the 'feeding program' (free breakfast) for graduating students when

they revise for the national achievement tests, in which the excellent ones get top scores. The school is also lucky in having the support of the town mayor who annually donates school supplies and uniforms, shoes and bags to all students.

On top of teaching five Grade 10 classes, Kathy's special role is academic supervision (teacher mentoring) for which post her good teaching skills and leadership are key qualifications. Kathy remarks:

> I think they [school authorities] have seen the passion of my teaching… You have to have demonstration teaching at the division level… where other head teachers in different schools observe your level teaching. And you show leadership.

Willingness to go the extra mile is another consideration: 'Attitude is very important. You always have to accept whatever task is given to you, even with difficulty in juggling schedules sometimes'. Professional development is important to Kathy and she is currently completing a Master's degree in education with specialization in language education.

Given this background, Kathy may be considered as belonging to a select group. Being involved in co-authoring the Grade 10 textbook has enabled her to understand how the reform ideals might be actualized through lesson designs—an experience that most English teachers in the country have not had. Kathy's story, therefore, illustrates congruence with and support for the reform and highlights what can be learnt about fostering successful curriculum change not just in the Philippines, but possibly in other similar contexts around the world.

2.2 Kathy's Understandings About the K-12 Curriculum

2.2.1 A Positive Attitude

Kathy has a generally positive disposition towards the new curriculum, possibly helped by the awareness-raising initiatives she was involved in. She comments 'I was part of the consultation. Parents, private sector, youth were consulted. A MOA was drafted between the DepEd, the CHED and TESDA'. Following the mandate from DepEd, her principal held an orientation meeting for the parents to discuss the curriculum content and to allay their anxiety about any possible additional expenses they might have to pay.

In class, according to Kathy, the teachers also explained the new curriculum to the students. This is perhaps not, on the surface, a particularly noteworthy action, but, as I will discuss later, it is significant as one aspect of the overall communication of the curriculum goals and principles.

Kathy believes in the vision and overall framework of the curriculum and locates the purpose of learning and teaching English comfortably in it 'so that students can face the world, ready to be employed … they [the DepEd] are setting a standard about the Filipino learners who are for the world'. She is happy that this curriculum has continued the previous focus on communicative competence and the use of literature[1] as the main reading material for meaning making in the lessons. For her, literature is 'an inspiration… a lesson to get from the story, to be connected to life'. It also has a role in language teaching since she is able to use literature texts as a springboard into language focus. As she puts it:

> using the lesson taken from literature for students to do a task… literature also as a motivation for language enrichment, e.g. focus on grammar in poetry to understand a line.

Her point here is that using literature as the basis for language teaching enables English to be seen as a language able to express real-life meanings, rather than just a subject in which certain rules have to be learnt by rote for assessment purposes.

2.2.2 A Move Away from a Grammar Focus

As Kathy understands it, one of the key differences in the new curriculum is that grammar is integrated in preparing students for the communicative tasks 'unlike before when the curriculum was grammar-focused'. The new curriculum framework does not emphasize the place of grammar in language teaching. Kathy notes that in the new Grade 10 textbook, the lessons are thematically arranged and centred on literary texts approximating the themes. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities are then built around these themes. How this integration of meaning and grammar

[1]Literature-based means that literature is the main reading material in the English textbooks classified as follows: Grade 7 (1st year HS) is Philippine Literature, Grade 8 (2nd year HS) is Afro–Asian Literature, Grade 9 (3rd year HS) is British–American Literature, Grade 10 (4th year HS) is World Literature.

is supposed to be carried out may be shown in the following description of a content standard for Grade 10 English:

> The learner demonstrates understanding of how world literature and other text types serve as ways of expressing and resolving personal conflicts, also how to use strategies in linking textual information, repairing, enhancing communication, public speaking, emphasis markers in persuasive texts, different forms of modals, reflexive and intensive pronouns. (Department of Education 2013: 146)

Here, it can be seen that the focus of grammar or language in the syllabus is very much as a vehicle to express ideas and carry out tasks. In practice, grammar (e.g. modals, reflexive and intensive pronouns) is taught beginning with awareness-raising and ending with some practice, for example, the teacher calls attention to the grammatical form as used in the literary text; discussion ensues; practice exercise follows.

Kathy also realizes that while the new curriculum's expectation is that students have mastered their grammar in the primary grades, the reality of the situation in the classroom is that this is often not the case, 'you still have to deal with that … they should learn grammar for them to express themselves'. One senses the tone of frustration here and suggests that Kathy still needs to spend time on explicit grammar focus.

Kathy remarks that at one of the training workshops which she facilitated, the teachers were anxious about the 'absence' of grammar in the lessons indicating that the new curriculum does not seem to reflect the reality of the teaching context: 'What about grammar? Students haven't even mastered it!' As English teachers, they expect to teach grammar; it has always been part of students' achievement tests. Even students, while perhaps relieved that grammar (taught the traditional way) is 'lost' in the new curriculum, might still feel insecure about their test performance without a proper focus on grammar in the lessons. The teachers' objections seem to indicate an understanding that learning English is equated with learning grammar, specifically, the rules of grammar. This reflects a wider educational culture that still sees learning as mostly factual knowledge and assessment as a way of gauging if students know the 'right' answers. Thus, although the new curriculum espouses a move away from overt grammar teaching, in reality, many teachers continue to teach in ways that they are familiar with and feel more comfortable with. Kathy suggests that teachers' insecurity about dealing with grammar is influenced by the learners' own conceptions of language learning and their range of language proficiency.

Although Kathy is not worried about the grammar tests as, in the current curriculum, the tests are congruent with the curriculum 'based on the desired learning competencies per grade level', she remarks that other teachers feel worried about such tests. This concern partly relates to the learners who are still worried about the 'lack' of grammar teaching because the idea of 'language as grammar' is ingrained in their language learning belief system. Learning the rules formally gives them more confidence than just applying these in practice where they are left to discover grammar use in a 'messy' way. This is especially the case with those whose English proficiency is in reality fairly basic.

Teachers are expected to implement the new curriculum in mixed ability classrooms. Classes are not grouped according to English proficiency, so even when teachers are open to the idea of teaching grammar using a communicative approach, they worry about how to deal with students who need to learn the basics of grammar before they are able to use it in practice. This is a likely challenge for most teachers, and although Kathy's classes are similar, she is able to deal with students' mixed ability by adjusting how she allocates her weekly class time to address students' grammar concerns, as she describes below.

> If they didn't get it [grammar] I won't jump into the next lesson but go back – repetition. It's not bad to repeat. Test it first. How can you master the other lessons if the basics you haven't mastered?

Kathy also does a grammar review lesson, using her own material, separate from the normal English class hours—a free service appreciated by both students and parents because through these extra lessons on the basics of grammar, the students are able to catch up with the normal lessons that demand for them to apply grammar in communication.

Kathy's responses exemplify how teachers everywhere 'exert considerable influence on instructional policies. They adapt, combine, shift, and adopt policy to fit with their workplace constraints' (Song 2015: 7). While the move away from grammar has been a struggle for many teachers who tend to resort to previous practices and behaviours, Kathy emphasizes the importance of addressing the greater curriculum goal of preparing students for the world outside the classroom. This, she feels, is important for her learners' future careers and aspirations. As she puts it:

> 'real world' has greater expectations of the students. The emphasis [in the real world] is performance, you see. They have to be ready for employment and when they apply for jobs they can be ready to write a letter of application.

Kathy acknowledges that regardless of whether other teachers believe in the curriculum aims, they have little choice but to try to implement it.

> Okay for them. Besides there's nothing they can do about it. Change is inevitable. No choice. If you are not happy with the system, go out of the system. But you don't tell them that of course!

She implicitly notes here that education in the Philippines has experienced many previous reforms which teachers have, somehow, coped with. In addition, teachers toe the line because holding on to their teaching job is of prime importance in a country with a high rate of unemployment. Nevertheless, Kathy's words perhaps suggest a lack of recognition of the challenge that the new curriculum poses for teachers who are 'less special' than she is. Her words also highlight the lack of agency teachers have in the change process—with too small a voice to be heard by the powers that be. The teacher continues to be seen as an unquestioning implementer of curriculum change.

It seems that for Kathy, the move away from the norm that language teaching should be centred on grammar does not pose the same challenges as it does for other teachers. She appears to have the confidence, experience and perhaps status within her school to implement what she considers to be the overall goals of the curriculum in her own way.

2.2.3 A Different Role for Teachers

While the old curriculum mandated classroom interaction, it rarely occurred because the textbooks were input-oriented and heavily grammar-based. Kathy thus believes that the implementation of the new curriculum requires teachers to change their classroom role in a number of ways. Firstly, she frequently emphasizes the importance of teachers taking responsibility for adjusting the curriculum to the needs of their learners. As she says, 'this is now the teacher's strategy. The teacher knows her students best and knows what's best for them'.

Secondly, the role of the teacher is also linked to the teaching method, and as Kathy points out, the enhanced English curriculum promotes a more genuinely interactive approach to teaching/learning. Teachers are expected to engage the students through cooperative learning techniques to promote the spiral development of thinking skills, especially higher-level learning competencies. She explains that here, language learning is triggered by

'teacher input, cooperative learning, pair work…[and] language is learned through other people…through output, application….'. She recognizes that for such approaches, teachers need to know how to facilitate and monitor learning through different forms of classroom interaction so that, as she puts it, learners are 'engaged…in active participation so that they learn. Sometimes pair work can be a form of a buddy system for slow learners. It's up to the teacher to strategise these…'. However, unsurprisingly given its complexity, Kathy points out that what the teachers actually do is far from this ideal, even though facilitating and monitoring learning are stressed in teacher training sessions.

The activities suggested in the textbooks and curriculum also give students the opportunity to 'evaluate themselves on what they learn' so suggesting that they share responsibility for assessment, a key component of the teacher's role in the previous curriculum. Many of the communicative tasks in the textbooks simulate real-world concerns, for example, argumentative and persuasive oral presentations on conflict resolution and a research report on a sociocultural issue. Kathy feels these are good catalysts for critical thinking but that students should be well prepared both in ideas and language for such tasks to be meaningful and successful. This implies that teachers also need to be prepared for managing such tasks and to understand what they might involve in terms of the teacher's role in the classroom.

2.3 Support for Teachers in Implementing the Curriculum

As Kathy's understanding of the K-12 curriculum has highlighted, with the move away from a grammar-focused curriculum, teachers (and learners) are required to take on new roles in the classroom and adopt an interactive approach to teaching. This raises the issue of teacher support through both the curriculum materials (textbooks) and training.

2.3.1 Textbooks

As a co-author of the Grade 10 textbook and a trainer, Kathy feels that this textbook has a lot more to offer the teachers than previous ones, and 'the teacher doesn't need to do much in terms of material preparation'. However, while the textbooks contain plenty of material, the onus is on the teacher to decide how best to use these materials. Kathy comments that the lesson modules in the book are 'only suggestions… the strategies only suggestions'. By strategies, she means both the activities/tasks and the manner by which

these are carried out. Hence, the teachers, she says, need to have hands-on experience of teaching the lesson modules for them to understand how to use the suggested strategies in the book. They need to know:

> how to choose the competencies suited to their students –e.g. higher level competences as emphasized in the curriculum. The learning competencies should be non-negotiable, but the strategies can be different from what's suggested in the module…strategies that would match better with the students of a particular teacher.

For example, she says, 'The tasks might be simple but considering the number of students in the class—45 to 50 students—pair work and group work would be better'. For Kathy, choosing approaches and strategies for particular tasks does not seem to be a problem, but considering her previous comments about teachers' struggles with the move away from a grammar focus, it is likely that other teachers may find it difficult to deal with this new autonomy. It seems that the textbooks do not provide such teachers with support in deciding how to carry out activities.

Kathy is concerned about the lack of availability of teaching material nationwide (see earlier section), since access to the new textbooks is key for change implementation (Hutchinson and Torres 1994). She believes that a lack of textbooks in an English class can have a negative influence on learning since, as she puts it, 'Sometimes the students are not interested in the lesson if they have no text to read'. Kathy expresses a sense of helplessness when talking about this overwhelming system-wide issue. However, she finds comfort in the initiative taken by the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) in her school to set up a photocopying fund, as a fallback measure to produce material for students' use, paid for by a monthly cash contribution from its members. For her class, when necessary, Kathy resorts to 'power point slides or… provide photocopies of several pages shared by a group of students. The buddy-buddy system'. These are her ways of illustrating how teachers simply have to make do with the constraints beyond their control regarding textbooks.

2.3.2 Training

To support teachers in implementing the K-12 curriculum, the DepEd organized nationwide one-week, free, residential training courses based on using the new textbook. Teachers had the opportunity to work together and support each other, something that rarely happens in their schools where they are always busy with large classes, full teaching loads and other multiple tasks.

While much emphasis was put on the new textbook in this training, only photocopies of lesson modules were available to the teachers in the training seminars because the first run of the textbook was riddled with errors.

Kathy was a participant in the training as a teacher trainer by virtue of her having co-authored the Grade 10 textbook and being a master teacher (a role which has involved training teachers as part of her school duties). As a trainer in the K-12 workshops, Kathy's account suggests that she emphasized experiential learning whereby the teachers, as students, participated in some of the textbook activities. This was followed by a discussion of the experience and insights gained. Kathy views these training workshops as positive in terms of the delivery approach and aims. She highlights the difference between training to support teachers in the old curriculum and in the new one: 'We had that before in the old curriculum. But this is more task-oriented, outcome based, product oriented'. Kathy comments that the teachers 'are eager in trying to learn. We had a very successful training'. She believes that the teachers were able to modify some of the textbook lessons based on their own classroom and school contexts, as she describes below:

> According to the teachers, at the outset [of the training], everything is the same as in the old curriculum; only the terms have changed. But when they presented their output, they got feedback and then they learned the strategies better.

Although Kathy seems to report that the training workshops had a positive outcome overall, the long-term effect is unlikely to be sufficient unless the support is sustained and not just a one-off activity (Waters 2005; Waters and Vilches 2012). This is particularly pertinent in the case here where many teachers seemed to be struggling to move away from a grammar-teaching approach and to deal with new interactive classroom roles. Kathy does mention attempts to provide continuing support through non-evaluative developmental mentoring in schools where master teachers will give support feedback and guidance to teachers. Kathy explains this below:

> And we also observe them. They're given feedback. When the Head Teacher observes a class, there's a grade attached to it. If the Master Teacher observes, he/she just gives suggestion. We have to help.

As a master teacher, Kathy has the responsibility of mentoring other English teachers in her school; however, this is not an easy role for Kathy. As her words above show, the head teacher also has a role in teacher support, but

this is evaluative. Kathy's non-evaluative feedback role is challenging in her cultural context, where losing face is a major sensitivity, and where hierarchy (age included) needs to be closely observed. As Kathy puts it:

> Sometimes the teacher is older than I am. It's hard to give feedback but it must be done. I need to be diplomatic.

In addition to this in-school support, Kathy describes how teachers attend monthly Teacher's Quality Circle (TQC) meetings. The TQCs, patterned after the Quality Learning Circle (Lovett and Gilmore 2003), are part of the regular master teacher-led development activities in the state schools, attended by all teachers. At these meetings, teachers share best teaching practices, raise issues and find solutions to concerns. Kathy reports how one TQC tackled some feedback on the new textbook where teachers discussed how to adapt activities to fit into the time frame of their lessons. For many teachers, these provide a kind of contextualized follow-up to the training workshops and from Kathy's conversation, they appear to be useful. However, it is not clear whether every meeting is as useful for the new curriculum and as Kathy remarks in the excerpt above, it can be challenging for her to guide and support older, more experienced teachers.

Overall, from Kathy's story, it would seem that support for many teachers in implementing the new curriculum has been limited. The new textbooks encourage teacher choice and autonomy without really providing concrete guidance on how to do this. While many teachers have been able to attend some one-off workshops, these have not always been followed up through in-school support, and so the immediate 'success' of the training that Kathy attests may not be sustainable. Where there are master teachers with a supportive role in schools, they may, like Kathy, struggle to deal with the sensitivities of giving feedback to senior colleagues.

So what of Kathy's own experiences of implementing the K-12 curriculum? The next section discusses what Kathy reports about her own classroom practice using the new textbooks and curriculum.

2.4 Kathy's Attempt at Implementing the K-12 Curriculum

As mentioned in Sect. 2.1, Kathy is generally enthusiastic about the new curriculum and feels that it fits with her own understanding of what she should be doing in the classroom. Through her talk, she shows how she

manages to implement the curriculum changes by taking account of her learners' needs and adapting the content and textbook activities accordingly.

In her school, Kathy is always given groups of learners who are 'extremes' in terms of the best and worst in language proficiency. To deal with this, she teaches with 'the same content but the approach is different'. She can challenge the best group of students to carry out as many activities as are found in the textbook. For the weaker students, she chooses one or two activities that can be maximized according to the students' learning pace. She explains how she motivates her students by connecting with their world even when there are no suggestions in the textbook:

> Before, it was simple; now I use technology and be trendy for the students. For example, the use of Facebook. Sometimes you mention it for the students. I use Facebook. Say, 'What do you feel right now? How many have Facebook at home? What do you post there? Now tell me your feelings. Give your status today through writing. In your notebook, so pass it to the next and give comment on what you write.

Kathy explains how engaging her learners through Facebook and other technology, as she mentions above, makes the lesson and task more motivating for the students. Kathy shows a strong awareness of the need to adapt the textbook to suit her learners. This was also evident in my observation of one of her classes where she spent time doing preliminary work on an 'energizer' not found in the textbook, where students volunteered to present a graphic poster to the class and classmates were supposed to guess the English idiomatic expression it represented. On this strategy, she remarks:

> I start my class with an energizer…not the usual energizer that you are going to move [physical]. I want them to think. I'm asking them to be more responsible by researching. The students share, two to three minutes, 5-10 items… sharing time; it's up to them what they want to share. It can be vocabulary, spelling, idioms. In the lower level [section], the sharing of the higher sections, I share with them. To model to them on what to do.

Her approach here shows that she is keen to make every activity an English-learning/thinking experience, modifying it as necessary depending on the class level. This is in contrast to the normal warm up activities seen in many state schools, which tend to be songs.

Kathy adapts the textbook in other ways. For example, in a task where students had to react to certain situations, the book suggested that answers

be written in the thought bubbles provided. However instead, Kathy asked the students to identify their reactions through emoticons. Her rationale for this is expressed below:

> I didn't follow what's in the book. It's hard for me to check the sentences so I asked them to draw and show to the class.

Her change of strategy was primarily to address the constraint posed by the physical set-up of a small classroom with 40 students cramped in it, which made it difficult for her to move around checking individual work. Secondly, it was to make the task more engaging, as she puts it, 'The kids like it. They are more visual. They don't like much of the writing. Some of the tasks I change into oral communication'.

Similar adaptation to suit her learners can be seen in her use of literature. Kathy uses many stories in her lessons and believes that the classics of World Literature can be relevant to students. Kathy tries to motivate her learners by supplementing and adapting activities. 'They [the classics] are just enhanced. I just use current examples. Students are still interested in a good story'. She also uses other media to supplement the reading material and states that 'For example, *Les Miserables*. There's a movie of that now. There's also a play and I ask them to watch it. I ask them to do it as assignment'.

Although it is evident that Kathy readily adapts the set textbooks, she is aware of the need to focus on the competencies and learning outcomes expected by the new curriculum and feels that her adaptations are appropriate as long as she is achieving that bigger goal. As she states, 'the learning competency that's the rule. As long as you touch the competency it's okay to change strategies'.

Adapting materials and approaches to suit the students and develop their communicative competence often means that activities take more time. She tends to spend more time on form-focused instruction in lower-level classes, something she finds frustrating as it takes away the intended content of the lesson. This sense of frustration can be seen in her words below:

> Before I used to get upset because what I can do in the higher level classes, I can't in the lower level sections – just extremes! But now I am able to handle it better. I pace myself and have more patience.

However, Kathy also confesses that since the textbook is still new '…it took us a very long time to finish one unit'. This slow-paced lesson coverage was,

Kathy says, a common complaint raised at one of their monthly Teacher's Quality Circle (TQC) meetings. According to Kathy, the teachers remarked that in previous textbooks, a lesson unit and activities could be finished within the allotted time frame. In the new textbook, the lesson units are lengthy as they cover a range of suggested activities for a set of learning competencies. As Kathy has shown in this section, she is able to make choices about which activities to use suited to the needs of her learners, yet still following the curriculum aims. Such freedom of choice is likely to be a challenge for other teachers who are familiar with 'doing everything' in the previous book.

Kathy's role and experience in the development of the new textbook seem to have helped her to understand the thrust of the new curriculum and the principles underpinning it and in implementing it in her classroom. While she is generally positive about the K-12 curriculum, she is also aware of challenges that come with the change process, and the need for teachers to adapt the textbooks to suit different proficiency levels of learners. For Kathy, the big incentive for the teacher is:

> when students become active and engaged [as a result of teaching]…the results of the test too when you see the impact of your teaching on the students… you see their improvement.

In her own classes, she can see this improvement—sometimes sporadic, sometimes steady.

3 Conclusion: Making Change Happen

Kathy's story portrays a teacher who believes in the new curriculum and who wants to make it work in her classroom and for other teachers in the system. While Kathy seems to be coping well in implementing the new curriculum, she is aware of the challenges faced by other teachers in terms of what the new curriculum is asking them to do in the classroom and the kind of support they have had (or not had) to be able to understand and make these changes. These challenges can be identified as the changing role of the teacher, the mismatch between the new curriculum goals and the reality of state school teaching and learning contexts, and the flow of communication between different people and levels of the education system.

3.1 The Changing Role of the Teacher

The new curriculum and accompanying textbooks require teachers to be flexible and adaptive and to have the confidence and ability to make decisions about what approaches and tasks suit their learners. This autonomous and adaptive role of the teacher is different from what was expected before where teachers tended to follow everything in the textbook. While this does not seem to be difficult for Kathy, without suitable support and training, other teachers are likely to struggle in using the new textbook. Lee and Yin (2011) report a similar situation in their study of teachers in China where changes to the textbooks left the teachers feeling a loss of control and uncertain how to use or adapt the materials. Without adequate support, teachers found that they 'could not keep a balance between their sense of identity and expectations of reform mandates' (Lee and Yin 2011: 36). Humphries and Burns (2015) provide similar findings in a study of new English language textbooks introduced into a higher education institution in Japan.

Philippine English teachers have had to deal with continuous curriculum changes over the years (Waters and Vilches 2013) and so coping with change has become an expected aspect of the teachers' role. New textbooks and the concomitant autonomy and choice afforded the teacher seem to be viewed by planners as something fairly straightforward, and the extent of the change required of teachers and the emotional risks involved seem to have been overlooked or underestimated.

Kathy is in many ways a non-typical teacher who has had the chance to make sense of the new curriculum through co-authoring a textbook and being involved in supporting other teachers to make sense of it too. These roles have helped her to cope with the new curriculum in the context of having to teach students with a range of language proficiency levels. Because she is special, Kathy's case provides a good example of how involving teachers in the curriculum-planning process can have a positive effect on its implementation and the significance of communication. Kathy's experience of actually designing the materials to support the change process is likely to help embed teachers' beliefs in the materials. This ought to make the materials more accessible to all teachers, since they have been written by a teacher very much like themselves. However, without accompanying involvement through training and support, this contextual relevance of the textbooks is not sufficient to help teachers implement change. Indeed, Lee and Yin (2011) suggest that many teachers in their study in China were 'drifter

followers' who felt no engagement or involvement in the reform process and although they tried to implement mandated changes, their detachment and distance from the planning process and support structures did little to foster a positive attitude to change. Kathy's story suggests that many of the teachers she describes may be 'drifter followers'.

3.2 Mismatch Between Curriculum Goals and Local Context

Kathy reports how the curriculum goals did not seem to be designed bearing actual Philippine classroom contexts in mind, particularly given the language level of the learners. Thus, while Kathy is aware of the need to develop her learners' communicative competence in English, she is also faced with the dilemma of deciding whether to stick to the curriculum goals or to address the immediate needs of her learners. This seemed to be a challenge for Kathy, albeit one that she seems to be coping with, but if we consider that she is a 'special' teacher, then other more typical teachers are likely to be struggling even more with this mismatch. Teachers' decisions are largely influenced by the compelling conditions of their actual teaching–learning situation and not just by the general framework and ideals that inform the new curriculum. Therefore, if curriculum reform is to be successful, it is not enough for a teacher to 'understand' new curriculum ideals if prevailing teaching and learning conceptions and conditions remain unchanged. This is not only relevant to the Philippines context, but is evident in research from a range of educational systems (e.g. Hallinger and Lee 2011; Altinyelken 2010; Song 2015; Park and Sung 2013).

In the context of an education system awash with reforms and initiatives over a long period, what seems to be apparent from Kathy's story is that the emphasis of planners has been on introducing change rather than considering ways to sustain it (Fullan 2000). This suggests the importance of communication in the curriculum reform process (see Markee 1997; Fullan 2007; Wedell 2009; Karavas 2014).

3.3 Communication and Engagement

Although curricular reforms are usually top-down initiatives, where the classroom teacher is seen as a passive implementer, ultimately it is the classroom teacher who has the 'power' to make such reforms succeed or fail. As Kennedy (1983: ix) puts it, teachers are crucial because 'it is the successful

application of curriculum and syllabus plans in the classroom … that will affect the realisation of national level planning'.

This reality has important implications for policy making and teacher development initiatives. Kathy's case shows a teacher coping well with a new curriculum partly because she has been involved in the change process through her roles as teacher, trainer, master teacher and textbook writer. Indeed, bringing teachers into the realm of discussions at the initiation stage of a new initiative is likely to help ensure that their concerns at classroom level are taken into consideration in change planning, and so make implementation more likely to succeed (Waters and Vilches 2008). This fits Basica and Hargreaves' (2000) argument that rather than viewing teachers as the objects of change, they need to be brought into the change process as early as possible through such engagement activities as training, dissemination of plans, etc.

The meetings Kathy attended at the start of the implementation process seemed to have a positive effect on her attitude to and understanding of the new curriculum. This suggests that opportunities for involvement in such consultation need to be provided for as wide a range of teachers, and of those involved in implementing the curriculum at the school level, as possible. This was the experience of curriculum change in Greece (Karavas 2014) where teachers and other stakeholders were consulted and involved at all stages of the planning and implementation process of a new primary English language curriculum, leading to what Karavas argues was successful implementation. However, the mechanics for enabling such consultations to be representative are bound to be particularly complex in a country like the Philippines, with a huge number of teachers, and with geographical divisions into island groups that make mobility, communication and dissemination difficult. Al-Daami and Wallace (2007) found that English teachers in Jordan wanted to be part of curriculum change consultations, but those charged with planning felt that teachers' involvement was not necessary. While this may not be the case in the Philippines, it does highlight the need for all stakeholders to see the benefits of teacher involvement and to ensure teachers' voices are heard.

Linked to the idea of communication and engagement is the provision of teacher training. Well-tailored (e.g. reflective, see Vilches 2009) formal teacher training, supporting the use of the new textbook, seems to be a necessary aspect of the planning of any new initiative (Wedell 2003; Kirkgöz 2008). The initial training for the K-12 curriculum was nationwide but was very much a one-off event. Kathy seemed satisfied with the outcome of this training, but acknowledged that there were many teachers for whom the

new roles proposed by the curriculum remained unclear. Similar concerns are raised in a study of teachers and training in Pakistan (Mohammad and Harlech-Jones 2008: 48) which argue that:

> too often the professional development of teachers is restricted rather than extended, and fragmentary rather than coherent; too often, they feel isolated and constrained; too often, the in-service course is no more than a one-shot experience that has few meaningful benefits.

Considering this quotation, it would seem that curriculum change implementation, whether in the Philippines or elsewhere, is likely to be a medium to long-term process during which teachers will develop new understandings at different times in different places, rather than an event which is completed once all teachers have been 'trained'. If this is so, then implementation planning needs to include not only initial training, but also consideration of and planning for ways of providing access to ongoing, locally relevant, training support for teachers (e.g. school-based as a supplement for seminar-based training—see Waters and Vilches 2000; Waters 2006), over time. As experience of an earlier Philippine project shows (see Vilches 2005), teacher learning and learning to cope with curriculum change do not happen overnight. This fits with much of the recent curriculum change literature which highlights the failings on one-off workshops and the need for a sustained, school-based development programme to help teachers contextualize new pedagogical practices (Power et al. 2012). Although teachers in Kathy's story do appear to attend a monthly TQC meeting, it is not clear how much these focus on the new curriculum and provide teachers with hands-on practical support and whether this support was enough at the initial stages of implementation.

Kathy's story has provided the reader with a picture of a special teacher, getting to grip with a new English language curriculum fairly successfully. However, it has also highlighted that without similar opportunities to those that Kathy has been given, in terms of her engagement and involvement in the change process, it is unlikely that other teachers will be able to cope with the new classroom practices and behaviours required of them.

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