

# International Perspectives on English Language Teaching

Series Editors

Sue Garton

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“This is a valuable addition to research and practice in ELT curriculum change, with a refreshing approach to identifying problems and solutions. It has a broad international focus but concentrates on the individual lives of eleven teachers in ten different countries faced with implementation of secondary school curriculum change. The reality of the teachers’ stories is filtered through interviews conducted by the writers of each chapter, teacher educators themselves. The writers provide a background to the teachers’ contexts and are able to combine the teachers’ accounts with their own knowledge of curriculum change. The result is a remarkable and effective combination of personal stories and their application to theories of curriculum change, avoiding both the dangers of personal anecdote and the sterility of theory divorced from practice. This is an excellent collection and will prove an indispensable resource to all those involved in curriculum innovation.”

—Chris Kennedy, *University of Birmingham, UK*

“One of the worst kept secrets in TESOL, and perhaps in education generally, is that the intended impacts of national curriculum change projects are rarely achieved in practice. The reasons for this gap between the planned and enacted curriculum have been documented for many years, yet, frustratingly, these insights have not made much difference to the way educational authorities around the world approach curriculum innovation. This very timely and insightful collection provides further evidence of the challenges that curriculum change often raises for individual

teachers in several TESOL contexts around the world and portrays in a vivid manner the consequences for these teachers of the hurried, top-down, unclear, and non-consultative manner in which new curricula are often thrust upon practitioners. The narrative insights into teachers' thinking and actions that the volume provides make it a valuable addition to the literature on TESOL curriculum change."

—Simon Borg, *Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway*

"This volume is essential reading for (language) curriculum policy makers and planners who all too often underestimate the effort required for curricula change to be successfully enacted in schools and classrooms. Context is everything as we know, but hearing the challenges from the teachers' perspectives is very powerful. It's an invaluable reminder of the importance of a multiple stakeholder approach which allows for a close consideration of local realities. Each chapter provides really useful lessons for curriculum planners summarised helpfully by the editors into three critical areas of temporal dissonance, contextual confusion and risk. I will definitely be encouraging my colleagues to read it!"

—Alison Barrett MBE, *Head of English for Education Systems, British Council, UK*

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Martin Wedell · Laura Grassick  
Editors

# International Perspectives on Teachers Living with Curriculum Change

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## Foreword

Change and innovation are a way of life for language teachers, and you can almost hear the groans every time a government announces yet another innovative curriculum aimed at producing a new generation of fluent English speakers. This reaction is not because language teachers are adverse to change—far from it. Many are active reflective practitioners, constantly focusing on how they can develop their practice to ensure their students have an excellent learning experience. But in this volume we are less concerned with the micro-changes that teachers can effect and more concerned with macro-changes at the level of policy. We think it is fair to say that English language teachers around the world have been plagued with more than their fair share: the introduction of communicative language teaching; an earlier start with the introduction of English in primary schools; English-only classrooms; the turn towards CLIL, to name just a few. However, what we find astonishing in the change implementation discourses is the absence of the main change agents: the teachers. Not only are their voices rarely heard in policy decision-making, but they are often also silent in research too.

Theoretical frameworks try to explain the impact and diffusion of innovation, with categories for change agents such as *innovator*, *early adopter*, *early majority*, *late majority* and *laggard* (Rogers 2003). However, such classifications imply that the adoption process itself is simple and one-dimensional and thus promote negative conceptualisations of those who fail to adopt change swiftly and full heartedly. Worryingly, they also fail to capture the complexity and challenges that language teachers face when trying to adapt to change and innovation in often challenging educational contexts where English might not be considered a subject of much importance.

This volume is therefore a very welcome addition to the *International Perspectives* series. In itself, it represents change and innovation, both in the field of studies into innovation and change in English language teaching and in the *International Perspectives* series. Unlike other volumes in the series, the chapters in this book do not report on previously carried out research projects. Instead, all chapters have been commissioned and they all follow broadly the same premise and pattern. Altogether, curriculum changes in ten different countries are explored. In each case, the chapter author is a teacher educator who has collected the story of an individual teacher coping with curriculum change. Each chapter begins by introducing the educational system in which the teacher works before giving the floor to the teacher to explore their understandings of the change, their efforts to implement it and their opinions of trying to do so. Each chapter concludes with the author's analysis of the teacher's experience in the light of existing ideas in the change and innovation literature.

What emerges is a rich and colourful tapestry illustrating the experiences of the teachers in their own words, as they struggle with, and succeed in, the implementation of curriculum change. Whilst each story is unique, the chapters together illustrate how universal the challenges that teachers face are, and therefore, each story is powerful in its potential to resonate across both geographical and educational contexts.

Birmingham, UK  
Stirling, UK

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Fiona Copland

# Preface

## Who are the Editors?

Between the 1970s and the mid-2000s, we both spent over 20 years working as English teachers, trainers, materials writers and project managers in state education systems in Kenya, China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Hungary. We have subsequently worked as members of the TESOL group at Leeds University, during which we have retained and expanded our international links and activities. We have noticed that in most of the international contexts which we know, many state school English teachers are still struggling to make sense of the classroom implications of the more or less explicitly communication-oriented curricula which most are now supposed to follow. Although as the following chapters show, such curricula may have first been introduced up to 25 years ago, the education systems in which English teachers work often seem either oblivious to their struggles or apparently unable to provide appropriate support.

When trying to understand why this state of affairs was so common in the countries in which we worked or had contacts, we like many others, first considered whether or how the problems that we had observed might be addressed through improving ‘visible’ aspects of curriculum change initiation and implementation of planning strategies and procedures. Over time it has, however, become clearer to us that if we wish to understand how change implementation strategies and procedures might be made more supportive of hoped-for change outcomes, we need to understand the experiences of the people who are expected to implement curriculum change. This has led us to the focus of this book—teachers’ experiences of TESOL curriculum change.

## What is This Book About?

This book is a response to the following quote which has appeared in all four editions of the book from which it comes. The first edition was published in 1981. The fact that the author finds it necessary to repeat it in his 2007 edition suggests that its message has still not been fully understood.

Neglect of the phenomenology of change- that is how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended- is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms (Fullan 2007: 8).

The chapters that follow explore the change experiences of a handful of the millions of English teachers who currently teach English in state education systems. The teachers come from 10 different countries on every continent. In all their contexts, the goals of their English curricula have changed as their governments have (like the Japanese Ministry of Education in the following quote, though of course phrased differently) increasingly seen the teaching of English as essential, both for individual learners 'to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language' and for the nation as a whole to be linked 'with the rest of the world, obtaining the world's understanding and trust, enhancing our international presence and further developing our nation' (Ministry of Education. Tokyo 31.03.2003). However, both in Japan and elsewhere, such national aspirations have rarely resulted in visible examples of state system teaching successfully enabling most learners to develop real English communication abilities during their years of in-school study.

Attempts to explain why this has been so in the existing literature on TESOL change (e.g. Hyland and Wong 2013; Markee 2007) focus largely on the macro, systems level of change—for example, different procedures and factors to be considered when making decisions about change planning, or the strategies for supporting change. Very little research has investigated the change process through exploring the experiences of the people on whom implementation ultimately depends: the teachers. Given the fundamental conservatism of most of the educational cultures in which state systems are situated (see discussion below), implementing a 'communication oriented' curriculum implies considerable adjustments to English teachers' and learners' behaviours and ways of thinking about teaching and learning. But what actually are these adjustments and how do teachers feel, as they attempt (or decide not) to make them? What influences whether they

make them, what support helps? This book explores questions such as these through stories of teachers' experiences of living through curriculum change. We hope that readers will find resonance in these stories in relation to their own teaching and learning contexts, and that the stories and analyses of their messages will contribute to the TESOL/educational change literature from the personal perspective that has so far, generally, been neglected.

Leeds, UK

Martin Wedell  
Laura Grassick

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# Abbreviations

CBI	Content Based Instruction
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSAT	College Scholastic Aptitude Test
DEL.Ed	Diploma in Elementary Education
DepEd	Department of Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EL	English Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELTE	English Language Teacher Education
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETC	English Teachers' Club
EPIK	English Programme in Korea
FA	Formative Assessment
GED	General Education Diploma
GCE	General Council of Education (Consejo General de Educación)
IATEFL	International Association of Teaching English as a Foreign Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IETTP	Intensive English Teacher Training Programme
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education

KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
KSCE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MT	Master Trainer
MSBE	Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education
MSCF	Maharashtra State Curriculum Framework
NCERT	National Curriculum and Educational Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEAT	National English Ability Test
NEST	Native English Speaking Teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SCI	Subject Content Integration
SETA	Seoul English Teachers Association
SMOE	Seoul Metropolitan Office of English
TBL	Task-Based Learning
TDP	Teacher Development Programme
TEE	Teaching English through English
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TQC	Teachers' Quality Circle

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