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Voices to be heard: What do teachers have to say about the reform of secondary school system in Bahrain?

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Abstract

Since “educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it’s as simple and as complex as that” (Fullan, 2007:129)*, teachers’ version of any change story matters. This paper is an attempt to voice out teachers’ perceptions on change in a centralised educational system like the one in Bahrain to improve the current and future reforms. It focuses on the perceptions of the teachers on one school who was pioneering secondary educational system reforms that took place in 2005 in Bahrain. The findings from teachers presented in this case study are a result of field notes, focus group, 5 interviews, and 56 questionnaires with a 65% return ratio. The data collected from these methods was triangulated in a thematic structure in a way that presents the perceptions of teachers about the change process from their points of view. The main themes of analysis are the perceptions of teachers about the creation, preparation, and the implementation of reform initiative recently introduced by the government.

Teachers have little control over the decision-making process and emphasised their perception that current reform was affected by its relation with their academic life. Several issues relating to the quality and quantity of training, leadership and motivation were raised. In addition, their ambitions and expectations about how any reform should change things in the classroom played a crucial role in shaping their reactions.

Chronic problems when it comes to the implementation stage existed and, most of the time, were identified even before the implementation. Nevertheless, the lack of empirical evidence contributed to the continuity of these problems. Therefore, this paper constitutes a step forward in the educational change literature in Bahrain that is available and accessible to the public.

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1. Introduction

Change agents are those who can facilitate and carry the mission of change to their context. Teachers are vital agents in any educational reforms. In more liberal systems they are expected to be original, entrepreneurs and partners in executing the national frameworks. While in authoritarian systems they are overseen as partners and

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perceived as a part of the top-down commands chain. It's more like "this is what you need" policy instead of "what do you need?"

The argument of Bennett et al. (1992), that change is about changing both practice and the perceptions of both the organization and individuals of their roles and responsibilities, focuses on the relationship between practicing change and management and individuals' perceptions as well. In the literature of change, emphasis is placed on the role of skilled management and leadership. An equivalent emphasis is placed on the necessity to involve the recipient. Recipient involvement in shaping change initiatives is determined by the urgency of the change: the more immediate the change, the less the recipient is involved in decisions. House and Watson (1995:19) emphasised, "managing change successfully, ultimately depends upon understood and shared values and objectives, for the managers and the managed". It is argued that involving recipients in decisions related to change will reduce resistance. Moreover, it could increase their loyalty and commitment to these decisions. Furthermore, management will be enriched by recipients' opinions, which will enhance the decisions reached. Nevertheless, there is no strong evidence that the involvement of subordinates will work all the time. There are situations where asking for involvement means asking for trouble if the contributions, thoughts and opinions of subordinates are ignored after being acknowledged.

Fullan (2000) emphasised the importance of both top-down and bottom-up strategies during periods of change. Hussey (2000) relates recipient participation to both the type of change and the urgency. That means, even though recipient participation is helpful, it should be determined according to the situation. However, since "educational change depends on what teachers do and think, it's as simple and as complex as that" (Fullan, 2007:129), their version of the change story matters.

2. Contextual information

According to Bahrain Informatics organization (BIC), the Kingdom is an archipelago of 40 islands with the total area of 741.4 square kilometers (BIC, 2011). Islam is the official religion of the Kingdom and is a major drive of the Ministry of Education (MoE) policies and frameworks (MoE, 2008). However, the Kingdom is known for its tolerance to other religions practices. Even though Arabic is the official language, English is widely spoken and taught at early stages in formal education institutions. According to the latest census conducted by BIC in 2010 the total population in Bahrain stands at 1,234,596. Bahrainis are minority forming 46% of the population and the rest are non-Bahrainis. The recent economic openness helped nearly doubling population figures.

The MoE is responsible for providing educational services in the country (Al-Suliti, 2002). With no taxes to be paid, the government takes total responsibility for designing and regulating the educational system. Latest reports by the MoE majority of non-Bahrainis population are males; as they migrate to the Kingdom seeking employment while leaving their families behind (MoE, 2008: 3). There are 33 secondary schools in Bahrain that caters for a total of 30760 students, 15963 female and 14797 male (MoE, 2010).

The main site of study was the Alkaramah Secondary Boys' School. It was established in 1919 and was the first school in Bahrain. It has a total of 18 members of the administration and 88 academic staff. The school has 7 heads of department, 2 deputy head teachers, and a head teacher.

Albaker (2008) provided the following information about one of the main reform projects related to the secondary schools reforming in Bahrain: the Unified Track System (UTS). The project tries to overcome the old system's deficiencies. It focuses on matching the needs of the society and the market. The old system –the credit hours - divided secondary education into five tracks: scientific, literary, commercial, textile, and technical, while the UTS merged the three main secondary (namely scientific, literary and commercial) tracks into one track in an attempt to reduce the unnecessary segmentation of subjects. The student is now obligated to study both core courses and elective courses. The core courses form 98 hours (60%) of a total of 156 hours, while the elective courses form 58 hours (40%) (MoE, 2005). The core courses will provide the student with general common knowledge, while elective courses will be chosen by the student according to his/her preferences and interests. The UTS was planned and introduced to the schools by the MoE. A higher committee appointed by the Minister of Education.

3. Overview of the research methods

To provide in-depth rich data about the case being studied beyond numerical analysis, the research basically employed a qualitative case study design aiming to answering qualitative driven questions (Bassey, 2003; Pring, 2000; Merriam, 1998). The findings from the teachers presented in this chapter are a result of field notes, 5 interviews, and 56 questionnaires with a 65% return ratio. The data collected from these methods have been triangulated in a thematic structure in a way that presents the perceptions of teachers about the change process from their points of view and using their words as much as possible. Using different resources to collect information on the perceptions of teachers about educational change generated an enormous amount of data. Therefore, the reporting and the analysis of the findings depended on triangulated evidence from different methods to echo the voices of the teachers.

4. Teachers' perceptions of UTS policy-making and planning strategies

Centralised/rationalised systems – akin to the Bahraini educational system – are characterised by responsibility for strategic planning, diagnosing and solving problems that concern educational institutions. Bush & Coleman (2000) explained this concept as the way governments ensure the quality of education outcomes. Nevertheless, during change periods, issues such as who planned and designed the action plan and how they recognised the need for such a plan seem to matter from the perspective of teachers.

4.1. - Teachers' perceptions of the fitness for purpose of UTS:

One of the criteria used to judge the quality of any project is its fitness to the stated desired achievements by the end of implementation. Campbell and Rozsnyai (2000: 132) defined fitness for purpose as “one of the possible criteria for establishing whether or not a unit meets quality, measured against what is seen to be the goal of the unit”. During change times, it is helpful to try to convince teachers that what is being introduced will enhance their practice and teaching and learning outcomes because it will engender more alliance, as Kotter (1996) suggested. Moreover, believing that any introduced change can help to improve the performance and skills of students will increase the morale of teachers, which is powerfully motivating, according to Fullan (2000).

In terms of the perception of teachers about the importance of UTS, in Alkaramah, teachers believe in the importance of the new reform, as nearly 64% of them perceived UTS as necessary to improve teaching and learning in Bahraini schools. Nevertheless, they explained the reason for their supportive attitude differently: some teachers believed in UTS because of its potential to fix the problems of the old system, while others believed in the fitness of UTS as an idea, but questioned the readiness and the capacity to convert it into reality. For many, the unanswered questions about the “how” could discourage teachers from moving on and push them into opposition to the scheme. As Hopkins et al. (1994) illustrated, even if change is received enthusiastically, this does not mean it will be implemented as intended or result in enhanced outcomes. Some teachers still did not anticipate that UTS would be converted into reality and were just living another day in an “Alice-in-wonderland world”, as one teacher described it. In this school, some teachers resisted the concept of UTS itself, especially those from the departments that have not been positively affected directly by UTS, which could contribute to his negative view and led them to question how far the idea was amended to suit the needs of Bahraini schools. Having a carefully planned initiative does not guarantee successful implementation. This in turn brings into question the ability of centrally planned change to understand the internal conditions of schools and the dynamics of the change process itself.

Moreover, teachers responses suggest a good basis for the acceptance of change: the sense of need and urgency (Kotter 1996; Hussey, 2000) exists. Nevertheless, the reason for this acceptance differs from teacher to teacher and from one department to another.

4.2. Teachers' perceptions of the planning of UTS and their involvement in decision-making:

Planning is concerned with deliberately achieving an objective and its proceeds by assembling actions in some orderly sequence (Hall, 1974:4). Plans for change and reform initiatives in Bahrain are designed rationally by the MoE. Carnall (2004) argued that alienating those involved in the implementation from the planning of change programmes can make the difference between failure and success in an initiative. Nevertheless, during the planning stage of UTS, a conference preceded the final articulation of UTS, which provided an opportunity for different

parties to express their opinions. Prominent Bahraini figures and thinkers, a number of teachers, university lecturers, and a number of parents were invited to attend. Even though this was a positive step forward, whether it was sufficient for teachers experience and opinion inclusion is another issue. Teachers in Alkaramah School were undecided about the quality of and the time spent on the planning before the introduction of UTS. Hopkins et al. (1994) argued, the gap between translating policy into actions and practice is surrounded by difficulties and is not successful all the time. Therefore, some teachers failed to segregate effective planning from practice, and judged the quality of the project planning from its implementation.

On the other hand, some teachers approached the planning issue from a different perspective. Since they admitted they are not aware of how the planning was carried out, which Fullan (2007) described as limited access to the initiative/information, they decided to judge the planning stage on the outcomes of the implementation stage. They believe, according to the gaps that exist in the implementation stage, that the planning was not sufficient. Teachers' judgment was not based on solid knowledge about how the plans were formed. This judgment could be better informed by increasing the involvement of teachers in the planning; however, how far it would affect practice and the implementation is uncertain.

Identifying problems, producing solutions and deciding participants are key principles in making decisions (Cohen et al., 1976). In rational systems, Legge (1984) argues that policy-makers usually state the problem, generate solutions, study and choose from among them, and then order the implementation. That was the case in Alkaramah, resulting in 55% of teachers seeing UTS as an order needing to be executed. Nevertheless, looking at the percentage of neutral responses (31%), the accuracy of this percentage might be questionable: the school culture and the power construction would have a major effect on the responses to any question or statement related to higher positions, power or authority. Field notes and interview findings helped to clarify the views of teachers; as one teacher said:

“From my point of view, all projects introduced and implemented are not negotiable and there is no way that they will retreat on implementing it. This applies to UTS, as I don't see it as a trial: no, it is something that has been implemented and will stay.”

The way teachers in this school deal with things – in another words, its culture – tends towards just trying not to ask questions and working with what they have. From some teachers' point of view, there is no point arguing since all orders are a certainty. They perceive power as what Bradshaw & Boonstra (2004) described as manifest-personal power, where the Ministry has the power to force teachers to conform to their demands, which in turn helps to develop new types of behaviour characterised by surrendering the will to participate in higher-level planning, not believing in the ability of their voices to change, and adopting a passive resistance stance. As one teacher stated:

“The project – UTS – was implemented by each teacher in the way he understood it. Some of them rejected the whole idea and carried on doing the same things they were doing before. In my opinion it's a sign of desperation and lack of training and conviction.”

Tomlinson (2004: 13) argued that the effectiveness of strategic planners depends on knowing how to involve key decision-makers in the planning process” (Tomlinson, 2004: 31). Nevertheless, bearing in mind that teachers had only heard about UTS once prior to its implementation, the questionnaire findings were astonishing: nearly 52% of teachers reported their satisfaction with the discussion before implementation. After investigating this response thoroughly, the interpretations tie in with the abovementioned perceptions. The combination of fear of expressing oneself openly and the latent-cultural power in the school, as Bradshaw & Boonstra (2004) described it, encouraged a “hiding in the corner” attitude and increased passive resistance.

5. Teachers' perceptions of the preparation for and introduction of UTS

It is difficult to separate teachers' perceptions about change from one stage to another. Therefore, their perceptions about the planning stage had been incorporated and its influence on their readiness for and reaction to the introduction of UTS was evident. Teachers shed light on several issues that concerned them during the introduction period, including the clarity of objectives, the appropriateness of the introduction period, the clarity of their role in the new reforms and the training received.

5.1. - Teachers' perceptions of the clarity of UTS objectives:

For any strategic plan to be implemented effectively, vision and sense of direction are becoming increasingly important. Therefore, Bush & Coleman (2000) argued that the involvement of teachers can help the process of implementation. When teachers responded to the questionnaire statements, encouraging results were obtained concerning their understanding of the project goals (52%) and their understanding of the project rationale (50%). Nevertheless, when interviewed there was enormous misunderstandings and confusion between the UTS and another project implemented at the same time in the school. Overloading teachers with reforms - as Fullan (2000) called it - can cause stress and burnout in teachers, lead to a lack of concentration and cause this state of confusion. Introducing two projects at the same time at Alkaramah School led to severe misunderstandings about the nature and objectives of UTS.

Lack of information and vision can lead to a lack of interest. Whitaker (1993) argued that fostering change through regulations rather than interpersonal discussion can lead to such negative changes in behaviour. Hopkins (1996) stressed that envisioning teachers is more about clarification and articulation of a set of values than a concrete representation given by the head teacher. By communicating the meaning (Beare et al., 1993), vision sharing could be built, leading to minimised resistance, wider belief in the effectiveness of UTS, and better understanding of one's role in the newly introduced reform. Teachers during interviews were consistent about not having a clear understanding. After believing in it before introduction, they had since developed a suspicious attitude about what UTS can offer.

The combination of a lack of clarity and misconceptions about both projects caused serious damage to teachers' belief in the reforms and demoralised them. Throughout the study, none of the teachers showed a clear-cut understanding of the objectives of UTS, even though a level of optimism was reported when they first learnt about it. They failed to answer simple questions when asked about the objectives. Some repeated what they had heard from officials without being convinced and most mentioned the contradicting reality as a sign of disbelief.

5.2. Teachers' perceptions of the UTS introduction period:

For a vision to be shared and built effectively in schools it needs to be adopted by leaders and communicated in a way which secures the commitment of teachers (Beare et al., 1993). Therefore, even fundamental change needs time to be communicated before implementation. In the case of Bahrain, building on the fact that reforms are constructed and introduced by the MoE, some teachers assumed the Ministry is responsible for communicating the new vision.

Responses received from teachers varied concerning the adequacy of the introduction period and the accompanying activities. Most of the teachers remembered one meeting with a Ministry official before the implementation. Others, especially those who joined the school in the same year as the implementation, did not recall any activity or meeting oriented toward teachers. However, all teachers interviewed - formally and informally - reported their dissatisfaction and raised serious questions about the planning and related it to their significance from the point of view of the Ministry.

As Kotter (2002) argued, this period is essential for building confidence, sharing concerns, and providing useful data about the introduced changes. However, the Ministry seemed to fail, from the point of view of teachers, to address important issues during this stage. Therefore, they were not surprised about the problems that occurred after the implementation as they claimed that problems did not have time to appear, to be discussed and prepared for at this stage. They thought the problem was that they were told only once about UTS before the implementation and had only one formal opportunity to discuss it with the Ministry official in a two-hour meeting.

On the other side, from the perspective of the Ministry, the school management is responsible to communicate their vision to all different levels in the school; this is the nature of the responsibility hierarchy. The Ministry communicated its vision to the head teacher and he/she should communicate it to the middle managers, who in turn should transfer it to the teachers.

Teachers felt that UTS was introduced too quickly to deal with and prepare for it, even for senior and middle managers. During the introduction period, the head teacher and the newly appointed field coordinator were the only two who attended regular meetings with the Ministry officials. This allowed them access to important information. However, for various reasons, not enough time was available to discuss all details with middle managers and teachers.

5.3. - Teachers' perceptions of the clarity of their role in UTS:

As a fundamental revolutionary change, UTS introduced new ideas, concepts and roles. During change times, teachers on the individual level frequently feel uncertain about their new role (Helsby, 1999). Teachers in Alkaramah School argued that if UTS introduced new concepts, what is their new expected role? And if it is the same as in the old system, then what is the difference between the new and the old systems? 53% of teachers thought they had a clear understanding of their roles in UTS. Nevertheless, once again, during informal meetings and interviews they seemed to confuse their roles in UTS with those in another project. Teachers had a better understanding of the other project and a clear expectation of how it would help them in teaching and how they would need to change their behaviour to use it. However, when asked to explain their role in UTS, they fail to give precise responses about what they thought of their new role. What teachers were able to notice was the increase in demands and tasks accompanying the introduction of UTS, where 89% of teachers felt that it increased their paperwork and new lessons had been introduced.

As a result, the failure to clarify the role expected of teachers, the changes to this role and how these changes will affect their day-to-day work and behaviour helped to develop resistance, or at least a negative attitude, among teachers (Morrison, 1998).

Responses varied from one department to another about the level of role change: overall satisfaction was reported but mainly because of the implementation of the other project implemented at the same time, which affected the way lessons are planned, the teaching styles and the involvement of the students in learning. Nevertheless, teachers were not pleased about the new lessons introduced by UTS because of a lack of material and training, which contributed further to blurring their vision about what is expected of them in UTS.

5.4. - Teachers' perceptions of training received to prepare for UTS:

Teacher development should be a continuous process. Nevertheless, it becomes more important during change periods. When asked about UTS, statements like 'there was no training', 'not enough training', 'nothing new in the course', and 'not a helpful course at all' were reported frequently by teachers. Nearly 72% of teachers felt it is the responsibility of the senior management to offer them training courses and 82% of them thought they needed more training. One teacher described the situation, saying:

"This project is like a German machine. Your manager tells you it is great and will help you to do your job better. But when you try to use it you discover you don't have what it takes to make it work. So it becomes useless. UTS without training is just the same."

Most teachers did not receive training, which led them to question the preparations made by the Ministry for the project. Emerson & Goddard (1993) emphasised the importance of the development of teachers to match their needs. In this case, teachers were not satisfied with the quality of the training courses. They argued that what they had been offered was a replication of old training they had received before and it was useless for them to do it again.

Teachers' disappointment of the training offered reflected their lack of desire to learn more about UTS. It might be argued that teachers are trying to avoid blame by using a lack of training as an excuse on which to hang their indolence. However, there was no effective training offered to counter their claims.

Meanwhile, teachers in the English department, for example, reported complete satisfaction about their role in UTS. They argued that the new curriculum and the training course increased their approval of the project. However, it is worth mentioning that curriculum changes and the training course offered have nothing to do with the introduction of UTS: these events happened simultaneously but were unconnected. Nevertheless, this establishes the merit of the argument that training can help teachers improve their skills, give them the chance to adapt during times of change, and decrease resistance levels. The success story of the teachers in the English department should be used as a 'short-term win', as Kotter (2002) explained, to instill optimism and defuse cynicism.

6. Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of UTS

The implementation stage is usually one of the most difficult stages during change periods. Implementation, rather than the policy, determines whether the change will work. As Fullan (2007) stated, implementation is the process of putting into practice a set of new desired ideas, programmes, activities or structures by people who are intended to change. Hopkins et al. (1994) argued the need for "implementation-friendly projects". Implementation is part of the process but not an isolated event: more often, it is a consequence of earlier stages. To complete the story

of how teachers perceived the process of change, they commented on the implementation stage and portrayed a picture of successes and failures of the new project. Issues raised during this stage related to leadership, communication, resources, training, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment.

6.1. - Teachers' perceptions of leadership:

School leaders can make a difference in enhancing the effectiveness of a school and its survival throughout the period of change (Hallinger & Heck, 1999). How school leaders understand change, act as role models, communicate with and approach teachers directly affects teachers. However, in a centralised system such as the Bahraini educational system, managers and leaders have limited space in which to manoeuvre, as one teacher explained:

“To be honest, any school management finds itself forced to follow what the Ministry say. There are orders from the Ministry and head teachers need to apply them. I think any decision needs to come from the field, where the experience of the management and teachers is valued, not the experience of someone sitting at a desk.”

Nevertheless, in Alkaramah School an empathetic awareness of management capacity in terms of what it can offer was reported. Findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews were consistent in the prevailing satisfaction of teachers with the way both middle and senior managers approached UTS but not the MoE. On several occasions when discussing leadership and managerial issues, teachers blamed the MoE for any limitation. They held the Ministry responsible even for the failure of the school management to provide help in certain situations.

When referring to the Ministry to answer teachers' questions and giving the response “I don't know” did not help to enhance the image of the non-empowered school level leadership. This was another factor contributing to the blame placed on the Ministry. Nevertheless, teachers believed, at a SM level, that the head teacher and deputies offered help and ensured that teachers got what they asked for. More than 70% of teachers thought SM understood their needs, demonstrated sufficient understanding of UTS, acted as a role model, and helped teachers. Greater satisfaction with MM was evident, where more than 75% found them to be helpful, to act as role models, and to understand the objectives of UTS and the needs of teachers.

On the other hand, teachers were realistic and did not expect miracles from their heads of departments. They perceived them as friends on the same ship, with similar knowledge and opinions about UTS, and most importantly with limited power to change or refuse orders received from higher levels. The establishment of Advising & Counseling Office (ACO) helped teachers vastly during all stages of UTS implementation. It was the source of answers when the head of department failed to provide them.

Overall, teachers were satisfied with the management performance. Moreover, they excused them because they understood that even senior and middle managers have limited choices, limited access to information, and are directed by orders from the Ministry. The collegial leadership approach adopted in the school contributed to improve the relationship between teachers and managers.

6.2. Teachers' perceptions of communication

The way the system is working will have a direct impact on how teachers communicate and exchange information between themselves and the management. The communication style in Alkaramah School was characterised as formal in the way orders were received from the school management in the shape of letters and memos. On the other hand, there was an “open door” strategy (Emerson & Goddard, 1993: 161) for informal communication between teachers and middle and senior managers. Kotter (2002) warned of under-communicating or communicating just to transfer information, which was the case in Alkaramah School. During the implementation of UTS, the MoE established the ACO to facilitate UTS and to be the link between the Ministry and the school. More than 50% of teachers believed that they knew whom to ask and they were easy to contact, and more than 80% reported it was easy to communicate with SM and MM. However, knowing whom to ask was not the case: as the interview findings clarified, teachers were not happy with the responses and the quality of the answers they received.

The lack of information caused teachers in some cases to lose faith in the practicality of UTS. Most of them knew to whom to address their questions; nevertheless, those who were supposed to provide answers often needed to ask

someone else. This point is directly linked to the lack of vision and the powerless leadership that were reported. Bureaucracy and withholding information caused confusion, which is avoided in a rational system. In one extreme case, one teacher knew nothing about the ACO office. After thorough investigation involving informal talks with other teachers in different departments, there were others who shared ignorance from departments who felt they were not affected directly by UTS. For them, their head of department was the only source of information and they did not feel the need to go to ACO members. This can be seen as another setback for the newly established communication link in the system. It might be argued that teachers did not need to speak to ACO members because they knew everything, which is a sign of success, but the reality was different. Those departments expressed a loss of interest in what was going on around them and sometimes felt depressed because UTS affected them negatively.

6.3. *Teachers' perceptions of the effect of UTS on classroom practice*

The most emphasised objective of implementing UTS was improving the outcomes of the secondary schooling system. Indeed, Ministry officials in their meetings, newspaper articles, and official Ministry documents focused on this issue. Once again, the responses of teachers varied from one department to another. Many teachers expressed their dissatisfaction during department visits, classroom visits, and interviews and did not perceive UTS as changing teaching strategies in the classroom. As one teacher explained:

“I’ve been teaching since 1989; nothing in terms of teaching has changed from the first day I was assigned to a school. I still write on a white board. The only thing that has changed is instead of using chalk I use markers. I’m still confined to a book and I have to dictate and then set a final exam.”

Teachers argued that if UTS is not changing the heart of what matters – teaching and learning practice – then how can it improve the performance of students? In addition, some teachers thought UTS had had a negative effect on the students, as it brought serious problems with its implementation. Individual differences between the students were becoming wider and teaching was becoming more challenging. The problem was teachers felt they were not ready for such diverse classrooms. They were not offered any professional help, and the teaching time became shorter while the curriculum remained untouched. Teachers found themselves in a situation where they had to work against new variables. Some departments managed to find solutions and shifted back to similar-ability classrooms, where students are divided into two classes according to their ability. Those departments reported greater satisfaction and fewer complaints about problems with individual differences. Nevertheless, this solution contradicts the main objectives of UTS and derails the implementation from its initial intentions of not differentiating between students in the first year. However, that was the only solution teachers believed they had.

On the other hand, teachers did not see the school benefiting from pioneering UTS. They disputed that one of the reasons they initially accepted the new project was the promise made by the Ministry to equip the school with whatever they needed to facilitate the implementation. Nevertheless, nothing much happened in reality and teachers were left trying to make a new system work with what they had before. Teachers thought the promise they had been given was no more than “lip service”, as Gross et al. (1971) described.

Moreover, teachers were expecting serious changes to the old curriculum when introducing UTS. However, not all subjects witnessed such change. Departments were affected in one of three ways: radical change, artificial change, or no change at all. Only one department witnessed a radical change in the curriculum. As one teacher said:

“In our department, many changes occurred to the curriculum but none was related to UTS. To be honest the change in the curriculum played a crucial role in making us feel a change had happened with UTS. Without it, we would have felt nothing in our department.”

Teachers in this department were satisfied with the curriculum changes even though they were fully aware these changes were meant to happen with or without the introduction of UTS. Others were not satisfied with the level of change and complained about it. The most unpleasant reaction was from teachers either where the curriculum was not affected at all by UTS or where teachers had been asked to be creative and innovative in the activity lessons without guidelines or a curriculum to work with. This resulted in teachers being reluctant to teach the activity lessons and if they were forced to take them, they felt lost and did not know how to make the lesson work; instead, they ended up teaching their subjects, bearing in mind that the Ministry prohibited teaching in these types of lessons.

7. **Teachers' motivation during the change process**

Knowing the demanding nature of their work, teachers usually do not enter the teaching profession seeking a luxurious lifestyle or a high salary. Therefore, a “sympathetic, supportive environment which nourishes them mentally and spiritually” is required (Emerson & Goddard, 1993: 13). During change periods, looking after the motivation of teachers could increase their productivity and reduce resistance. In Alkaramah, a sharp disparity among teachers in different departments was evident. Teachers in departments directly influenced positively by UTS reported greater “job comfort” and “job fulfilment” (Evans, 1998). The positive influence was reported as increasing teaching hours for their subjects, reducing and restructuring the curriculum, and introducing new technology in teaching. On the other hand, other teachers reported anxiety concerning being transferred or reappointed to another school, especially in departments negatively affected by UTS. Teachers complained that UTS ruined their professional life and took control inside the classroom out of their hands, whereas their subjects had been transferred to pass/fail courses with no grades. Others complained of changes to their teaching conditions. They expressed a decline in their motivation since they felt - as teachers – that they were not being treated fairly and their needs were being neglected by the Ministry.

Aligned with the argument for salary as a dissatisfier, as with Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory, in Alkaramah School, salary is still seen as a motivator, while teachers still complain about low salary and increasing workloads. Many teachers repeated: “Improve my working conditions and expect me to do more”. Teachers thought that they were not being rewarded financially and related this dissatisfaction to their laid-back attitude towards reforms. They claimed they were doing their best out of affection to their profession. As one teacher said:

“I feel I can play a major role in UTS but there are some conditions, like offering training courses and incentives for teachers. If the Ministry want to really develop education in the country, this should include improving teachers’ intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.”

Generally, the attitudes of teachers towards “what will happen next” varied from one department to another. Teachers started with a positive feeling about UTS. After the implementation, their satisfaction level started to differentiate between those who supported and those who opposed UTS based on their experience in the first three months of implementation.

8. Conclusion

It was evident that teachers do have a stand, whereas resistance to change among teachers was always attributed to external factors: most of the time the Ministry was held responsible for not delivering on its promises. Teachers had approached UTS believing in its capacity to improve teaching and learning and in its importance. Nevertheless, a mixed feeling toward the UTS was developed during the implementation. Associated with this feeling, teachers felt marginalised and, sometimes, were content about it. This is a serious indicator of teachers’ disengagement and losing sense of ownership. It is vicious circles of a deeply rooted culture of “name and shame”, a game that had been going on for decades between the MoE and teachers. It was evident during this study that some teachers had abandoned their role as teachers and refused to change because of personal interests. However, with the evidence of lack of: inclusion, envisioning, resourcing, training and support, it is hard to generalize that all teachers are not keen to work and/or change. Teachers have little control over the decision-making process and emphasised their perception that current reform was affected by its relation with their academic life. Several issues relating to the quality and quantity of training, leadership and motivation were raised. In addition, their ambitions and expectations about how any reform should change things in the classroom played a crucial role in shaping their reactions.

Chronic problems when it comes to the implementation stage existed and, most of the time, were identified even before the implementation. The consistency and similarity of the responses of teachers forms the basis for the need to re-evaluate the current practice of how change is managed. Perceiving change as rational and predictable proved to be incorrect, as the evidence showed enormous variance between what meant to be and what happened in reality.

On the other hand, lessons learned from this study can inform future change attempts. It reveals, from the teachers point of view, the strengths and weaknesses of the process of change which can be overcome by long-term solutions rather than just quick short term fixes. Firstly the nature of change should be perceived differently. The rationale adopted for many years is about to be challenged, since the educational change context proved to be complex. Then accountability frameworks need to be a starting point, implemented alongside encouraging incentives and needs help and assistance. At the same time, capacity needs to be built in order to establish the mechanisms for internal accountability. Moreover, it is important to understand that school culture is a crucial factor

that can inhibit or promote change efforts. Establishing a culture of discipline which is able to criticise and reflect on its performance can be related to the capacity building process and will help in the process of self-evaluation. What will enable decision-makers to better understand school cultures is adopting different research philosophies to explore schools' realities. Action research is a potentially powerful tool to unlock school cultures and develop criticality levels within the schools' staff. Finally, forms of decentralisation can offer greater autonomy to school levels which in turn might increase staff involvement, commitment, and creativity, since it is going to be their decisions and tailored to fit their situation. All of these suggested ways forward are also ways forward for further inquiry and future investigation.

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