

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHERS IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATIONAL RENOVATION AND SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

In the context of fundamental and comprehensive renovation of primary and secondary education in Vietnam nowadays, teachers have a very essential role. However, there are many factors which can influence how they understand and adopt new ideas in their practice. In this article, based on the review of literature, the researcher recommends some suggestions which may contribute to a successful renovation in Vietnam.

Keywords: educational renovation, teachers in renovation, implementing change, renovation.

TÓM TẮT

Những yếu tố tác động đến giáo viên trong tiến trình đổi mới và một số đề xuất cho Việt Nam

Trong bối cảnh đổi mới căn bản, toàn diện giáo dục phổ thông ở Việt Nam hiện nay, giáo viên đóng vai trò rất quan trọng. Tuy nhiên, có nhiều yếu tố có thể tác động đến việc giáo viên hiểu và ứng dụng những đổi mới trong thực tế như thế nào. Trong bài báo này, từ việc xem xét những nghiên cứu về những yếu tố nói trên, chúng tôi kiến nghị một số đề xuất có thể góp phần giúp cho việc đổi mới ở Việt Nam thành công.

Từ khóa: đổi mới giáo dục, giáo viên trong đổi mới, ứng dụng đổi mới, đổi mới.

1. Introduction

Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that. [9, tr.115]

We have recognized many innovations come and go and many have failed. Researchers have undertaken much research to identify the factors that influence the outcomes of planned educational change. Fullan [9] identifies nine key factors that have emerged as critical in the process of implementing change. These are organized into three main categories: (1) the characteristics of the innovation or change; (2) the local characteristics; and (3) the external factors. Among 9 factors, teachers have a very crucial role in determining whether or not change will happen in the classroom. Recognizing that the 'changes, reforms, and improvements impact primarily upon teachers' [30, tr.36] and that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement, many researchers focus on the role of the teacher. Much of the

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literature on teachers' perspectives about educational change relates to the question of why innovations are not implemented as the developers anticipated. In early research, education developers often expressed frustration that teachers did not willingly or quickly accept and implement their suggestions. Teachers were described as recalcitrant or resistant to change. The literature at that time suggested that teachers feel uncomfortable about change, desiring to cling to their old ways. However, later research indicated a shift in explanations for the lack of implementation of educational change.

Researchers began to focus on the relationship between educational change and teachers' personal and professional contexts. They point out that one of the most important reasons for the considerable gap between reform ideas and teacher's enactment at the classroom level is the lack of understanding of the voice of the teachers at the grassroots level. Researchers understood that teachers 'are required to change themselves and what they do to meet specifications laid down by policy makers who neither know them or the contexts in which they work' [30, tr. 36]. Acknowledging this, researchers seemed to take a much more positive and sympathetic view of teachers and their role in educational change. And the focus of educational change research in recent decades has been considerably more respectful of teachers and their reasons for accepting or rejecting planned changes.

Listening to teachers' voices, researchers figure out that there are many factors influencing teachers' adoption of new ideas. Understanding these factors can help to explain why a teacher changes or does not change, and also how the teachers change. In the context of fundamental and comprehensive innovation of primary and secondary education in Vietnam nowadays, the changes expected of Vietnamese teachers require a huge pedagogical shift. To better examine teachers' capacity to take this on, within the confines of this article, I clarify some crucial factors that construct teachers' lenses for viewing the innovation and influence them in implementing new teaching approaches.

2. Factors that influence teachers in the process of educational change

2.1. Teacher professional development

Within educational innovation, professional development for teachers is now recognized as an important ingredient because, for essential changes in practice to occur, teachers must first undertake professional development to assist them with developing new ways of thinking that match the changes advocated. Because of its importance, more and more educators have researched the role of professional development in relation to the process of educational innovation. A number of studies have revealed that researchers view faulty implementation of educational change as a result of ineffective professional development and claim that the effectiveness of professional development programs is strongly related to teacher learning and the quality of teaching and learning in schools [17, 25]. Some large-scale survey studies

have shown how professional development can influence teachers' knowledge and practice. In particular, in recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the characteristics of effective professional development. However, some research shows that quality professional development in general does not always lead to consistent changes in practice because different teachers may respond differently when they participate in professional development. Teachers do not accept the policy demands and messages from professional development about teaching immediately; they first filter the ideas through their own interpretive frames. Coburn [8] argued that teachers accept or reject different aspects of the innovation depending on their worldviews, their preexisting practices, and their shared understanding. Ball explained, "What teachers bring to the process of learning to teach affects what they learn. Increasingly, teachers' own personal and professional histories are thought to play an important role in determining what they learn from professional development opportunities" [2, tr. 501].

Other studies have revealed that teachers' histories, that is, prior experience, knowledge, beliefs and their very different contexts, all construct their frames to interpret what they learn through professional development. Therefore, teachers may vary in their understanding and application of an innovation.

2.2. *Teachers' understanding*

The other important factor which helps teachers to be successful in implementing change appears to be whether or not they understand exactly what the intended change is and that they are aware of the implications for classroom practice. Previous studies have reported that lacking understanding of the change is a major reason for differences in teachers' responses to change. For example, Hill [12] in her qualitative study on elementary mathematics reform, concluded that it is the differences in teachers' interpretations and partial understanding of the intended change rather than a lack of effort or rejection of the change that led to the unsuccessful implementation. Similarly, Wang argues that when policymakers fail to make their intentions clear, teachers 'may have no clear idea of what was intended and then could ignore some aspects of the innovation or that teachers misunderstand the intentions and react with disfavor' [33, tr.14].

A similar situation exists in many countries around the world. In the Hong Kong context, Carless [7] reported that misconceptions about task-based teaching is one of the factors affecting how teachers approached the implementation of communicative tasks in their classroom. Tong [31] found similar evidence that teachers' lack of understanding of the changes is one of the barriers to their pedagogical transformations. In Thailand, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison [25] also found teachers' confusion about the principles and application of a reform designed to promote learner-centered instruction had hindered the implementation. In Turkey, teachers' limited understanding of a curriculum innovation was also found to be one of the hindering

factors causing a gap between curriculum objectives and primary teachers' implementation of the innovation [17]. Similarly, in South Africa, Bantwini reported that there was a lack of understanding of the curriculum reforms which teachers perceived 'as a hindrance to positive change and implementation' [4, tr. 87].

As above, there is strong international evidence that teacher's understanding of an innovation strongly influences their capacity to implement it in their classroom teaching.

2.3. Teachers' experience

The other factor that can influence teachers in adopting change is teachers' experience. Many decades ago, John Dewey explored the link between experience and education. In his theory of experience, he specified two principles: continuity and interaction. Continuity means the experience of each person will affect his or her future. Interaction refers to the meaning that one's present experience is a result of the interaction between his or her past experience and the present situation. While Dewey's idea means that teachers should take account of students' past experiences in order to help them open up, rather than shut down, their access to future growth experience, it also applies to teachers as their past experiences also play a significant role in informing how they interpret what they learn from professional development. Also, teachers' attitudes towards the innovation will depend on what experience the innovation brings to them as well as their past experiences in teaching and, in some cases, with past innovations.

There is evidence in the research literature to support this view. Olsen and Kirtman [22] identified multiple lived experiences including not only teachers' previous teaching but also their childhoods and current families as important factors shaping their views of teaching and learning. In turn, these multiple experiences shape their active responses to an innovation. Leinhardt and Richardson have also found that teachers' experiences affect their learning to teach [18, 27]. Others have concluded that there is a relationship between teachers' experiences and their responses to an innovation. For example, Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, Mundry, Love, and Hewson [20] claim that what people know and believe will influence their choice and decision-making. Bantwini explained that "individuals develop reform maps that guide them in navigating the reform process, based on their professional experiences. These experiences, accumulated over years, are trusted and powerful lenses that teachers utilize to judge new reforms channeled or imposed on them" [4, tr. 89]. Thus, when teachers are required to change, they use tacit and intuitive mental models based on past experiences to guide them through a planned change.

While teachers' experiences can be understood as embracing many kinds of life experiences, their teaching experiences seem to be very important in affecting their decisions to resist or accept the innovation. Some researchers believe that the more experienced the teacher, the more reluctant they are to change. According to Olsen and

Kirtman, we often assume ‘a teacher’s career trajectory would be accompanied by an eventual decrease in the enthusiasm necessary to embrace reform [22, tr. 311]. However, their research shows that ‘career cycle based effects on restructuring attitudes are far murkier and more complicated than typically reported’ [22, tr. 311]. In their study, some teachers who had been teaching for many years and were close to retirement saw no reason to change because they thought their students ‘always turned out alright before’ [22, tr. 311], and moreover, they would retire soon. However, other veteran teachers accepted the change and ‘rose to the challenge and blossomed in their final years’ or led ‘the charge for change’ [22, tr. 312]. In summary, it is evident that one of the crucial factors that construct teachers’ lenses to view the innovation is their professional experience. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account of teachers’ past experiences in order to understand how they respond to the change.

2.4. Teachers’ pedagogical beliefs

Literature shows that another critical factor influencing teachers in adopting change is the beliefs they hold about the change [4, 7, 16, 28]. For example, Roehrig and his colleagues [28] conducted research to examine the implementation of a reform-based high school chemistry curriculum. Using interviews and observations, they concluded teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning strongly affect the implementation of curriculum. In another study, Carless [7] also found that teacher belief is one of six issues that influence how teachers implement communicative tasks in their classrooms. Kimonena and Nevalainen [16], in their study of what a small rural school in Finland understood by active learning, argued that the reforms in curricula or equipment only do not always lead to change in teachers’ practice. To change the way teachers engage with their students, teachers’ beliefs need to be challenged. Conflict between a teacher’s beliefs and proposed new ideas can result in resistance to change.

However, while teachers’ beliefs strongly influence their acceptance or rejection of change, it is difficult to change those beliefs, especially those that are firmly held. Guskey [11] explained that change in belief follows, rather than precedes, change in behavior. He found that teachers only change their beliefs if they try new practices and find that it improves their students’ achievement. Saito and Tsukui [29] discuss the problem and challenges in the process of trials to build a learning community in schools of Bac Giang Province, Vietnam and conclude that changing teachers’ beliefs regarding how to conduct lessons is very time-consuming.

Richardson (1996) described three primary sources for teachers’ beliefs: (1) personal experience; (2) experience with schooling and instruction; and (3) experience with formal knowledge. Amongst them, experience with schooling and instruction seems to be very important. Beliefs from this source are developed during one’s 12 - 13 years at school when they, as students, observe how their teachers teach them in the context of their classrooms. This experience influences their view of what it means to be a teacher. Researchers found that those beliefs were so strong that when these

students became teachers, they often believed that they did not have much to learn about teaching, except during their internship. Therefore, attempting to introduce a new practice to teachers is challenging work.

Another aspect of *belief* is the concept of *self-efficacy*. Bandura defines self-efficacy 'as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives' [3, tr. 71]. In terms of teaching, teachers who have a strong sense of self-efficacy believe they understand the content and know how to help their students learn that content well. These teachers often see difficult tasks as challenges that they want to overcome while the teachers who have low self-efficacy often do not believe in their teaching capabilities and avoid difficult tasks. According to Bandura [3], people's beliefs about their efficacy are developed from four sources. The first is mastery experiences which means while successes build a positive belief, failures can diminish one's sense of efficacy. The second source to create efficacy is through vicarious models. Knowing that a similar teacher succeeded in applying the change can make the observing teacher begin to think he or she can be successful if they use the change too. However, seeing someone similar try and fail can cause the observer's efficacy to be reduced. Social persuasion is the third source. A positive comment can raise a person's efficacy, encourage them to try their best and sustain their effort to the end of the task, while a negative comment can result in making them avoid challenging activities. A psychological indicator is also a source which can affect one's efficacy because 'positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy; despondent mood diminishes' [3, tr. 72]. Bandura's ideas about self-efficacy can help us understand why and how different teachers respond in different ways to the innovation in which they are involved. Moreover, the concept of vicarious models and social persuasion help us to see the important role of professional context and the interaction amongst teachers in the process of implementing change.

Calderhead [5] also researched teachers' beliefs and found that there are five main areas in which teachers hold significant beliefs including those about learners and learning, teaching, the subject, learning to teach, and beliefs about self and the teaching role. These beliefs influence the ways teachers teach their students and therefore, affect teachers' responses to mandated changes in their teaching. For example, teachers with different beliefs about their students' learning may use different teaching methods to teach them. Different beliefs about the rationale and purpose of teaching may also make teachers focus on different aspects of learning such as developing students' academic performance over social performance, improving academic results (from tests and examinations) rather than the process of knowledge learning. Teachers' beliefs about the subject may also affect their choice of teaching approach and teaching materials. Strong beliefs about learning to teach may encourage them to learn from their own teaching experience or learn from observing other teachers' teaching. Lastly, teachers' beliefs about self and the teaching role may affect the way they form

relationships in the classroom in order to manage the class.

2.5. School context

Many researchers also claim that promoting individual teacher change needs to take place in the context of a particular school's culture and norms, including the collective of teachers, administrators, and students because professional development will have little impact on teachers if the school culture does not recognize and support teachers' state of growth and readiness for new ideas. Other researchers, including Adamson and Yin [1], Yan [34], and Roehrig, Kruse, and Kern [28] have argued that lack of school support appears to be one of the main obstacles affecting teacher change. The school context embraces many factors, and among those most frequently cited as influencing how teachers respond to the imposition of new demands are school leadership, the teachers themselves and the students.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the role that school leaders have in creating the conditions necessary for successful reform. Adamson and Yin [1] claimed that school leaders' poor management of change is one of the barriers to teachers' pedagogical transformations. Yan [34] found evidence that school administrators' resistance to curriculum reform strongly affected the teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Fullan [9] wrote that school principals are in a position to ensure that the conditions for success exist. He identified these conditions as 'shared goals', a collaborative and supportive climate and the development of 'procedures for monitoring results' [9, tr. 83]. Other studies confirm the important role of principals in organizing and carrying out school change. For example, in the context of Vietnam, Saito and Tsukui [29] point out that the change of school principal led to changes in management styles. They conclude that to promote the change, reaching a consensus with school managers needs to be a priority so that they incorporate the related matters into their policies and change their management style for implementing the policies.

While teachers have already been noted as critical in any reform, Fullan emphasizes the crucial role of 'peer relationships in the school' [9, tr. 84]. He claims "Change involves learning to do something new, and interaction is the primary basis for social learning. New meanings, new behaviors, new skills, and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals or are exchanging ideas, support, and positive feelings about their work. The quality of working relationships among teachers is strongly related to implementation" [9, tr. 84].

Many studies have supported Fullan's findings. For example, Tong [31] indicated that together with school leaders' poor management of change, weak teacher collaboration appeared as a barrier to their pedagogical transformations. Coburn [8] also values shared understanding through interactions between teachers and their colleagues as an important part of the process and it is through these interactions that teachers shape, emphasize, and interpret the message of change before bringing it into their classroom. In their recent study, Adamson and Yin [1] also found that teachers'

professional interactions affect the extent to which they are able to apply new understandings and expand teaching repertoires. Joseph [14] identifies that the group to which teachers belong has a crucial role in assisting them to interpret and understand many aspects of a reform. He argues that the benefits of informal meetings among teachers and the more substantive conversations in which they are involved enable them to seriously consider aspects of the reform rather than summarily dismissing them.

Apart from school leadership and the teacher network at the school, students also appear as a crucial factor which can hinder or support teacher change. Fullan [9] believes that students are also involved in change and unless they perceive that it is meaningful to them, most change will fail. Some research reveals that teachers only change their teaching if they see the new practice enhance their students' learning. Richardson [27] points out that the adopted change would be dropped if it did not work for teachers and whether the change helps to engage students in their learning will determine whether the teachers implement the change or not. Joseph [14] notes that teachers often resist parts of the reform that are too difficult for their students. Yan found that student resistance is a crucial factor that contributes to the implementation gap because resistance influences 'teachers' pedagogical decisions to cater for their students' needs and preferences' [34, tr. 12].

In brief, the school context with school leaders, networks of teachers, and students has a strong influence on the extent to which teachers understand and apply the change. Teacher change can only be sustained if teachers receive support from their colleagues, their students, and especially from their school leadership 'who occupy key positions with their authoritative status and subject expertise' [1, tr. 187].

2.6. Government requirements

In Asian countries such as Vietnam or China, innovations are often top-down and mandated by the government. In these countries, apart from the policies of adopting change, the requirements of how to examine teachers' performance in school seem to be very important and have a strong effect on the implementation process. Saito and Tsukui [29] in research about school reform for a learning community under an international cooperation project in Bac Giang Province, Vietnam, pointed out that within the government innovation, the schools are under the strong control and influence of the Department of Education and Training of the province. They state that, "The Bureau of Education and Training of the district regularly inspect schools. They check various types of documents, including lesson plans, teachers' notebooks for professional teacher meetings, and so forth. Inspectors also observe lessons and give instructions to teachers. Their views tend to be very conventional, and the teachers fear being held for not conducting lessons according to the policies listed by the authorities" [29, tr. 573].

What Saito and Tsukui [29] report can be called as support in terms of pressure and quite similar to Fullan's idea about a distinction between accountability and capacity building. Fullan [10] claims that "some forms of accountability have elements of support, and some forms of support have elements of pressure or built-in accountability. Be that as it may, accountability involves targets, inspections, or other forms of monitoring along with action consequences. Capacity building consists of developments that increase the collective power in the school in terms of new knowledge and competencies, increased motivation to engage in improvement actions, and additional resources (time, money, and access to expertise)."

However, Saito and Tsukui [29] also claim that teachers in schools, apart from a great concern about the policies, face the pressure of examinations, which are a major kind of assessment and cover the entire scope of the textbooks. Government expectations show up in the form of student success rates, periodic reviews and compulsory use of textbooks. This pressure 'leads to the teachers' tendency to cover the whole curriculum through one-sided lectures and impose upon students the task of memorizing the contents as a mandate of schooling education' [29, tr. 573].

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the wash back effect of the examination on teaching and learning and many studies have found evidence that the examination has a crucial influence on teachers' responses to change. Canh and Barnard [6], based on their study in Vietnam, found that the strong wash back effect of the national examinations is one of the causes of teachers' unwillingness to change their teaching approaches. Morris conducted a study in the Hong Kong context to determine why teachers did not use a teaching approach which was recommended by curriculum planners. Morris concluded that 'change will not occur unless teachers perceive it to be necessary for the pupils to pass the public examination' [21, tr. 15]. Richardson also states that changes, which are adopted and tried out in the classroom, will be dropped if teachers do not see that it works for them and helps 'teachers respond to system-level demands such as high test scores' [27, tr. 14]. Yan [34], through a study of secondary teachers' implementation of curriculum reform in China, concluded that a gap between the curriculum requirements and the teachers' classroom practices were due to contextual constraints and the examination-oriented culture. These two factors are obstacles in any change process. According to Yan, because the students' results are used to judge teachers' performance, even though the teachers do not support the examination culture, they still employ the didactic approach to guarantee the students' success in the examinations. Yan elaborates "The teachers' obsession with tests was found to have led to the common mundane practice in all schools of devoting the last whole year to revising all the contents to prepare for the national college entry examination...The teaching and learning was not felt enjoyable, but effective for exam purposes. A convergence emerged that the traditional teaching methods would persist unless the examination culture was hanged". [34, tr. 10]

It seems that the examination-oriented culture strongly affects teachers in change. In Vietnam, the primary motive in going to school is to obtain high qualifications and academic performance measured by the examinations; consequently, examination preparation is a priority for parents, students, and teachers. Therefore, examinations may have a strong influence on teachers' teaching and taking examinations into account to investigate teacher change is necessary.

2.7. Culture

Park [23], in a study of the learning style preferences of Southeast Asian students in the United States, found that Vietnamese students, as well as other Southeast Asian students tend to be passive and nonverbal in class. The students rarely contribute actively in class discussions until they are asked. They accept teachers as a major source of knowledge and behave as passive receivers [24]. Park explains 'reticence and humility are highly valued Asian cultural values' [23, tr. 247]. Park elaborates, "For Vietnamese, due to more than a thousand years of Chinese influence, the Confucian philosophy is very much alive and sets a powerful interpersonal norm for daily behaviors, attitudes, and practices demanding reflection, moderation, persistence, humility, obedience to superiors, and stoic response to pain" [23, tr. 248].

The Confucian philosophy affects most features of Vietnamese people's lives and of course, students and teachers also are influenced. Vietnam has a long history of respect and dedication to education based on Confucian ideals. Vietnamese students share a common Confucian heritage with other countries in Asia, known as Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC). According to Hofstede and Hofstede [15], in the list of Power Distance Index values for 74 countries and regions, Vietnam is one of the high scoring CHC nations (Malaysia scores highest with 104; China: 80; Singapore: 74; *Vietnam*: 70; Hong Kong: 68; Korea: 60; Taiwan: 58 and Japan: 54). Hierarchical relationships are often emphasized in a country with such high power distance scores. Within a school context, hierarchical relationships mean that classroom teachers have to defer to and obey their principals while their students have to defer to and obey their teachers.

In Western countries, following Socrates' philosophy, teachers and students are friends, and students can question or even argue with their teachers in the search for meaning and understanding. This is not so in Vietnam and other Asian countries influenced by Confucius' philosophy where students are taught to respect, obey and listen to teachers [13, 24]. The difference between these two philosophies is summed up by Tweed and Lehman: "Socrates, a Western exemplar, valued private and public questioning of widely accepted knowledge and expected students to evaluate others' beliefs and to generate and express their own hypotheses. Confucius, an Eastern exemplar, valued effortful, respectful, and pragmatic acquisition of essential knowledge as well as behavioral reform" [32, tr. 89].

In a study examining the influence of the Chinese culture of learning on the adoption of communicative language teaching in the Chinese classroom, Hu notes that ‘students are expected to respect and not to challenge their teachers’ [13, tr. 98]. Pratt also states that in learning, the important thing is that individuals ‘master the content, through diligence and patience, without questioning or challenging what is presented’ [26, tr. 315]. Rather than thinking independently, exchanging ideas with their friends, listening critically to what teachers are saying and drawing their own conclusions, these students learn mainly through passive listening to teachers’ lectures and memorizing [23]. Students are expected to be in class to receive knowledge rather than construct it. Therefore, the focus of teaching is not on how teachers and students can create and construct knowledge in an experiential approach, but on how extant authoritative knowledge can be transmitted and internalized in a most effective and efficient way. To meet that expectation, teachers need to be knowledge experts. Pratt [26] claims that once teachers obtain enough knowledge, they only need to find a way to interpret, analyze and elaborate beautifully on this for their students. The teachers do not expect any contribution from their students and do not see the need to encourage their students to contribute.

For Vietnamese teachers and students, the Confucian culture has become a natural part of their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions. Pham argues that it is difficult for Vietnamese teachers to ‘accept any pedagogical practice that tends to put teachers on a par with their students and detracts from teacher authority’ and ‘may put teachers at the risk of losing face’ [24, tr. 6]. Moreover, teaching and learning within this culture over many years has made teachers too familiar with the sole role of delivering knowledge. Students also have become too familiar with passively receiving knowledge and they, along with their teachers, are unfamiliar with students being involved in active learning activities such as questioning, discussing, and presenting knowledge. Pham claims that teachers may involve active activities in their lesson ‘just for changing the learning environment, but not for increasing students’ knowledge or skills’ [24, tr. 6]. However, other researchers have conducted studies in Vietnam and reached different conclusions from Pham. For example, Lewis and McCook [19] found that even though Vietnamese teachers in their study retained the traditional aspects of teaching, they were clearly interested in applying the new teaching approach. These teachers valued the use of authentic language by their students and encouraged them to take the initiative in learning activities. Such findings convince us that despite traditional teaching and learning in this culture, Vietnamese teachers can still adopt active learning and teaching approaches successfully. Thus, it is essential to note and necessary to listen to advice about taking into consideration the cultural complexities whatever Western-based approaches policy makers want to carry out in Vietnam [24].

There are some other factors which are reported to influence the ways teachers actually interpret and implement reforms in their classrooms such as teachers' expertise, assumptions about learning, emotions, reform cycle, personal relationships, personal interests, previous education ... [7, 14, 17, 22]. However, the seven factors discussed above are factors most frequently cited in the literature.

3. Some suggestions

Based on factors influencing teachers' responses to change discussed above, we can conclude that teachers may vary in terms of willingness to take on the change. Together and in various combinations, the factors identified above are likely to filter teachers' responses to any mandated innovation and their decisions about how to adopt (or resist) proposed changes. Insights gained from reviewing the literature on the factors influencing teachers' adoption of change suggest that to have a successful innovation, these factors need to be considered carefully. In the case of Vietnam, Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is preparing for an innovation which requires a huge pedagogical shift, therefore, understanding and taking these above factors into account is necessary.

Understanding that there are many factors that can affect teachers in the process of implementing change, MOET should know that it is impossible to ask all teachers to be eager to embrace the change wholeheartedly. Teachers respond in many ways and resistant teachers may become proficient at implementing reform when they are observed, but then return to their preferred ways when they are alone. To help teachers understand new ideas and change their beliefs, MOET should provide them a chance to learn through their own experience which attending official professional development workshops (as MOET did in some previous innovations) could not provide. Knowing that a similar teacher succeeded in applying the change can make the observing teachers begin to think they can also be successful if they use the change too. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to learn new things by experiencing them in their school, in their class, with their students. Moreover, when teachers begin their new practices, they really need adequate time and support from their administrators. Without support from the central administration, teachers would be unwilling to devote the time, effort and emotional investment necessary for successful implementation of a particular innovation. Therefore, training and making sure that every school's administrators understand and support the change is very important. MOET needs to pay crucial attention to the administrators and organize special training courses for them. In fact, we have evidence that many reforms failed because school's administrators did not understand and support the change (or supported it in the wrong way).

Teachers also need support from their students. The teachers will not become involved in genuine change unless they perceive that it is meaningful to their students which often means improving their students' results and making them learn happily.

Therefore, MOET should guarantee that implementing the new teaching approaches will not only make students love to learn but also improve their learning results. Information from the literature also shows that to encourage teachers to adopt a new teaching approach, the ways in which students are assessed needs to be appropriate to the ways in which they are taught. Often the students' results are used to judge quality of teaching and therefore it is important that the examination requirements align with those of the introduced teaching approach. Therefore, to help teachers in using the new teaching approach, MOET must assure that examination requirements do not conflict with the teaching requirements.

Support from a teacher network is also very important because dialogue between a teacher and other teachers, or with their critical friends, or perhaps with staff developers, administrators, change agents, or consultants is a vital component in an approach to work toward a change of beliefs and practice, which is necessary for the change process. Therefore, for a successful innovation, MOET should think about creating a teacher network and building a model of professional development with ongoing support in the teachers' own schools. I will address this issue more clearly in another paper.

Finally, in countries such as Vietnam which are influenced by Confucius' philosophy, implementing a new active teaching and learning approach may be harder than in Western countries, where the students are experienced in evaluating others' beliefs and generating and expressing their own hypotheses. Therefore, Vietnamese teachers may need more time and more support to adapt to the new teaching requirements.

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