

Leadership and Collaboration in Implementing Curriculum Change in Hong Kong Secondary Schools

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Task-based learning (TBL) was a methodological innovation in the 1999 English Language syllabus for secondary schools and the 2006 curriculum for senior secondary schools in Hong Kong, designed to replace teacher-centred, grammar-focused approaches that were identified as previously prevalent. This two-year longitudinal study analyses the implementation of TBL in three schools. It focuses on teachers' conceptions of TBL and classroom practice, and the support provided by senior management. It finds that TBL is enacted differently by individual teachers, and that the lack of senior leadership is significant in causing the innovation either to wither or to become diffuse. In some cases, problems associated with implementing TBL were addressed through the determined commitment of pioneering teachers and the collaborative efforts by staff, but change was nonetheless hampered.

Key words: curriculum change, management, classroom practice, English language teaching/learning, task-based learning

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the processes of implementing a curriculum reform - the Task-based learning (TBL) innovation in Hong Kong - in different secondary school contexts. Adopting a positivist approach - which is concerned with describing and understanding the diversity of the implemented curriculum in context - it examines how factors at the school level and at the teacher level influence the nature of the innovation as enacted at the chalkface. The study, which has widespread implications for

curriculum reform in schools, finds that TBL was being implemented by teachers in ways that diverged significantly from the intended curriculum, due to factors such as unclear conceptions of the reform, the lack of teacher enthusiasm, weak collaborative cultures and, most notably, the lack of leadership from school principals, deputies and other senior teachers.

TBL was introduced as a key component in the 1999 syllabus for English Language in secondary schools (Curriculum Development Council, 1999) and the 2007 curriculum for English Language for senior secondary schools in Hong Kong (Curriculum Development Council & Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2007). English is an important subject in Hong Kong because it is perceived as important for economic development in an increasingly globalized world, and as in many East Asian countries, curriculum reform has increasingly promoted versions of communicative language teaching, including TBL (Littlewood, 2007). Success in English examinations is

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a requirement for access to tertiary education and to good employment prospects. It is taught in primary schools and has a strong presence on the secondary school curriculum, even though daily social transactions for the vast majority of the population are conducted in Cantonese, the local Chinese dialect.

Because of the high stakes related to public examinations in English Language, prevalent pedagogical practices tended to reflect the three Ts: teacher-centred, textbook-centred and test-centred (Adams & Morris, 1998), with the mastery of grammatical knowledge and other discrete linguistic items taking precedence over more holistic forms of language. TBL was intended to be a sweeping change, envisaging a shift in theoretical models of second language acquisition (SLA) away from the empiricist/skill-based approaches that assume that language learning is the result of behaviour and largely conditioned responses on the discrete linguistic level, towards the rationalist/process approaches that assert that language learning is primarily the result of social interaction, critical thinking and a desire to communicate using holistic discourse. It is thus associated with the philosophy of the communicative approach that has been widely promoted internationally in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It was also

linked to progressivist values systems promoting student-centred learning and the development of broad generic skills that could be seen as being in tension with traditional Asian educational values (Morris, 2000; Littlewood, 2007).

TBL is premised on the notion that the acquisition process functions best when students are exposed to a rich language environment for active comprehension, and are given many opportunities to use language in creative, motivating, realistic tasks and in social interaction (Krashen, 1981; Skehan, 1998; Bax, 2004; Skehan & Foster, 2005; Swan, 2005). To foster successful SLA, TBL concentrates on making the classroom experience resemble that which the learner will face in the wider community, while, at the same time, allowing opportunities for form-focused teaching and learning in a supporting role (Nunan, 1987, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Ellis, 2003). Classroom events include discussion-oriented, problem-solving activities, and students are asked to work in groups rather than in the more traditional teacher-fronted arrangement. Learners take an active role in negotiating with each other by adjusting the acquired L2 structures in the conversation to achieve mutual comprehension of meaning (Ellis, 2003; Bruton, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2006), and control their own learning by using individual learning styles and strategies.

The term ‘task’ is a complex concept, defined and

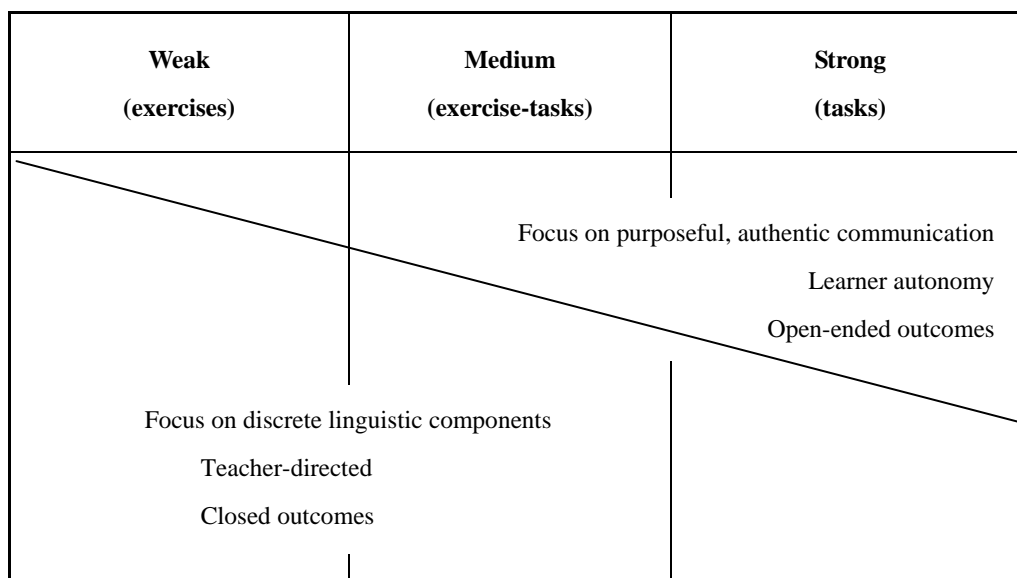


Figure 1. Forms of TBL (adapted from Littlewood, 2004 and Tong et al., 2000)

analysed from various, sometimes critical, theoretical and pedagogical perspectives (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1996, 1998; Willis, 1996). In this study, a broad conceptualisation of 'task' is used to classify the pedagogical activities that took place in the case study schools (Figure 1). The framework encompasses Littlewood's (2004) distinction between focus on form and focus on meaning in communication-oriented language teaching—both of which have a role in TBL (Tong, 2005). It identifies three categories: a *weak* form, in which priority is given to the mastery of discrete linguistic forms (such as grammatical structures, vocabulary and pronunciation) and the focus on holistic communication of meaning (such as conducting a conversation or written correspondence) is relegated to a peripheral or supporting role; and a *strong* form, that is the reverse of the weak form (Legutke & Thomas, 1991). The framework also incorporates a *medium* form where there is a balance in the focus on contextualised language and individual language items (Tong, Adamson, & Che, 2000).

A number of studies in Hong Kong regarding TBL have highlighted the tension between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum (Clark et al., 1999; the collection of papers in Adamson, Kwan & Chan, 2000; Adamson & Davison, 2003; Carless, 2002, 2004, 2007) and have identified contextual factors at the school level that militate against faithful adherence to the ambitious intentions of curriculum planners. In a comparative study of the intended, resourced and implemented TBL primary school curriculum for English Language and Chinese Language, Tong et al. (2000) found that English Language teachers tended to implement a medium form of TBL that balanced a focus on discrete linguistic forms and a focus on holistic communication. Tasks with the characteristics of the intended curriculum (i.e., involving realistic, purposeful and holistic use of language), when they were evident, were generally placed at the end of learning sequences, where they were often squeezed by time constraints or given to the students as homework with little subsequent attention paid to the outcome. There were several reasons for this. Many teachers reported that they had confidence in their established pedagogy and were dubious as to the claims of TBL, which they felt was time-consuming and offering little pedagogical variety, although they were willing to accede to the reform by adding TBL on to their existing approaches to

ELT. They cited the problem of noise generated by learners engaged in TBL being misinterpreted by the Principal and other colleagues as indicative of poor classroom management. A lack of suitable resources was also mentioned as a disincentive. Similar findings were reported by Carless (2002, 2004). His study also found that many primary school teachers of English Language did not have strong English communicative proficiency and had received insufficient training in TBL pedagogy. Teachers complained that large class sizes of around 40 students in cramped classrooms constrained the use of TBL, and they expressed frustration at students' tendency to use the mother tongue, Cantonese, when engaged in TBL, and at the uneven degree of engagement by students in group work.

The major focus of these studies has been primary schools, where the contextual dynamics are different from secondary schools (for instance, the English level of the students is likely to be more sophisticated) but the findings provide some useful pointers to avenues of inquiry for the present study. This paper argues that such factors also led to the implementation of a hybrid version of TBL that grafts the reforms onto existing models of teaching and learning. This present study views curriculum reform as a complex process, riddled with contradictions and tensions involving interacting factors such as the nature of a policy as "often an amorphous and shifting phenomenon" (Adamson & Morris, 2000, p. 19); the prevailing ethos or culture and quality of leadership of a school adopting the reform; and the role of stakeholders inside or outside the school setting and their perception, ownership of and involvement in the reform process (Hall & Hord, 1987; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Markee, 1997). Of fundamental importance is the role played by school management and teachers: "significant curriculum change is dependent on how it is understood and used by teachers and how the change is incorporated within the structures and culture of the school" (Adamson & Morris, 2000, p. 19).

Research Design

This study analyses the forms of TBL enacted in three case study schools. Case studies are able to capture the participants' viewpoints and give a vivid and full description of what happened, and are well suited to

attaining an understanding of the complex process of implementing TBL through a multitude of tensions and compromises. A combination of data collection approaches were used for triangulation - document analysis, observation of 110 lessons, 54 semi-structured interviews with 23 stakeholders, and the study of task materials. Ethical procedures, such as obtaining consent and maintaining confidentiality, were followed in accordance with established practice. The stakeholders included staff in leadership positions: the school principal, the deputy principal and the panel chairperson (head) of the English Language department in each school. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Cantonese, and quotations have been translated into English for this paper. Analysis was guided by conceptions of TBL incorporated in Figure 1, and by patterns that emerged from the data as the research proceeded. Tentative findings were checked through further cycles of interviews, lesson observations and documentary analysis.

One area of interest in the study was the teachers' understanding and conceptualisation of TBL, and how they related these to their existing beliefs about English language teaching and learning, as well as their interpretation of TBL in the classroom. Another area was how teachers were supported in the implementation of reform. This involved probing why the schools adopted TBL in the first place, and the strategies employed by school leaders to help the teachers in understanding and putting TBL into practice.

Findings

This section analyses how TBL was transformed by teachers in the three case studies. It examines the roles played by change facilitators, especially the school leadership, in each case.

School 1

In School 1, the move to adopt TBL came from Eve, an experienced English teacher, on her return from an in-service training course. She took up a pioneering role and initiated TBL in her own Secondary 2 class, with the support of Mandy, a supernumerary English teacher from overseas. The panel chairperson adopted a 'wait and see' approach and only minimal support was provided by the

school leaders. Eve's project was never mentioned in English panel meetings, and the principal had no direct involvement in the process of change. Eve and Mandy were allocated adjacent desks in the staff room because the principal wanted to facilitate the adjustment of Mandy to her new environment, and this arrangement helped professional exchange, while their shared spirit of innovation kept them going.

Eve and Mandy implemented their understanding of TBL on an ad hoc basis. They did not have a clear idea about TBL, merely seeking to alleviate the existing boredom among students in learning English. When asked about her definition of TBL, Eve said that tasks should be purposeful and involve students' active participation, as students will learn the language through playing. This conception is located towards the strong form of TBL. Mandy commented:

We try to involve students more actively in learning and have more fun with them. But to be honest, we don't know whether we are actually doing tasks.

Nevertheless, one example demonstrates the use of a strong type of task. It was linked to a unit in the textbook on the topic 'People'. Eve and Mandy asked the students to look for information related to their pop idols and to conduct a simulated interview with them. Then the students were requested to write a poem to express their admiration for their idols. However Eve and Mandy found it difficult to include such tasks that integrated listening, speaking, reading and writing skills into the existing internal school teaching schedule because their textbooks (which were based on a previous official syllabus) espoused a discrete approach to language skills. They also had to finish prescribed activities with the class, especially those linked to the common assessment.

Eve and Mandy maintained a low profile at first, but later explored channels to share their experiences, such as a board display of students' work. When other teachers pointed out the grammatical errors in the students' work, Eve explained that the main intention was to acknowledge the students' efforts at communication and a focus on language mistakes could be discouraging. After a term passed, the panel chairperson began to accept that the learning about TBL was maturing and she took over the leading role, extending the implementation of TBL to more

classes, by putting teachers into work teams, with an expert guiding novices. Eve and Mandy each acted as the coordinator of different year groups to support other teachers. It was the work of the two pioneers, together with the eventual readiness of the other teachers and support from the panel that contributed to the carryover of TBL to other year groups. One colleague, Cindy, summed up the other teachers' feeling about undertaking the change by saying:

It's good to have someone who has the experience to lead the change... Eve is willing to share their experience and materials with us and we don't have to start from scratch. Working together, we can share more ideas and lessen the workload.

Eve informed higher level management about the progress of TBL in the school, as she thought they might help its development. She felt that the principal was timid in trying out new ideas, but the deputy principal was encouraging. He held a practical view of reforms, perceiving that aspects such as teacher preparation and workload needed to be taken into consideration when planning for change. He supported teachers in receiving further training to enhance their professional development and also applied for government funding to set up a multi-media language centre so that the English classes could use that room for TBL activities. Overall, though, TBL was implemented through a process that was piecemeal, serendipitous and lacking vision, direction and systematicity.

School 2

In School 2, the panel chairperson, Mike, first mooted the idea of adopting TBL - even though he admitted that he did not have a strong grasp of the concept. However, most of the teachers had received some training in TBL, which meant that they were more disposed to adopting the innovation. The principal backed the move, as one teacher, Lucy, commented:

The principal—who admitted that he knew nothing about task-based learning—was very supportive in allowing this tryout. Also, he values English

teaching.... The principal doesn't want the English proficiency of our students to worsen, so whenever we have any suggestions to improve students' learning, the principal is often willing to listen and support us.

The teachers' reliance on outside expertise was evident in the initial stage. Mike's wife, who was an English teacher in another school and who had attended the in-service course on TBL, was invited to present some ways of developing resources. The success of this workshop prompted the teachers to invite colleagues from other schools to share their experiences of TBL. Another strategy was to learn about TBL through trial and error. The tryout in the first year was on a modest scale—just four weeks of each semester in Secondary 1 were devoted to TBL, which meant that the teachers did not feel that it was an onerous imposition.

However, the teachers felt uncertain about the concepts and effective implementation of TBL from the outset. Not one of the seven English teachers involved in the TBL initiative claimed they understood the principles 'very well'; three said they understood these principles 'well'; three reckoned they had 'average' understanding; and another claimed to understand the principles 'very badly'. This lack of confidence was not helped by the system that was used to produce TBL materials. The teaching team divided the work: each member was responsible for designing one unit of work, that is, a few tasks under a unifying topic. The teachers held brief meetings to decide on the topics and their sequence, and the format. Based on their discussion of what would be more appealing to students, the topics they chose for the two terms were 'Growing Up' and 'Food and Health', in which units such as relationships with others, study and extra-curricular activities, eating habits, and fitness were devised. Once these had been decided, the team had to come up with the materials for use with the Secondary 1 classes. There was no explicit agreement on the number of tasks to be designed for each unit; the team just agreed on having enough materials for one cycle per unit. There was no discussion among the team on the actual tasks within each unit and how the materials could be presented. The length, the focus, the language content or skills were not discussed either. The reason one teacher gave was that they relied on their experience, intuition and judgement, as discussions would take up too much time. There was no feedback loop

to ensure commonality of approach.

In the end, some classes found the teaching materials more difficult than those for other classes. Sometimes the language was too easy, and the teachers had to modify the materials. Some tasks had to be cut because teachers had to devote time to other in-house activities. Moreover, the common assessment created a feeling of a need for greater uniformity, and this led to concern among the tryout teachers at the different work pace of different classes. Although the quantity and quality of the final products varied a lot, the teachers avoided adverse comments to colleagues and simply made their own adjustments in the classroom. This served the sound pedagogical principle of catering to the specific needs, interests and abilities of different students, but it added to the workload of the teachers.

Most tasks were weak, being uncontextualised language exercises; others were medium, in that they practised language items within a communicative context; and a few had the characteristics of holism, purposefulness and contextualisation associated with the strong characterisation of tasks. In this process, the teachers revealed their lack of understanding of tasks. For instance, one teacher, Florence, claimed she used a strong version of TBL in teaching grammar:

I introduced some activities in the topic of question tags as so to arouse students' interest. We had a game of bingo. Students were asked to put down some question tags, like 'doesn't he?' Then, I read out some sentences and asked my students to fill out the answer, as well as to check if the question tags they had put down fitted into the answer.

In fact, this focus on question tags without reference to a communicative context is a weak form of task.

The decision to shelve TBL in the second year was taken after a questionnaire survey of teachers and students revealed that the teachers were still not sure what a task was. There was a consensus among the teachers that TBL took too much time to prepare and implement. A problem of leadership was apparent: the school leaders tended to see the whole change process from the perspective that it was better to have something carried out instead of nothing. The panel chairperson was an interested participant but not a dynamic

driver of the initiative. Other teachers played the role of an outsider or observer instead of really facilitating the process of change. The few meetings that did take place tended to focus on logistic matters instead of pedagogical issues. As a result, there was no individual person or channel to crystallise understandings of TBL. The cautious strategies used to develop the tryout actually contributed to the decision to shelve the TBL experiment. The tryout generated considerable work because it necessitated time-consuming production of materials by the teachers. Pseudo-collaboration was enforced in the form of sharing of ideas and designing materials, but little intellectual or professional exchange was generated. Teachers simply worked on their own. Their hard work was not rewarded with a sense of satisfaction or achievement that could impel them to continue. The change was viewed as an isolated event instead of a process and the lack of dynamic leadership negatively impacted on teachers' enthusiasm for change and drove them back to their original practice. The adoption of TBL was characterised by superficial understanding and a lack of uniformity, while its implementation was half-hearted, weakly managed and individualistic.

School 3

The adoption of TBL in School 3 was initiated by the principal, who saw an opportunity for enhancing the school's image as an innovative school. He reckoned that that TBL offered an opportunity to enhance students' ability to learn. However he was frustrated by the apparent unwillingness of teachers to display initiative in contributing constructively to the change instead of automatically following his instructions. To counter this attitude, the principal brought in two newly qualified staff, Iris and Monica, who, he believed, possessed a better understanding of TBL.

The school started experimenting with TBL in Secondary 1. The panel chairperson was worried that it would be more difficult to do TBL with normal class sizes of around 40 students, so each Secondary 1 class was split into two groups, taking advantage of the availability of the two extra teachers. Iris and Monica were given the responsibility of designing TBL materials. However, as newcomers at the vanguard of change, they were in a weak

position to persuade the other teachers to use the materials. The other teachers did not dare to criticise the materials or refuse to use them because the idea was initiated by the principal, but no genuine professional exchange took place between the two sides, and this was exacerbated by Iris and Monica being accommodated in the resource room rather than in the staffroom. They remained physically and intellectually separated. Monica commented,

I think there are quite a lot of misunderstandings between us and the other Secondary 1 teachers. They might think that we are specially recruited by the principal and trying to impose something on them, but in fact we need their involvement and feedback as well.

Iris and Monica appeared to have clear ideas of TBL. They reckoned that good acquisition of English required meaningful and active participation on the part of the students. The other teachers had little idea of TBL. Four teachers said that they had quickly flicked through the official syllabus to learn more about TBL, while others said they expected to get ideas from the textbooks. Some teachers reckoned that they had already been adopting a similar approach to a strong form of TBL, but the activities they described were actually just practising discrete language items. They still held the belief that 'students learn from teacher instruction' and tasks were for 'practising', 'revising' and 'catering for individual differences'.

Iris and Monica were not experienced materials designers. They based their design on their own understanding of TBL and the exemplar modules produced to complement the official syllabus. Tasks were designed with reference to the textbook chapters selected for use at the beginning of the term. Even though the Secondary 1 teachers viewed the tasks as being related to the textbook chapters, they treated them as separate entities without making explicit links to students' previous and upcoming learning. Most teachers in fact considered the TBL reform as a disruptive process whereby they were asked to change their habits and routines for the sake of outcomes that they thought were not guaranteed. The traditional way of English Language teaching was so firmly grounded in practice that moving towards TBL seemed to be too big a step for most of them. Consequently, following the initial fanfare, TBL

was adopted in a spasmodic fashion.

The lack of opportunities for professional development given to teachers hindered change. Although some teachers attended TBL workshops, there was no obvious or explicit culture of professional exchange for them to share the experiences with others. Middle management in the school did not demonstrate the ability to lead or facilitate interaction among teachers. The panel and deputy panel chairpersons merely acted as conduits between the higher authorities and teachers. The rigid teaching schedule and assessment syllabus were other factors that stifled the opportunities for creativity. They specified lists of vocabulary, grammar items, and language skills to be taught and assessed. Iris said she found it difficult to design suitable tasks that might interest the students but at the same time were in line with the constraints of existing practice in the school. The tasks that had been designed ranged from weak, language form-oriented to some strong complex, holistic tasks.

Classroom observation indicated that the innovation produced little change in the pedagogy, classroom environment and student learning activities. In interviews, teachers made it clear that their limited implementation of the TBL was also due to its failure to take into account and cater for the constraints of the classroom and wider educational context. The teachers faced problems in using TBL with large mixed ability and inadequately resourced classes; they faced problems in applying communicative principles with unmotivated learners; they were reluctant to assume non-authoritative roles within an essentially teacher-centred working environment. Not having the skills or support to overcome these problems, the teachers reverted to their familiar teacher-centred, grammar-based pedagogy, performing the roles of authority and transmitter of knowledge with which they and their students felt most comfortable.

The enactment of TBL in School 3 was limited to a weak form that represented very little change from previous practices. TBL did not form the basis of the new curriculum and it was not a real change that determined what the syllabus would be like. The culture of the School 3 was hierarchical and a top-down approach to curriculum change was in practice as the principal initiated the change and he had strong views as to the reasons for instituting the reforms. However, clarity of purpose was not matched by clarity of

detail. Responsibility for supplying the finer points of the reform was devolved to the panel chairpersons. There appears to have been little scope for, or confidence in, bottom-up evolution of a plausible interpretation of the TBL reform. Basically the teachers were not on board and there was a lack of professional dialogue and collegial culture amongst the teachers. Essentially, the culture was one of compliance rather than any enthusiasm on the part of the teachers. There was no evidence of effective communication skills and long-term strategic planning. Under these discouraging circumstances, both Iris and Monica felt helpless and this frustration in the end became a reason for them both leaving the school after two years.

Discussion

The experiences of the TBL reform have implications that go beyond the subject of English Language and beyond the geographical boundaries of Hong Kong. The reasons why TBL failed to take root as envisaged by policy makers provide lessons for any educational system contemplating the implementation of reform into the complex ecology of schools. Overall, the manifestations of TBL in the case study schools could be classified as weak to medium versions, as opposed to the officially promoted strong version. The strongest and most enduring version of TBL was evident in School 1; in School 2, there was a shift (soon discontinued) towards a medium version from previous practices that could be classified as a weak version, while in School 3, little change from a weak version was evident. In none of the schools did the manifestation of TBL conform to the intended form described in official documents.

The findings of this study indicate that the management of change plays a crucial role in creating the conditions for implementing reforms. The organisational structures and processes of schools and teachers' professional interactions affect the extent to which teachers are able to apply their understandings and expand their teaching repertoires. The study also demonstrates the importance of bottom-up influences in the process of change in schools. The scenario in School 1 suggests that greater teacher initiative and autonomy could generate a greater capacity for innovation on the part of schools. However, bottom-up initiatives alone are insufficient if the stakeholders are not empowered to

complement pedagogical change with systemic change. To be sustained, such initiatives require support from the organisational hierarchy, especially the panel chairpersons who occupy key positions with their authoritative status and subject expertise. Teacher autonomy is only relative and, like other stakeholders in the education system, their choices are always limited by a range of external structural and cultural factors. Also, if teachers are expected to be the pioneers of change, they might feel exposed without support and therefore prefer to 'play it safe' by using risk-avoidance strategies such as adopting the rhetoric but not the practice of reform.

Likewise, top-down management, as practised in School 3, even if it did succeed in removing the systemic constraints to reform—which was not evident in the case study—is ineffective in bringing about pedagogical change if the teachers do not perceive that they have ownership of the reforms and that they are sufficiently equipped with the understandings, skills and encouragement to operationalise them in the classroom. In this regard, recognising the power of professional conversation in teacher learning is essential in enhancing curriculum change. It was the talk that surrounded the work that made the biggest difference in School 1 during the vulnerable process of change. The processing and implementing of information and new knowledge were not straightforward; teachers struggled to understand and grapple with new ideas and techniques, partly through dialogue and partly through trial and error. The teachers created a context in which they transformed forms of knowledge into something they could either use or simply think about. If school change is to occur, teachers must be provided with opportunities to process and adapt such formal knowledge and make it part of their own personal and practical understanding of what it means to teach and to change teaching.

The proposition that teaching can be seen as problematic is potentially emancipatory, provided that teachers have the channels and strategies to exercise the right to question, challenge and seek alternative approaches to deal with teaching more effectively. The situation in School 1 shows that when a critical stance is taken in viewing research and policy, it provides a basis for discussion, debate, and on occasion, inspiration. In addition, such collaborative dialogues have value in creating expectations for what schools can be, thereby providing

visions for better teaching practices. As the new teaching approach became part of their regular practice, it too comes to be questioned. The complexity and the contextually-bound nature of a teacher's work does not lend itself easily to the notion of 'fidelity' in which ideas generated in one setting can be directly transferred to another. Teachers need to be able to cope with change, need to be open to change and make change an integral feature of their working environment. They need to develop the capacity to critique and question imposed knowledge, to discriminate, judge and select the most appropriate for their learners and for their context teaching techniques and practices (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Elliott, 1994; Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). Teachers in School 2 and School 3 did not possess this mentality. School leaders can support change by getting teachers to work collaboratively in identifying and solving problems of their teaching and learning context.

Another reason for the relative success of School 1 was the central role played by the teachers in deciding both what needed to be changed and how that change should occur. This suggests that if reformers expect significant curriculum change to occur in ways that will improve teaching and learning, they will need to focus on content and curriculum issues that are central to the concerns of teachers. Though teachers in the case study schools possessed some knowledge of TBL acquired through different channels, they lacked skills and strategies to fully integrate their concrete experiences and abstract understandings. The feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability also impeded their desire and effort to advance further in the process of innovation. Providing support to teachers regarding their actual concerns, and encouraging reflection through professional communication could help these teachers progress along their different stages of learning. Attitude clarification and refinement paves the way towards successful change, though it may not be guaranteed. Teachers can become successful enactors of change and even innovators within an essentially conservative context. Collaboration provides a safe environment in which the inevitable mistakes that occur are accepted, and thus establishes a climate in which risk taking and growth are encouraged. The group setting in School 1 provided the requisite supportive structure in which newly forming skills could be honed and anxiety about failure could be alleviated. In the other two schools, and to a lesser extent in School 1,

the lack of strategic guidance forced teachers to define their own roles in TBL, which meant they might have been working on different assumptions from different perspectives. As a result, they eventually found it harder to collaborate or compromise. Effective change requires leadership from senior colleagues in creating a collaborative, supportive environment that demonstrates an openness to grapple with change; without these factors, innovations will fail.

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