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**Learning Environment and Factors that Influence Teachers' Response to Policy Change and Quality Education**

By

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**Abstract**

This article is based on an exploratory analysis of factors that influence teachers' response to policy change and quality education. How do teachers respond to new policy and new guidelines and procedures? What are some of the ways in which they can respond and how do they affect them? These are some of the questions this article will address. The aim of the article is to examine learning environment, paying attention to factors that influence teachers' response to policy change and quality education. The article seeks to illuminate external factors that influence teacher response to policy and curriculum change and how they can be tapped by experts in education. It seeks to establish internal factors that affect teacher response to new policy and curriculum initiative, which is rarely understood by stakeholders in education sector. The article should make readers and education experts identify the role of policy and curriculum change makers in facilitating teacher positive response to innovation trajectory. The study established the importance of understanding teacher responses in order to improve implementation. It recommends the need to understand response of stakeholders in change in education in order to succeed.

**Key words:** Learning Environment, Teachers, Policy, Change, Quality Education

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### **Introduction**

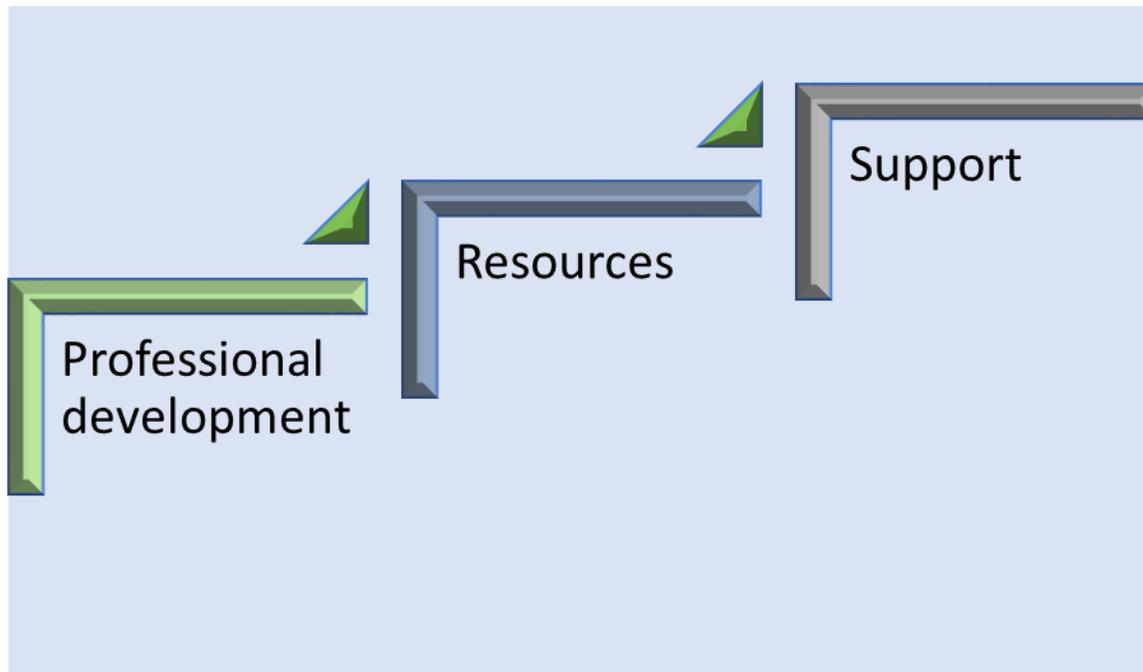
It is generally agreed that teachers' conscious and unconscious beliefs about a theory influence change. There are external and internal factors that influence teachers' responses to change. There are several factors, external and internal which are handled separately in the sections below. The factors range differ in terms of how they affect learning. Some have greater impact than others. The important aspect to note is that some of them cannot be looked at in isolation but rather as unit parts which affect each other. This is a discourse analysis. In this article, my contention is that good quality teacher training as well as support, are needed to ensure sustainable success of reforms in schools. I argue that teachers must be trained on both the participatory approach to education and on the specific materials that are to be used in the classroom. Teachers desperately need guidance on how to deal with sensitive, emotional and challenges that may arise causing fear and embarrassment to themselves and/or their learners. Similarly, Mugweni, Mufanechiya and Dhlomo (2011) suggest that institutions should be committed to empower practitioners by scaffolding and providing them with ethically structured support if change and implementation is to be realised in reform efforts.

External factors include Professional Development, Resources and teacher support which must all be harnessed in order to have a high chance of success. Internal factors include Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs, Teacher Knowledge, Motivation and Workload, among others. We need to understand how all these factors affect the learning environment and how they influence how teachers respond to policy change.

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### External Factors

The external factors discussed in this chapter are teacher professional development, resources and support. Figure 3 below shows the external factors.



**Figure 3: External Factors**

Source: Survey

### Professional Development

Literature reveal that, regardless of the mode of training adopted for new policy and curriculum initiatives most teachers in schools are always left behind. Where training takes place, the school-level training may be limited. Consequently, inadequate training of teachers militated against effective policy and curriculum implementation and to some extent cause negative attitudes among some teachers Chavunduka *et al.* (2004). In cases where training is successfully done, it may produce teachers who display three key virtues of an effective educator such as understanding, self-efficacy, competence and openness, Schenker (2001),

In South Africa, Prinsloo's (2007) undertook a study which revealed that Life Orientation (LO) teachers had little rigorous formal training in the presentation of LO programmes. Their training had consisted of one- to three-day short courses on the content and aims of the programme. Teachers criticised the knowledge and experience of the trainers/facilitators who had been appointed by the relevant department to empower them for their task (Prinsloo, 2007). Their major criticism was that the trainers had limited teaching knowledge, inadequate knowledge of didactic methods in the learning area and little knowledge

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of the current conditions in schools and classrooms. That is, facilitators did not seem to comprehend the problems in contemporary classrooms and they lacked the necessary knowledge and skills. The study (Prinsloo, 2007) also found that the success or failure of teacher implementation of LO programmes was closely linked to the said factors because teachers who lacked training and skills lacked motivation and confidence. In addition, it was found that teachers lacked motivation to implement LO because the subject area had low status among teachers. Teachers who taught the curriculum were labelled as ineffective by colleagues. The results show that teachers acknowledged that they had little influence on the learners and were unable to alter the learners' behaviour.

In another study in South Africa, Jansen (2002) found that despite unprecedented investments in policy making and policy production, 'there appears to be very little change in the daily routines of schools and classrooms. There continues to be 'a policy-practice gap' in South African education and beyond (Jansen, 2002:199). The study found that the significant part of the explanation for the distance between policy and practice lies outside of conventional factors attributed to education reform under Third World conditions. These may be the lack of capacity, the large number of under-qualified teachers or resistance to change by some conservative communities. What government officials intend in terms of the project and actual practices in classrooms are always inconsistent.

In Zimbabwe Ndamba *et al.* (2011) carried out a study on teacher preparedness for the implementation of the HIV and AIDS Education Policy at primary school level in Masvingo urban. The major challenge reported was the lack of adequate content as the majority of the teachers did not do HIV and AIDS education during their training at teachers' colleges. Other challenges cited in the particular study were that teachers were not free to discuss sexual matters with both boys and girls in one class and administrators rarely supervised or observed the teachers teaching AIDS education lessons. Similar to these findings Wood and Olivier (2007), in a study in South Africa on increasing the self-efficacy beliefs of Life Orientation teachers, found that the teaching of the subject was a daunting task for most educators since they did not believe that they were equipped to be effective instructors and modellers of life skills. Therefore, classroom practice can be weak and apathetic due to the lack of adequate basic knowledge on the policy and curriculum innovation.

Consistently discussing on policy and curriculum initiatives, a survey conducted by in Kenya revealed that about 50% of the country's 240 000 teachers did not receive any training regarding an HIV and AIDS education policy initiative (ActionAid 2004). The teachers reported that teacher training programmes in the country were not comprehensive and systematic enough to equip practicing teachers with knowledge, adequate skills and materials. It is imperative that those who are about to take part in implementation of the new curricula should be educated.

Writing about policy and curriculum change in developing countries, literature (Mugweni, *et. al.* 2014; Bantwini, 2010; Prinsloo, 2007; Carless, 1998) suggest the following four elements as compulsory for successful teacher training in support of curriculum change:

1. Permanent and locally available in-service training, for example through a cascading model;
2. Establishment of effective systems for supervision and support of teachers;

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3. Adjustment of the content of teacher training to the teachers' own level of knowledge and experience; and
4. Encouragement of teacher motivation and commitment, for example through improved working condition or opportunities for professional development.

The above submission suggests that in order to ensure successful curriculum change, training needs to be continuous and developmental rather than bit by bit. Teachers need both on- and off-site training. The former 'relates the innovation to the realities of the school context, and the latter, to permit the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the innovation away from the pressures of daily routines. Traditional external professional development sessions such as train-the-trainer may induce change as these sessions assist teachers to understand the content of a curriculum initiative and may influence the decision to initiate engagement with the innovation (Burgess *et al.*, 2010).

Expecting teachers to embrace a new policy or curriculum without sufficient training and information as to why such change is necessary, often leads to inadequate support to adopt the initiative (Cohen & Hills, 2001). Training events, however, place teachers as passive stakeholders where knowledge is delivered by experts. High investment of time, effort and focus may be required to sustain the development of a learning community of teachers as well as to actually implement the curriculum initiative (Mugweni, 2012). Overall, training reduces the problem of teachers' misconceptions about change. Sweeny (2003) argues that if teachers' professional development needs are not met, they can easily become stuck at some lower levels of growth, perhaps even for the rest of their career.

### **Resources**

Inadequate funding of educational reforms is a common feature in most sub-Saharan African countries. The implication of inadequate funding in curriculum development and implementation is that teachers of whatever category are poorly represented in development and planning, poorly trained and poorly remunerated (Oloruntegbe, Duyilemi, Agbayewa, Oluwatele, Dele & Omoniyi, 2010). Literature consulted regarding resources as a factor affecting policy and curriculum initiatives revealed a shortage of human resources during implementation (Mapfumo, 2011).

In the context of this discourse basing on a study carried in Zimbabwe by Mugweni (2012), shortage of human resources with relevant qualifications to teach HIV and AIDS and life skills was a concern. All teachers who participated in the study had degrees, but no qualifications in the policy and curriculum initiative involving teaching of HIV and AIDS education in schools. Other studies carried out in different context revealed that headmasters did not allow sufficient time for teaching of the subject area (Mapfumo, 2011; Chivonivoni, 2006). While school heads appreciated the innovation, they expressed concerns about the challenges of accommodating the subject on the timetable. Thus, implementation of change in schools may be affected by time as well as human and material resource constraints.

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### **Teacher Support**

Support is a key variable in implementing policy and curriculum change. Teachers who are initially enthusiastic about an innovation, may easily become disillusioned if there is lack of support for the change, such as inadequate resources, lack of teacher collaboration and negative sentiments from colleagues or the school head (Bowins & Beaudoin, 2011). Headmasters create the organisational features that support curriculum changes in schools. They influence the teachers' capacity to implement curriculum change by demonstrating critical support, a desire for change and the belief that change is possible.

The dissemination of an innovation from curriculum developers or change agents is often insufficient to achieve understanding amongst potential implementers. What is needed is negotiation of meaning between developers and teachers, so that a shared vision of the implications of the change can be developed (Hartell, 2007). Similarly, it is crucial to note that information is a prerequisite for consent. It means people cannot faithfully implement change they know nothing about, hence the need for professional development. Consistent with the issue of the need for teacher support, the absence of inspectors of schools has resulted in a culture where teachers often go to their classes without proper preparation and planning (Bantwini, 2010). The impact on the potential for policy and curriculum change can be so severe that an overall assessment of the state of preparedness prior to developing and launching the reform is essential to 'ensure that key needs are addressed concurrently, thus increasing the likelihood' of the success of the reform (Bantwini, 2010).

Teacher collaboration is an important factor in implementing curriculum change. By sharing their successes and concerns during meetings and planning times, respected teachers cultivate self-efficacy in their colleagues and help them refocusing (Zimmerman 2006). Through collaboration influential teachers can exert influence over their colleagues in the adoption of innovations. Experience shows that collaboration and support teachers receive from fellow teachers, principals and students facilitate their adaptation to change. Peer pressure combined with peer support is most effective in developing a culture of change in schools (Zimmerman, 2006). Consistently more literature stresses the importance of collaboration and being supported by colleagues during a change process (Hartell, 2007). Fullan concludes that when teachers experience change as a group, the collegiality that occurs allows the teachers to adapt more effectively.

In reform processes it is essential to engender an environment of care rather than one of censure. Support coupled with demands is essential for continuing educational improvement. Support allows those involved 'in the difficult process of implementation to tolerate the anxiety of occasional failures' (Guskey, 2002). Further, 'pressure is often necessary to initiate change among those whose self-impetus for change is not great. It provides the encouragement, motivation, and occasional nudging[Nudging: in this particular study nudging involves pushing the teacher(s) gently or gradually in a particular direction so as to reach a particular curriculum implementation level in response to change] that many practitioners require in order to persist in the challenging tasks that are intrinsic to all change. Drake and Sherin (2006) confirm that for curriculum to be a vehicle for reform, teachers must be supported and guided in making adaptations that maintain the reform-oriented goals of the curriculum.

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When teachers in their own setting try to independently implement change and build their mastery to the routine level of task management (Stage of Concern), that is when support becomes so critical for the teacher to succeed in implementation (Sweeny, 2003). If teachers are not supported during a change process the following may occur:

1. They cannot continue to grow
2. Implementation problems will often overwhelm them and the innovative practices will be discarded, and
3. Weaker coping strategies may be adopted.

In this discourse I contend that good quality teacher training plus support is needed to ensure sustainable success of reforms in schools. Teachers must be trained on both the participatory approach to education and on the specific materials that are to be used in the classroom. Teachers desperately need guidance on how to deal with sensitive, emotional and challenges that may arise causing fear and embarrassment to themselves and/or their learners. Similarly, Mugweni, Mufanechiya and Dhlomo (2011) suggest that institutions should be committed to empower practitioners by scaffolding and providing them with ethically structured support if change and implementation is to be realised in reform efforts. These external factors work consistently with teacher internal factors discussed below.

## **Internal Factors**

### **Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs**

Teacher change is behavioural and perceptual, that is, attitudinal and cognitive (Zimmerman, 2006). Attitude towards policy and curriculum change is a variable that has been a factor to employee acceptance of new policies. Teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about curriculum change obviously play a fundamental role in their understanding of the reform and affect their behaviour in the classroom. Bantwini (2010) refers to the cognitive factor as the internal mental landscape of the classroom. It means teacher response to change is an integration of thought and action (Ni & Guzdial 2007). The attitudes towards curriculum change and implementation that teachers develop tend to be derived from their experiences as learners, their training, their teaching experiences, their interaction with colleagues and the societal values and norms of their working contexts. In addition, teachers' prior experiences play a role in convincing them to adopt curriculum change and implementation. Consistently, though many factors were found to affect teacher adaptation to change, 'the experience of these teachers mainly appeared to affect their confidence (Bowins & Beaudoin 2011). When teachers' attitudes are congruent with the innovation, then they are likely to be positively disposed towards implementing the change. If change is incompatible with teachers' existing attitudes, resistance to the reform is likely to occur. In practice ideas are recontextualised and displaced and are often unable to meet the social development goals demanded of them.

In a study pertaining to teachers' responses to a new early childhood education curriculum in Australia, Burgess *et al.* (2010:53) found that 395 of the teachers expressed

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negative attitudes to the launch and implementation of the initiative. It was established that the negative attitudes emanated particularly from concerns associated with workload or work priority which seemed to highlight the multiple curriculum initiatives. In that particular study it was also found that the content of the curriculum initiative provoked teachers' negative responses to change. According to Burgess *et al.* (2010:53), teachers either found the documents daunting or they felt confused or disappointed. Time was also an issue for the teachers with negative attitudes and a critical concern across all educational settings where teachers attempted to find time to undertake professional development (O'Sullivan, Carroll, & Cavanagh, 2008).

Like teacher attitudes, teacher beliefs impact on practice during curriculum implementation. Literature (Bechtel & O'Sullivan, 2007) from studies stress the importance of teacher beliefs when adapting to change. A study in Canada by Bowins and Beaudoin's (2011) on the manner in which experienced physical education teachers adapted to a new curriculum, it was found that change was effectively implemented when teachers believed that the change would enhance their students' learning. The finding implies that change would not be possible unless teachers believe they were doing something worthwhile. It has been observed that in tasking teachers to implement reforms very little consideration is 'given to the teachers' pre-existing beliefs and perceptions of the need to change (Jansen, 2002).

In a different context Perry *et al.* (1999) undertook a study on teachers' beliefs about the learning and teaching of mathematics in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. The survey technique was employed where the sample of 273 secondary school mathematics teachers responded to a questionnaire. The study found that teachers' espoused [Espoused beliefs refers to what teachers say about something; in this particular context, it refers to what teachers say about mathematic influence their teaching of the subject] beliefs about mathematics teaching and learning were important because these seemed to influence their practice and teaching approaches.

Another study was commissioned by World Education in Ghana to establish an up-to-date picture of teachers' HIV and AIDS knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. The study explored teachers' willingness to participate in HIV and AIDS programmes, their knowledge and capacity and the magnitude of their personal risk-taking (Adamchak, 2005). It was found that although teachers were willing to help with HIV and AIDS education efforts, not many had undergone professional development to effectively teach HIV and AIDS education. The study established furthermore that teachers were reluctant to talk about and demonstrate the use of condoms. Teachers in the study believed that exposing students to condoms promoted promiscuity. Overall, the study found that risk-taking among teachers was low but present. The majority of the teachers perceived schools as safe and secure zones for students and the teachers expressed ambivalence about interacting with people who might be HIV-positive (Adamchak, 2005).

Bantwini (2010) argue that people involved in school reform have their own ideas about how change should proceed, and that they act on these attitudes. It is a misconception to think that teachers are without wills of their own and that they can be manipulated (Bantwini, 2010). In the context of this discussion it becomes clear that an insight into teachers' attitudes and beliefs must inform policy makers to develop and facilitate implementation of future policy and curriculum change.

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### **Motivation and Workload**

The level of development that a particular nation experiences will be in some way a reflection of the calibre of the teachers that it has (Oloruntegbe *et al.*, 2010). In this discourse I contend that teachers view requirements of a new curriculum as threatening since it demands more of their limited time. Hart (2009) In most cases teachers espouse that they do not have enough time to do what they were expected to do in their daily practice (Hart, 2009). Researchers such as Giles and Hargreaves (2006), Kennedy (2005), Fullan (2005) and Zimmerman (2006) agree that there is a sharp imbalance between teacher time and teacher workload.

In a study carried out by Bantwini (2010), he reports that teachers were of the view that they were overloaded with administrative work and, for them, it was therefore impossible to do that kind of work for the poor salary they got. Consistently, in another study on teacher understanding and implementation of curriculum change, Burgess *et al.* (2010) found that teachers expressed a concern with their personal workload, overwhelming content and lack of time. This implies that teachers were experiencing an increased workload and as a result, this might have impacted negatively on their responses to curriculum implementation.

Jansen (2001b) indicates that failure of education policy is a direct result of the over-investment of the state in the political symbolic rather than its practical implementation in terms of personal availability of funds and related issues. My experience in schools shows that teachers are sometimes assigned to teach subjects not according to their areas of specialisation, but according to the needs of the school. Some teachers relate the issue of salaries to the question of work overload. As Stoffels (2004) reveal that a lack of job satisfaction during curriculum change was apparent in the responses of some teachers who stated that curriculum change intensified teachers' workload. In his study in South Africa, Bantwini (2010) found that teachers compared their remuneration with that of friends in other fields of work, and concluded that they were not fairly remunerated. In their study Oloruntegbe *et al.* (2010) contend that teachers' salaries contributed to low motivation and negative impressions during curriculum implementation.

A study carried out by Action Aid aimed at showing how HIV and AIDS education was received by schools and implemented in India and Kenya. Among other things, the study found that attempts to implement HIV and AIDS education in schools was constrained by the existing social and cultural restraints and power inequalities in discussing HIV and AIDS and sexual relations (ActionAid, 2004). As a result, HIV and AIDS messages were not communicated at all or were taught selectively. In a study by Wood and Oliver (2007) in South Africa, it was revealed that teachers in general were unmotivated and demoralised and had little hope for positive change in the school system. Many of the teachers had lost their passion for teaching, but it appeared that reflection was a powerful tool to assist teachers to gain their self-efficacy and sense of purpose. Reflective practice is a process that empowers the individual and the group and decreases defensiveness, alienation, powerlessness and isolation.

### **Teacher Knowledge**

Teacher knowledge is situated in policy as a facilitator of transformation. Teachers are the official bearers of 'professional models of transformational change' (Priestley (2010). The

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meaning each teacher attaches to curriculum change acts as his or her map to understanding the new curriculum and the implementation journey. The understanding frequently determines the success of the reform (Bantwini, 2010:89; Zimmerman, 2006). Further, 'teachers employ their knowledge of daily conditions and experiences as lenses or windows through which they view new reforms' (Mugweni, *et. al.*, 2014).

Beliefs, values, experiences and daily challenges have been found to influence and shape the meanings that teachers actually attach to the new reforms, which in turn play a vital role in their acceptance and classroom implementation Bantwini (2010:89). Ignoring these issues can aggravate the gap between political symbolism and implementation. It is a fact that the adoption of an innovation or change is influenced by social and cultural background of the individual (Mackenzie, 2011). In some circumstances, the shifting of occupational boundaries has led to a widely noted lack of clarity about teacher mandates in curriculum change.

If teachers are to implement change successfully, it is essential that they have a comprehensive understanding of the principles and practice of the proposed change. Carless (1999) mentions that it is desirable that teachers understand both the theoretical underpinnings and classroom application of the innovation, since the lack of sound subject knowledge leads to ineffective curriculum implementation. Fullan (2001b) warns of the cardinal fact of social change, namely that people will always misinterpret and misunderstand some aspects of the purpose or practice of something that is new to them. It is important to know teachers' perceived meanings when aiming to understand and help them, particularly when the assigned meaning does not align with the intended new curriculum vision.

Similarly, I argue that a teacher's awareness and knowledge of alternatives is coloured by that teacher's experience and philosophy of teaching which acts as a psychological barrier, frame, or selective filtering mechanism. In an investigation of implementation of a new language policy in Greek secondary schools, Karavas-Doukas (1995) found that teachers showed incomplete understanding of the reform they were mandated to implement, and that these misconceptions led to negative perceptions of the innovation. Teacher understanding can be enriched by generating specific teaching methods for the change, along with resource materials that can be used without adaptation in the targeted classrooms.

In Zimbabwe, the culture of silence is a popular assumption to explain the poor public policy on the institutionalisation of HIV and AIDS education to learners in secondary schools. As revealed by Musengi, Ganga and Mugweni (2011), the process of sexual maturation or growing up and its management in adolescence appear to be affected by a culture or the conspiracy of silence. This culture of silence in many communities including Zimbabwe is due to the observance of taboos and stereotypes associated with sexuality issues. A study carried IN Zimbabwe by Shumba *et al.* (2006) found that in the African culture, discussing issues on sexuality was wrongfully perceived as eroding societal values and norms. It is assumed that these taboos and stereotypes in the context of Zimbabwe make stakeholders hesitant to recommend the deliberate teaching and learning of HIV and AIDS information in early childhood classes (Musengi *et al.*, 2011). It should be understood that a culture of silence creates a context where neither parents nor teachers systematically and deliberately inform young children about how to cope with HIV and AIDS and sexual abuse. The result is the children's lack of informed

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knowledge and skills for dealing with HIV and AIDS-related problems. The lack of informed knowledge, guidance and life skills often cause anxiety, stress, and emotional turmoil for the individual child.

Fuller (1994) conducted a case study in the United States of America to examine factors that primary school teachers say determine the formation and modification of their conceptions. Three female teachers (two taught sixth grade and one fifth grade) from public schools participated in the study. Data were collected using interviews and observations. Fuller found that the role of the teacher is important because the teacher makes decisions on whether or not to implement change. The study provides illuminative information on teacher conceptualisation and pedagogical practices in school policy and programmes.

Consistent with Fuller's (1994) findings, teachers' understanding as emanating from their teaching experience and beliefs and that there appears to be a strong relationship between teachers' conceptions and their practice in classrooms. In day-to-day life we see, interpret and react to the world according to what we have experienced in the past. It can be maintained that teachers are historical beings who do not simply shed their old ideas like a shabby coat and slip on something new. It can further be viewed that as teachers reach out to embrace an innovation, they reach out with their old professional selves. So, among other variables, critical to the classroom implementation of change initiatives is teachers' understanding.

In Zambia, Chiwela and Siamwiza (1999) carried out a survey to establish teachers' knowledge, attitudes, practices and skills in teaching HIV and AIDS prevention and psychosocial life skills. About 25% of the teachers said that they had limited knowledge of HIV and AIDS and psychosocial life skills. The teachers viewed themselves as unqualified for AIDS education. Of the teachers, 30% were of opinion that that sex education led to promiscuity among students. Some of the teachers revealed that they worried about their own HIV and AIDS status and were willing to share the sentiments with someone.

In South Africa, Prinsloo (2007) undertook a qualitative study on the extent to which schools and Life Orientation (LO) teachers succeeded in achieving outcomes of the programmes. Teachers' views regarding their training and skills in the LO area was investigated. Factors that determined successful implementation of the programme were probed. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with school principals and LO teachers. The results from the principals' data presented the following constraints in their creating a supportive climate for teachers' implementation of LO: lack of a value system, lack of parental involvement, the influence of the community, lack of proper role models among the teaching staff, difficulties with policies of the Department of Education, and issues of cultural diversity. All the principals of culturally diverse schools in this study mentioned that teachers had difficulty in creating relationships of trust and a climate of success in the classroom.

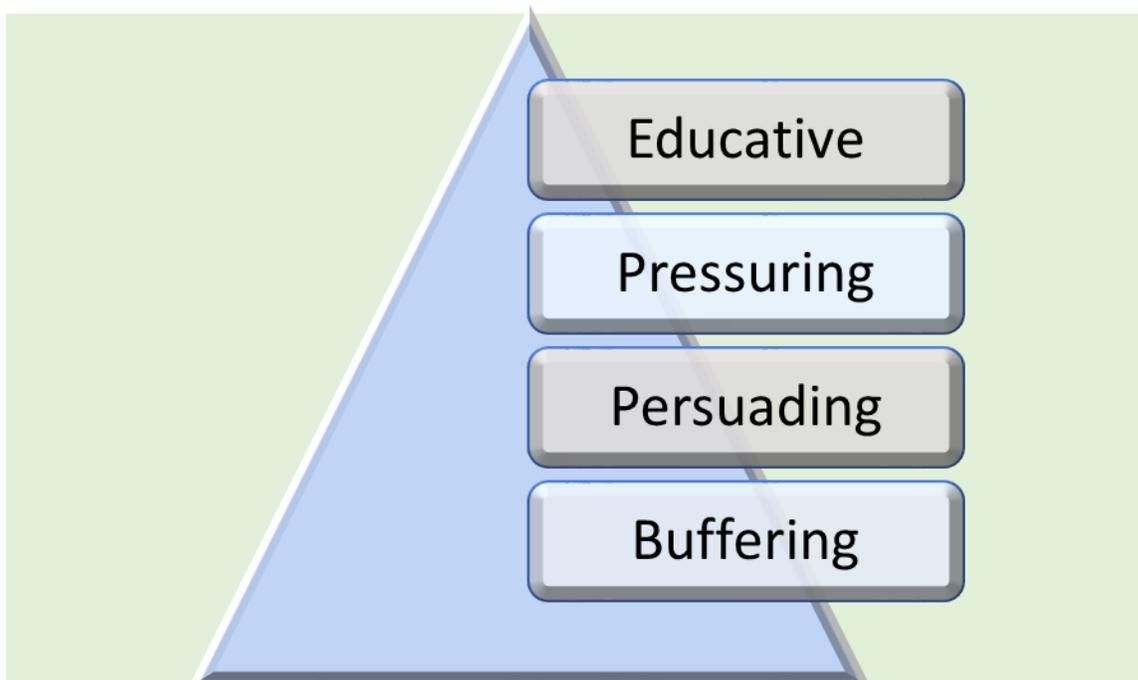
In Zimbabwe, using a narrative research design, Machawira (2008) investigated how three HIV-positive teachers in primary schools understood, interpreted and acted on the Zimbabwean school HIV and AIDS and Life Skills policy. The study found that in a context where AIDS is prevalent there are limits to what education policy can achieve if it remains out of touch with the real world where children and teacher 'are either infected or affected by HIV. The study also found that while the Zimbabwean HIV and AIDS policy is about 'bodies' and about

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'emotions', it is blind to the 'bodies' and the emotions of those implementing it. (Machawira & Pillay, 2009) concludes that it is this oversight that creates the wide gap between policy intentions and outcomes. Some of the teacher factors can act as barriers to change as explored below.

### **Role of policy and Curriculum Change Facilitators**

Policy and curriculum change makers essentially have four roles in working with teachers. The roles are either educational or political. These are: educative, pressuring, persuading and buffering.



**Figure 4: Role of Policy Change Makers**

**Source: Survey**

The discussion below clarifies the role of change makers who act as facilitators and agency of mentoring other teachers for reforms in policy and curriculum to be effectively implemented.

### **Educative**

The educative role helps the facilitators to help their fellow teachers to interpret comprehensive policy variables into explicit classroom practices. The teacher change agency helps fellow teachers implementing reforms analyse the policy and curriculum data, discuss the trajectory to their practice. Facilitate and lead professional development sessions as well as even co-teach to model new pedagogical and didactic approaches. They become motivated mentors who fellow

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teachers move past superficial responses to change toward effective policy and curriculum implementation.

### **Pressuring**

As the teacher policy and curriculum change facilitators support fellow teachers' learning, they should also encourage school management to get teachers to implement changes in their classrooms. If the teacher facilitators feel that they do not have power they should invoke principals or school head to exercise their authority and influence change. However, the facilitating teach should engage into the change process in the manner and spirit of collegiality.

### **Persuading**

Another way teacher facilitator may persuade teachers to make changes is specifying areas the new policy or curriculum initiative is similar to what the teachers experiencing change are already doing. It is also important to highlight issues which are consistent with the implementing teachers' values and believes. This practice, referred to as "constructive congruence" is ideal when persuading teachers to embrace and implement change effectively.

### **Buffering**

Teacher policy change facilitators also protect fellow teachers by shielding them from outside pressures. They provide guidance about which messages to ignore or how to respond symbolically. Literature (Mugweni, 2012; Jansen, 2002; Bantwini, 2010) shows that that there are few instances where teachers responded symbolically without a teacher facilitator's involvement. Teacher change facilitators engage in subtle and not-so-subtle efforts to influence how teachers respond to improvement initiatives.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, change and the tendency to embrace or to resist it seem always to have been part of the human condition. Change leads to consternation for some, indignation for others, shock for still others and hope for a few. This article has demonstrated that good quality teacher training as well as support, are needed to ensure sustainable success of reforms in schools. I have argued that teachers must be trained on both the participatory approach to education and on the specific materials that are to be used in the classroom in order to be successful. I have shown that teachers desperately need guidance on how to deal with sensitive, emotional and challenges that may arise causing fear and embarrassment to themselves and/or their learners.

The article has made some recommendations, useful to all education stakeholders. Teachers must be supported before, during and after implementation of change. All learning institutions should be committed to empower practitioners by scaffolding and providing them with ethically structured support if change and implementation is to be realised in reform efforts. Changes will always take place in learning environments and stakeholders, especially government must put relevant infrastructure in place in order to deal with any challenges.

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