Introducing a New School Curriculum: Teachers' Views on The Change Process

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Abstract:

This study investigates the responses of teachers in an Arabic school in west London to the introduction of a new school-mandated curriculum: the International Baccalaureate (IB). The study focuses on seven teachers in the major subject areas of English, science, maths, Arabic language, Islamic studies, ICT and French language. As a result, this study found it necessary to employ qualitative research methodology using in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of teachers within the context of their practice. This research provides a basis for analysing how teachers experience and understand change. The research revealed a phenomenological perspective of teachers' actions. Analysis of the data is organised into four main categories: teaching career for participants; teachers' views about IB; introducing the IB to the school and the future of the IB in the school. The findings suggest that change does not result because it is mandated by central management, but certain factors—such as school-based support, perception of autonomy, collaboration, participation in curriculum development, professional development, academic preparation and experience—influence teachers' response to change. When these factors are evident, teachers respond favourably to change. Implications of these conclusions are discussed as are further questions and opportunities for further research.

Key words: change management, teachers attitude, curriculum change, school leadership.

Introduction:

Change does not just happen because it is mandated by central management. The phenomenon of educational change depends on the attitude of the teachers—how they think and what they do in the discharge of their responsibilities (Vrabcová, 2015). Teachers are central to change in practice; the process must be a regular part of their daily work for the change to be successful. The teacher is the instructional driver in the classroom. As the delivery agent of instruction, he or she is the primary factor in the implementation of innovations. Today, society relies on teachers and educational institutions to provide the basis for a functioning

society. Schools now should plan and provide for a diversity of cultures and learning styles because people live in this world as if they are in small villages. Students' physical, social and emotional needs also need to be addressed. The accelerating social and cultural changes within the educational system continue to have a vast impact on the working lives of teachers.

When is a curriculum in need of an upgrade or replacement? According to John White (2004), the curriculum is "a vehicle, or collection of vehicles, intended to reach a certain set of destinations; we have to begin with destinations themselves…to work out what kind of vehicles are best to help us [succeed] in particular circumstances" (p. 6). Changes in the curriculum might arise in response to a breakthrough in the field; new knowledge like the discovery of space leads to changes in the content of the curriculum. Such change results from ongoing discussion within and among the disciplines, even leading to the creation of new disciplines (John et al, 1999).

Such meaningful educational change that leads to improved teaching and learning is demanding and difficult, even for the best teachers. Overall the story of educational reform is a story of nervous movement from one fad to another, with little ensuring effect on teaching practice (Tyack & Cuban, 2003). Hargreaves (2001) agrees that the overwhelming majority of literature on educational reform is a catalogue of teacher failures and shortcomings as they repeatedly fall short of the ever rising and changing expectations. Nolan and Meister (2000) state that a major reason for this lack of success is the neglect of the phenomenology of change. The failure to understand how individuals experience change—in contrast to how it was intended—is at the heart of the spectacular failure of reform efforts (Fullan, 2007).

Curriculum Change:

The plethora of books focusing on educational change published within the past few years have mostly neglected the human side of change (Clement, 2014. Russ-Eft, & Preskill, 2009. Nolan & Meister, 2000). This view does not match with the findings that will be presented later, which give importance to the role of teachers in curriculum change.

Fullan (2007) writes that educational change depends on what teachers think and do. He maintains that teachers are influenced by their interpretation of change and the way it affects them personally. Teachers possess the major portion of knowledge with regard to teaching and learning; thus, recognising, articulating, and understanding that knowledge are imperative in order to improve schools (Pont, Nusche, & David, 2008). According to Fullan (2007), too few studies of educational change are written from the perspective of teachers who are simultaneously the subjects and objects of change.

The definition of curriculum differs according to researchers; it may be defined narrowly as a specific set of knowledge, skills, and activities to be delivered to students, or it may be defined broadly as a set of planned activities to foster teachers' teaching and students' learning (Scott, 2016). It may be further defined as national curriculum, school curriculum, or subject curriculum (Cheng, 1994). Since the focus of this study will be limited to the school level, curriculum is defined as a set of activities and content planned at the individual level, the programme level, or the whole school level to foster teachers' teaching and students' learning.

To a great extent, curriculum development, or change, aims to maximise the effectiveness of teaching and learning through change in planned content, activities and arrangements for educational processes (Kirgöz, 2008). Significant change is defined by Cheng (1994) as any change in which an impact occurs on the enterprise due to some financial, radical, and/or organisational adjustment affecting the majority of the staff or the financial health of the operation. Such change can be referred to as strategic in nature and a morphogenesis, meaning that it takes on the nature of creating new forms and is permanent and pervasive (Chrusciel, 2006). Change can be considered frame-breaking, culture-changing, transforming, radical and revolutionary (Chrusciel, 2006), where one of the four components (people, tasks, technology and structure) are the impetus. These four components can be condensed into three types of capital: human, information and organisational (Chrusciel, 2006).

By recognising the phenomenon of change, the organisation begins to proactively handle change transformation by using a flexible curriculum in the hope of minimising the overall frustration of the enterprise and maximising the gain of it. Even the failure to deal with change is a

conscious decision not to act—with ramifications (Chrusciel, 2006). Therefore, the issue is not necessarily change itself, but rather how an enterprise successfully confronts change and prepares itself to deal with the inherent uncertainty (Chrusciel, 2006).

Research Questions:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore teachers' views and perceptions of the change process in introducing a new curriculum at an Arabic school in west London, providing a critical analysis of ways in which the management of the school enables or disables school improvement and acceptance of this change. This research provides a basis for analysing how teachers experience and understand change. The research questions driving this study are:

- What views do teachers have about the change?
- What will be the consequences of the change?
- Are there obstacles for the change, and if so, what are they?
- If there are obstacles, how can they be overcome?
- Is there any resistance to change?

These questions seek to understand the phenomenon of change from teachers' perspective and were investigated using a qualitative research design consisting of in-depth interviews.

Methodology:

Qualitative methods are ideally suited to the task of describing and understanding educational change and programme implementation. Patton (2002) writes that an effective way to study programme implementation is to gather detailed, descriptive information about what is occurring in the programme. Since programme implementation is characterised by a process of adaptation to local conditions, needs, and interests, the methods used must be open ended, discovery orientated and capable of describing developmental processes and programme changes.

The best way to determine what others are experiencing is to find methods of data collection that allow for devising procedures and strategies that consider experiences from the participants' perspectives. In an attempt to understand the lived experience of being a teacher during this change process, the researcher chose to incorporate fieldwork as the research

method, relying on in-depth interviewing which is fundamental method that qualitative researchers use in gathering information (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

The interest in pursuing this research lay in learning what it means for teachers to be engaged in a school restructuring effort, how they understand these experiences and what underlying themes emerge from these experiences. This is what Lundmann and Villadsen (2016) call "subjective understanding"; this suggestion is best uncovered through in-depth interviewing. The purpose of in-depth interviewing is to understand the experience of other people and the meaning that they make of that experience.

In preparing for this research, the author spent a considerable length of time deliberating on the wording of the interview questions and actively avoiding leading questions (Changing Minds, 2006). The interviews were carried out face to face; each took about one hour in length. The questions are fairly open, designed to elicit teachers' responses, asking them to address the issues of focus. The teachers were sent the interview questions beforehand so that they were familiar with the questions and could, if they wished, prepare their responses. The questions guided the interview but did not dictate the path; that is, if there were other issues the teachers wanted to raise, they were encouraged to do so.

Sample size and characteristics:

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on a relatively small number of cases or participants (Patton, 2002). The underlying principle is that information-rich cases are selected; in addition, when selecting participants for study, it is essential that all participants experience the phenomenon—in this case, this change process. The strategy must also fit the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the constraints being faced. With this in mind, the author recognises that no perfect sampling strategy exists, but having considered the alternatives and the requests of gatekeepers within school, the author chose to use critical case sampling (Patton, 2002).

Critical cases are those that are particularly important in the scheme of things. Such cases permit the logical generalisation as well as maximum application of information to other cases since, if it is true of this case, it is

likely to be true of all other cases. Although Patton (2002) warns against making broad generalisations from the study of one or a few critical cases, logical generalisations can often be made. One clue to the existence of a critical case is a statement to the effect of "if it doesn't happen here, it won't happen anywhere," or vice versa. Another clue is a key informant observation to the effect that "if that group is having problems, then we can be sure that all the groups are having problems" (p. 236). Critical case sampling is valuable in that theory emerges directly from the data.

The chosen sample is not representative of the school faculty, and it was not intended to be. The author is more interested in understanding, in depth, the experiences and perceptions of select teachers who are currently immersed in the school-wide reform initiative. As a result, seven teachers were chosen based on their length of time at the school, different subjects taught and experience in the consequences of changes that occurred in the past while remaining on staff. Table 1 outlines the most important information regarding each participant.

Table 1 Overview of participants' career information

Item	Teacher's initials	Gender	Subject	Number of years as teacher in general	Number of years spent in the Arabic school
1	RS	Male	Arabic	25	20
2	MB	Male	Science	25	17
3	ND	Male	French	15	12
4	AH	Male	Islamic	39	10
5	SK	Male	Math	14	6
6	FA	Male	ICT	4	4
7	FS	Female	English	8	1

The table clearly illustrates that the sample covers most of the subjects taught in the school. In addition, the sample varies according to the number of years teachers have spent teaching in general or the number of years they have spent teaching in the school.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Data analysis in qualitative research, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), involves systematically searching and rearranging accumulated materials, including interview transcripts, to increase understanding of them. This enables the researcher to present findings to others. Meanwhile, analysis requires organising data, identifying patterns, determining the relevance of patterns, and effectively sharing these findings with others.

A common problem in qualitative studies is letting unanalysed data pile up, thus making the task of final analysis much more difficult (Maxwell, 2012). Early and ongoing analysis is strongly recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) as this helps the researcher cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data. It makes analysis an ongoing enterprise that adds to the energising process of fieldwork.

Unquestionably, data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all the phases of a qualitative project and the one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in literature (Thorne, 2000). Creating a database is not sufficient in conducting a qualitative study. In order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a qualitative researcher must engage in active and demanding analytical processes throughout all phases of the research. Therefore, understanding these processes is an important aspect not only in carrying out qualitative research, but also in reading, understanding and interpreting the results.

What makes a study truly qualitative is that it usually relies on inductive reasoning processes to interpret and structure the meanings that can be derived from data (Holloway, 1997). Distinguishing inductive from deductive inquiry processes is an important step in identifying what counts as qualitative research. Generally speaking, inductive reasoning uses the data to generate ideas (hypothesis generating), whereas deductive reasoning begins with the idea and uses the data to confirm or negate the idea (hypothesis testing) (Holloway, 1997). In actual practice, however, many quantitative studies involve inductive reasoning, whereas good qualitative analysis often requires access to a full range of strategies (Schwandt, 1997).

Walker et al (2008) believe that all qualitative analysis, regardless of the specific approach, involves:

- comprehending the phenomenon under study;
- synthesising a portrait of the phenomenon that accounts for relations and linkages within its aspects;
- theorising about how and why these relations appear as they do; and
- recontextualising, or putting the new knowledge about phenomena and relations back into the context of how others have articulated the evolving knowledge.

These steps help depict a series of intellectual processes by which data in their raw form are considered, examined, and reformulated to become a research product. However, the form that each of these steps takes may vary according to such factors as the research question, the researcher's orientation to the inquiry, or the setting and context of the study.

The following sections will discuss the findings that emerged from interviews with the seven teachers. These findings are categorised into four subsections: teaching career, views about the International Baccalaureate (IB), introducing the IB in school, and the future of the school.

Teaching career for the participants:

The purpose of this section is to present how each teacher feels about being a teacher, thereby enabling readers to gain insight into how these teachers understand their teaching roles. In addition, it will examine how teachers perceive the similarities and differences between the new curriculum and the English National Curriculum.

Feelings about being a teacher are crucial and denote various meanings. In general, all teachers in the sample asserted that they have positive feelings about being a teacher. (MB) and (AH) feel that they are happy and content and that they are doing a wonderful job. (RS) and (FA) say that they enjoy teaching, that teaching has enriched their life, and that it has become part of their life. According to (AH), teachers who focus on the value of knowledge can deliver the same positive attitude to their students. Teachers can encourage students to love learning and evaluate knowledge by showing them the importance of the information with which they are dealing. (AH) also says that he has loved teaching since he was young; he tries to mimic good teachers he had as a student. Such positive inspiration is evident in the response by (FS) regarding her feelings as a teacher:

I have always been a teacher! I cannot remember a time when I was not "teaching"; from siblings at home, through peers at primary school, to friends at university. I have often replayed lessons in my head and changed them to fit into my perception of "a good lesson". I suppose that it is quite clear that I define myself through what I do: I AM A TEACHER; I do not work as a teacher. In short, teaching is a passion and a life goal.

The positive feelings the teachers expressed regarding their profession fall into the following summarised points:

- Teaching is one of the most honourable and honest professions in the world. (MB)
- A teacher is a messenger who makes sacrifices to help other people. (SK) (FA) (AH)
- Teaching enables the teacher to understand students' needs and help to build positive relationship with them. (FA)
- Teachers positively impact young people's lives. (FA) (RS)

Meanwhile, (ND) and (SK) report that teaching is considered a big responsibility, especially in the UK, where the teacher, as (SK) claims, can feel uncomfortable because some students do not care. In addition, (SK) adds, the law in some cases sides with the student. However, both (ND) and (SK) assert that teaching is still an important profession.

Teachers' views about IB:

The participants also commented on the curricula change; it is important to first point out the differences between the two curricula the IB and the English National curriculum. Although the English National Curriculum, as (FS) claims, gives young people the freedom to choose programmes that most suit them as well as the opportunity to combine different types of learning, it offers limited opportunities for knowledge, skills and attributes in further learning and the wider community; is confusing; lacks transparency (e.g., too many qualifications and specifications); and involves a heavy assessment burden. Meanwhile, the IB has more information about learners' achievement and their development skills and attributes; promotes the development and use of Arabic and English language, which helps students appreciate their own cultures as well as others; and involves a lesser burden on assessment and exams.

Whilst the English National Curriculum promises acknowledgement and celebration of diversity and difference, the curricular manifestations of this diversity take the form of "addendum" projects and initiatives that are never fully integrated within the curriculum itself. For example, Black Literature month is celebrated, but the fact that this month is singled out as a stand-alone month means that literature by black authors should be viewed as something that we celebrate independently from the rest of literature. In the IB programmes, such half-hearted attempts at curriculum reform are not acceptable; diversity and multi-culturalism are the foundations of the curriculum, not added extras.

Teachers' views on both new and old curricula, mentioned in question B-8, gives the reader an idea of teachers' (the participants) evaluation of and reaction to the change. (MB) says that both curricula have a common pattern of education and preparation for life. However, he adds that the IB curriculum aims to provide pupils with a broad and balanced education linked to real-life situations while remaining very challenging as well. (MB) describes the IB as not a narrow-based package. (FA) does not see much difference in terms of the delivery of the subject; both the IB and the English National Curriculum (NC) have a student-centred approach and regard the teacher as a facilitator. According to (FA), the differences are in the structure of the subject and assessment. The IB involves more project work; meanwhile, subjects such as the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) are not available in the English National Curriculum. (RS) says that both curricula have the same goals and objectives in education, but they use different approaches and methodology. Meanwhile, (FS) says that the old curriculum (NC) and the new programmes have a lot in common in the sense that they have a given pedagogy, learning and teaching standards, and an underlying philosophy.

(SK) concludes that the similarities centre around the idea that the student is the centre of the educational process; the differences involve the structure and the role of teacher, which is significantly reduced in the new curriculum. (AH) concurs that the two curricula both agree and disagree, but asserts that this is due to the fact that both concern the coverage of basic topics. (AH) says that the IB's advantages centre around its comprehensiveness, global perspective and diversity. With regard to assessment methods, (AH) claims, the IB gives the teacher greater freedom

as well as encouraging the effectiveness of the student in the areas of comprehensive research and self-reliance. On the other hand, (AH) adds, the English National Curriculum concentrates more on subject specialisation, which is appropriate for certain students who tend to study best in academic specialisations.

One of the most prominent themes to emerge throughout this study was uncertainty. The issues of uncertainty and a lack of clarity are evident in virtually every study of change, from the early implementation of change studies when Gross et al (1971) found that the majority of teachers were not able to identify the essential features of the innovation, to present studies of reform (Fullan, 1999). The problems of uncertainty and clarity increase with the complexity of the reform. In short, a lack of understanding and clarity represents a major problem of educational reform; teachers often find that it is simply not very clear as to what the change means in practice (Fullan, 2007).

Such uncertainty in turn leads to frustration on the part of the teachers. Much of the uncertainty and frustration surrounding the restructuring of the current initiative can be attributed to four distinct issues: confusion as to what the new curriculum actually is; a lack of administrative leadership and support; changes that continue to be imposed without teacher input; and the school's past history of adopting changes and then abandoning them.

In question A-6 concerning past experiences with educational change, four out of the seven participants from the sample indicated that they went through some kind of educational change during their careers. The remaining three teachers indicated that they encountered change for the first time in this school. The teachers perceived that the school had a habit of jumping from one initiative to the next, without seeing any of them through to the end. The school history of adopting changes without teacher input, and then abandoning the innovation, has led to increased frustration and uncertainty.

(MB) says that educational change is always a difficult and painful experience for the teachers, parents, and pupils; for every change, "there are victims 'casualties', usually the initiators of change never stay around to see its effect. They tend to be victims of their change or they lose interest and move on". Previous studies (Earl & Katz, 2000) indicate that teachers'

experience of waves of reform as "the flavour of the month" eventually leads them to lose their enthusiasm and their ability to sustain changes in practice. These cycles of change are very tiring for even the most dedicated teachers. (ND) describes change as stressful to many staff members and asserts that the changes occurring in the school are not based on strategic or well-thought-out plans. According to (ND), dealing with numerous changes in the school within a short period of time has yielded negative consequences; many effective staff members have left the school, as have many successful students, and the school has lost its credibility in the community.

Meaningful educational change that leads to improved teaching and learning is demanding and difficult (Evans, 2001). (RS) has experienced a number of educational changes, of which some resulted in positive aspects, such as learning from the new experience and moving forward to improve his professional approach and skills, while others resulted in negative aspects, such as the lack of preparation for the change coupled with a rush to apply it. Meanwhile, although (FA) has not experienced educational change as a teacher, he remembers the introduction of a new curriculum alongside the current one as a student at the same school. He states that the difference between that change and the current one lies in the method of implementation; in the previous change, the curriculum was introduced gradually and slowly, first with year one and subsequently with another class the following year. However, in the present change, all programmes are intended to be immediately and simultaneously implemented from the beginning.

A common administrative and legislative delusion is that reform can be imposed, even forced, on teachers, without any regard for their values or the inclusion of their voices. Historically, this pattern of forced implementation has enjoyed little or no success (Hargreaves, 2001). Based on his experience, (AH) concludes that the sequential current changes in the school resulted from:

1- The people who established the school looking to it as a private school which serves specific niche (the Arab and Muslim people living in London) rather than a general educational institution, resulting in any decision regarding the school being affected by this view;

2- A succession of different authorities, each with a different vision and direction;

3- The lack of an independent committee that includes parents, who are in charge of counselling at the school;

4- Those people who have gained expertise in change inside the school leaving on their own accord or by redundancy, resulting in a loss of expertise at the school; and

5- Fluctuations in the budget supplication.

Fullan (2007) notes that the crux of change is how individuals come to terms with the reality of the change in the context of their familiar framework of reality. In other words, their interpretation of what the change means for them influences what they subsequently do and how they do it. The teachers struggled with issues of clarity and a lack of clear understanding as to what the goals of the IB curriculum initiative were. Uncertainty and frustration emerged as recurring themes in this study. Yet in question B-7, the teachers indicated that they understand the IB curriculum and had a good idea about the philosophy and structure of it. Such positive feelings will facilitate the implementation of the new curriculum, but some concerns remain.

(MB) thinks that the IB curriculum is an excellent package, especially at the diploma level; he is looking forward to teaching the science components. However, he states: "the middle years programme (MYP) and the primary years programme (PYP)—I am not too confident in regard to implementation. We should take each programme alone instead of implementing all programmes at once." Likewise, (FA) feels that the IB curriculum is a stronger curriculum than the English National Curriculum; currently in the UK, most universities are looking to accept pupils who study the IB over their counterparts who have taken A-levels. (FA) mentioned that the media had reported that many state schools will be providing the IB as an option alongside A-levels.

(RS) concurs that the IB curriculum is well designed and offers several good programmes: "It [IB] provides students with well-balanced education in order to meet the international standards and it also promotes the development and use of Arabic and English languages." In his opinion, this helps students to appreciate their own culture as well as other cultures. Yet, based on his experience, (RS) cautions that a great deal of work and organisation needs to be done to implement the IB curriculum.

(FS) also feels quite enthused by the prospect of teaching an IB programme, and (ND) sees it as a good challenge for all teachers—it is up to them to make it successful and boost the school's status. (SK) describes the new curriculum as excellent and challenging, but adds that it needs gradual implementation; with great effort and potential, the student will be able to graduate in more than one language and will gain admission to most universities. According to (AH), despite the IB system's newness;

[it] is characterised with flexibility and the freedom to choose the topics. [It is] also characterised by realism and integration and diversity; on the other hand, the IB gives high doses of power in several disciplines, making the student familiar with the high level of academy that life needs. It is a comprehensive and universal curriculum.

Introducing the IB in the school:

Educational change is highly complex, and the profoundly political system in which teachers' work shapes and constrains their efforts to improve or change it (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000). The teachers encountered a number of significant and noteworthy barriers during this study. Two distinct yet interconnected issues emerged: the decision to introduce the IB curriculum in the school and lingering doubts or concerns the participants have regarding this decision. The participants split into two groups regarding the decision to introduce the IB in the school. The group supporting the decision describes it as right and useful; the others believe the decision to be one that is incorrect and does not serve the school at this stage.

(MB) considers the decision to be good in principle, adding that it is not only the school that thinks this of the initiative: "UK education is also gradually incorporating the IB ideas". However, he feels that each decision should include as many interested groups as possible. (FA) agrees, he has no problem with the IB itself, but feels that the decision was made by very few people—maybe one or two—without consulting more experienced people. He also feels that the implementation of the IB, as well as the manner in which it was rushed in to the school, was wrong, and the school is still suffering as a result. (RS) believes the decision to introduce the IB curriculum can be a step forward, if implemented efficiently; a great deal of consultation and discussion among parents, students and staff is always

beneficial. (FS) looks at the decision as a move towards providing better services to students. (ND) thinks it is more convenient for the Muslim community living in London to be taught the IB curriculum, because it helps students to be open-minded and increases awareness of other cultures and religions. He thinks it is a good decision.

However, (SK) argues the decision is inappropriate because it did not take into account the interest of the majority of students or the curriculum being suitable for students. The opinion of teachers was neglected; so were the students' and parents' opinions. The authorities who took this decision were convinced that it was the right one.

In addition, (AH) argues the decision to implement the new curriculum was inappropriate for several reasons. The beneficiary (local community) had not been consulted in the matter at all. The local community has reservations about what might be included in the new programme, with topics such as ballet, drama, music, and singing available. In addition, the present staff is not able to achieve the new curriculum, meaning additional or new staff is required. As a result, the total cost to develop the programme is very high and may double as the programme requires the school to bring in teachers with special expertise in various areas. In addition to the lack of confidence among the staff of teachers, questions have emerged about the ability to succeed in light of the failure of previous curriculum changes. The decline in the number of students because of the instability of the school regarding changes in curriculum has led to particular concerns about the changes and a lack of useful material with which to move forward in the new programme. In addition, the board of trustees has been unable to convince the staff of the benefit of the change.

The teachers' responses to questions C-10 (about lingering doubts or concerns they have) and C-11 (about their feeling towards the IB curriculum initiative), provide additional concerns regarding the implementation of the new curriculum. (MB) focuses on the impact of the change on staff at the school:

My concern remains as always, the degree of support for this project [IB] from the parents, the board of trustees and from teachers. Implementing such large changes is traumatic and involves hard work, requiring more pay as well as new responsibilities. My concern is that, if

the rewards are not competitive, good, well-trained teachers and staff might be forced to leave. This means that the school is forever training staff, who then are forever leaving.

Nolan and Meister (2000) documented that teacher uncertainty is intensified by a lack of management leadership and teachers' commitment to doing what is best for students. This appeared to hold true within this research study as the ambiguity of the school restructuring effort left many of the teachers feeling at a loss. Without the guidance and support of the management, the teachers felt like they were on their own, struggling to understand their role within the restructuring effort and questioning if more sudden changes would occur in the future. Given the complexity of implementing change, the teachers perceived that they did not receive the managerial support and guidance they needed. However, overall (MB) expresses reservedly positive feelings about the IB:

My feelings towards the IB curriculum initiative are positive, but I'd like to be reassured of job and role security. Too many changes too fast create a sense of insecurity.

Meanwhile, (FA)'s concerns focus on pre-implementation issues, stating that changes needed to be thought about carefully, and a clear plan should be put in place. This plan should include a time line at specific levels, not as a whole school. (FA)'s feelings on the plan are mixed:

I have no problem with the IB curriculum and with implementing it. However, the way it was brought in at the expense of our students was a mistake. KS3 GCSEs were discontinued, and currently students who finish Y9 end up with no qualifications. Why couldn't KS3 and GCSE run alongside the IB up until it is certified?...The doubts I have are that three years since the plan to introduce IB was taken, and it's not until 2018 that we will be certified if at all. Another concern that I have is: are the students, the school has, capable of achieving the grade in IB when they struggle with A-levels and written work?

(FS) also comments on administrative aspects of the implementation:

The lack of stability in management worries me. This is an external factor, and has nothing to do with the programme itself, but it still causes concern for me. I am concerned that the Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the Primary Years Programme (PYP) are so flexible that there are just too many probabilities available for implementing them.

Yet (FS) remains optimistic about the implementation:

I believe that our students deserve the best, and the IB programmes can provide us with a great opportunity to do that. Diversity is never threatening, as far as I see it. I believe that asking questions, developing inquiring and inquisitive minds, and defining ourselves—not by what we are not, but by what we are—are all qualities that help the positive development of our children. This will aid them in the future in responding to challenges to their identity, faith, or beliefs in a way that recognises where "other" points of view come from. Such responses are bound to lead to better outcomes in terms of helping the "other" see how we see things.

(ND) also comments on the need to ensure a well-planned implementation, but remains positive about the programme itself overall. (RS) raises questions about the issues of communication and a lack of transparency, but states: "I agree strongly with the philosophy and the vision of the IB programme, and I would love to see it implemented in reality."

Meanwhile, other teachers commented on the impact of implementation on the students. (SK) asserts that successful implementation will be difficult because the curriculum's success requires academically successful students. As students constantly enter and exit the school, thereby changing the composition of the student body, (SK) asks: "Why was the IB model chosen for the school and for those who are seeking to develop?" (SK) goes on to assert that teachers are not happy about the IB curriculum, asserting that "this is a step to increase confusion within the school, rather than stability".

Finally, (AH) responds with much caution about the curriculum and its implementation:

My concerns are the general attitude of the world towards the IB, as well as Britain, which is seriously contemplating applying the same approach. The means of communication and information technology facilitate the possibility of applying the curriculum regardless of its comprehensiveness and universality of liberty. The IB curriculum is closer, in fact, to the Arabic curriculum than the English National Curriculum.

Although (AH) notes that the IB curriculum includes the freedom to choose national and regional topics, with more areas than exist in the English National Curriculum—especially in social, cultural, linguistic and

spiritual studies—his outlook remains one of caution regarding the potential success of implementation as well as the curriculum itself:

Success may be achieved, but not as easily or quickly as anticipated. There may be a need for patience…as well as allowing time to deal with [difficulties], as is the case in any new project. The question now is, do parents sacrifice their children to go to the programme? And another question is whether the parents know that the levels of children are below the level of entry in the programme diploma? Will they agree in these circumstances to the [continued enrolment in this school] of their children?

As stated earlier, teacher involvement in the process has been a concern both among the participating teachers and in the literature. Teacher participation is vital to the success of any change (Fullan, 2007). Questions B-12 and B-13 asked the teachers to comment on their roles in the process—both currently and expected.

Several teachers commented that their roles have not changed from primarily teaching duties and indicated no particular involvement in the implementation of the IB curriculum. (FA), (RS), (FS), and (SK) indicate that they are teachers involved in a specific subject. (SK) goes so far as to state: "I have no opportunity to participate or express myself. Due to the way the administration impose change on teachers, isolation is an expected reaction to this kind of treatment."

However, several of these teachers expressed a personal desire to play a larger role in the implementation of the curriculum. According to (MB), "I expect to play an important role, such as dealing with the science department, as well as examination tasks both internal and external". In addition, (FS) states, "I expect to be quite instrumental in moving forward with the programme. Having said that, instability is a fact of life at the school, so you never know!" Finally, (SK) comments quite strongly on the expected roles within the new curriculum, suggesting that skills and abilities play a lesser role in determining which teachers are involved:

I hear only that there are teachers nominated for training for the new curriculum without consulting us. The reason behind choosing certain teachers is not according to objective methods; it is because of friendship or favouritism. The administration is weak and does not want to be challenged by anyone. So, those teachers who do what the administration wants will be chosen and promoted to higher position.

Two teachers—(ND) and (AH)—indicated that they are currently trying to be involved in the implementation. (ND) states that he is teaching and adapting the IB curriculum in various subjects. Meanwhile, (AH) is working to help other teachers develop their skills:

As a PhD holder in the subject of in-service teacher training, the Administration entrusted me to coordinate the work of training and development for teachers, especially since they are forced to train themselves in the fields of the curriculum for [the] IB. They have a dire need for training in accordance with the requirements of the IB curriculum.

Educational change is a learning experience for the adults involved as well as for children. Teachers need to participate in skill-training workshops; they also need to have one-to-one and group opportunities to receive and give help and, more simply, converse about the meaning of change. Under these conditions, teachers learn how to use an innovation as well as to judge its desirability on more informed grounds; hence, they are in a better position to know whether they should accept, modify, or reject the change (Fullan, 2007). In the present study, the researcher noticed that each one of the teachers is thinking to play a role in the school by him or her alone. There are no procedures offered from the management to push teachers to collaborate in work. Providing teachers with opportunities to work together can help to improve the quality of curriculum, teaching and learning so that teachers can prepare for their students and cope with a new curriculum. Reductions and restrictions in their preparation time hamper teachers' abilities to innovate effectively and limit the quality of what they are able to prepare for their classrooms (Hargreaves, 2001).

Both (ND) and (AH) indicate that they expect to continue to be involved in some aspect of development of the new curriculum. According to (ND), he expects to play a very productive role, whether teaching or in another aspect of school life. Meanwhile, (AH) focuses on the role within a team:

The role that I expect myself to fill with my colleagues from the teaching staff and management at the school is to work as part of a team, and to participate in the information and put my experience at the service of others. I will accept others, no matter how different their views, so that in the decision-making, the decision will go to the majority of votes and will

bear results. I feel that success would be beneficial for all, and failure a cause for self-examination.

Relationships and strong collaborative cultures in teaching are powerfully linked to effective classroom learning, stronger professional confidence, and feelings of self-efficacy among teachers and their capacity to initiate and respond to change. Numerous studies document the fact that collaborative work cultures at the school, and ideally at the borough level, are critical for the implementation of attempted reforms (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010; Fullan, 1999).

The future of the IB in the school:

The teachers involved in this study unanimously indicated that they have high hopes for the change in curriculum. (MB) expects the school to become a centre for excellence in learning. (FA) echoes this statement, hoping the school returns to "its former days of glory" as a reputable place of study. Both (FA) and (ND) hope the change will eventually attract more students. (ND) also comments on the expectation that the change will result in the school rising to a leading position in the educational field by raising students' achievements and teachers' expectations. (FS) suggests the change will eventually lead to more student-centred education, true bilingualism and higher student achievement— "top-notch graduates that are accepted at the world's most renowned universities." (SK) believes the school can succeed in achieving the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) accreditation.

Meanwhile, (RS) focuses on both student achievement and assessment. He hopes the IB curriculum will bring about "a unified framework of qualifications that stretches the performance of learners, motivates progression, and recognises different levels of achievement". In addition, he expects "assessment arrangements that are appropriate to different types of course and styles of teaching and learning, with the overall amount of assessment manageable for learners and teachers alike".

Finally, (AH) expects additional general training in the field of planning and preparation for the IB curriculum, stating that "general training for teachers in the area of subject planning, the development of curricula, and a scheme of work" is important to the success of the curriculum. In addition, he maintains that recognising "the importance of

collective work and understanding and accommodating international developments in the educational field" should be the hallmarks of success.

Most teachers also believe they will ultimately benefit from the new curriculum. (MB) states that teachers will benefit from the training and new skills learned, particularly as schools throughout the UK are implementing the IB curriculum. (RS) states that the training will enhance teaching skills in general, while (ND) believes the training will enable teachers to become experts in the IB curriculum. (FA) also comments on the additional training, stating that it will open additional opportunities for employment—a belief echoed by (FS). (AH) states that the additional training will make him more effective and influential: "My prediction is that it would make me more global, more comprehensive and more acceptable to others in the exchange of cultures, with the possibility of enforcing respect for the cultures and principles of others." (SK) alone remains pessimistic: "I will still be a maths teacher. In fact, there is nothing to lose. I see things a bit more optimistically when the situation is corrected and the school has received a new administration. However, if things go as they currently are, I am pessimistic about what can happen in the future."

Finally, the teachers offered mixed responses in predicting their future career positions. (FA) and (FS) both comment that they cannot predict the future, although (FA) states that if he does not "take on more responsibilities soon…I would see myself elsewhere". (RS) also comments on the hope to have a more active role within the school in order to achieve the goals of the school and help in making it a success. Several teachers also commented on their hopes to have a role in the new curriculum initiative. (MB) hopes to move up to a coordinator or departmental head position, although states a desire not to move to this level "for many reasons". (SK) indicates a desire "to be involved in the establishment of a department of mathematics, and the evolution of the students. I want to play a leading role in the school." (ND) also hopes to make an impact outside the classroom, stating,

I hope the school will be more able to evaluate properly members of staff on the basis of their skills, expertise and professionalism and use them in ways that make the school more successful.

Finally, (AH) expects to contribute in teaching and training in the school:

I will find myself a successful teacher for the three programmes contained in the IB curriculum. I would also like to contribute to develop the performance of teachers by designing training programmes that fit with the IB needs.

Conclusions and recommendations:

The teachers in this study felt that they had little or no say in the new curriculum initiative decision, including the role that they play in the school. Management's autocratic approach to decision making was increasingly frustrating for the teachers, who wished for more collaboration and involvement in the governance of the school as well as the participation of the parents and local community. Teachers in the present study were initially not accorded an opportunity to interact with curriculum developers during the initiation, development and adoption phases of curriculum change. The management did not involve teachers in the decision to introduce the new curriculum, and later teachers were excluded from the process of developing the new curriculum. Such a scenario has widespread ramifications for teachers in their implementation efforts. Teachers perceive that specific factors must be obtained for the delivery of successful curriculum implementation.

The data obtained during the present study led the researcher to confirm that teachers play an important role in educational change; therefore, it is essential that policy makers involve teachers from the initial curriculum stage. If the management takes this into account, teachers would have the opportunity to collaborate, interact and provide the input that teachers uniquely have. Meaningful educational change that leads to more powerful teaching and learning is difficult and represents "a serious personal and collective experience characterized (sic) by ambivalence and uncertainty" (Fullan, 2007, p. 32). The author believes that this study adds to the existing body of knowledge that attempts to define the perceptions of teachers involved in school change. This study can also assist policymakers and managers with their understandings of the complexities of school change.

This study highlights the importance of the following realities that need to be recognised when schools engage in restructuring efforts: (a) teachers need to understand the initiative; (b) teachers need opportunities to learn and to collaborate; (c) teachers need adequate resources and support; (d) teachers need time to change; (e) teachers measure their success based on the intrinsic rewards of student achievement. The teachers in the present study attempted to define what the initiative entailed and tried to piece together what they knew in the hope that they were indeed heading in the right direction. However, despite numerous efforts to elicit feedback from the management, the teachers did not completely understand the goals of the new curriculum initiative. In addition to understanding the meaning of change, a teacher's motivation and commitment to any particular change—not just change in general—is important for successful implementation. A common administrative and legislative delusion is that reform can be imposed, even forced, on teachers, without any regard for their values or inclusion of their voices (Hargreaves, 2001). Historically, this pattern of forced implementation has enjoyed little or no success, and within this study caused increased frustration on the part of the teachers.

Despite the barriers faced, the teachers remained dedicated to the initiative because of their commitment to teaching and to the success of students. They were also motivated by their desire to improve student learning. Therefore, it is important that when considering school change, the foci remain on what is important to teachers—namely, student success. Educational change should be framed from the perspective of improved student learning, not focused on the methods or techniques being advocated. Understanding that teachers are motivated by the psychic rewards of teaching is crucial to successful school change.

This study asserts that teachers do not have a single shared perspective on educational change. The complexity of the emergent themes demonstrates the need for future studies to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences as they engage in restructuring efforts. Every teacher experiences change differently; studying these experiences will add to the growing knowledge base. Future studies should focus on how teachers experience change in different contexts, in order to begin to identify more clearly the key elements needed to support and sustain successful school change and, specifically, the introducing of new curricula. The rapidly

changing field of education has increased the interest in and need for future studies that address questions relating to implementation and the implication for everyone involved. Researchers need to undertake studies that explore change from the perspective of various stakeholders. Future studies could focus on the impact educational change has on students. Very little research has been conducted regarding curriculum change from the student perspective. In addition, future studies could involve managers as well as parents as such research into their experiences and perceptions would be very illuminating. Another area for future research would involve other schools within London planning to introduce a new curriculum—the IB in particular. The Arabic school in west London is one model charged with leading the way and serving for other Arabic schools to follow.

This study does not come to an elegant conclusion; rather, the conclusion is still unfolding. The school continues its implementation procedures with the IB organisation in order to gain accreditation for the IB curriculum. This process will require at least two more years according to the development plan. The teachers were asked to adopt new practices and to adapt their pedagogy to infuse teaching strategies that differ from traditional methods that define what it means to be a teacher. Responding to change and to the introduction of the IB is an inescapable reality of these teachers' work as long as they stay in the school. Successful and sustainable educational change depends on how teachers understand, make meaning of and respond to these changes.

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