

## Educational Reform in Third World Countries

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### Abstract

This paper examines some educational reforms in third world countries in Asia and Africa and concludes that generally they have failed or only gained partial success. The problem is that most of the innovations that are introduced in third world countries such as Botswana follow top-down models or centre-periphery models of change, as they are usually borrowed or imported from outside, including from western countries like the United Kingdom or the USA. The innovations are perceived to be incongruent with the prevailing social and cultural values of the classroom and therefore do not receive the support of both teachers and students and therefore fail to take root. The importation of innovations is usually done through bilateral or multilateral aid agencies, which usually have agendas that go beyond educational ones.

**Keywords:** implementation, learner-centered, innovation, classroom interaction, pedagogy, teacher-centered.

### Introduction

Studies have shown that for educational reform or innovation to be successful or have the desired impact on teaching and learning the whole education system must be mobilised and should work harmoniously together (Skilbeck 1990; Markee 1997; Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson, & Austin 1997). If some aspect of the education system is not working in concert with the others this might affect how the curriculum impacts on teaching and learning. If for instance teachers are not trained in how to implement the curriculum, this might prevent the curriculum from bringing about the desired changes in teaching and learning, as they might not implement it correctly.

However, curriculum reform is even more complex if, as is the case in most third world countries in Asia and Africa, innovations are imported from some parts of the world to others. This is because innovations do not just involve technical issues, such as new teaching materials and methods, but embedded in those materials and methods are worldviews involving socio-cultural values (Tabulawa 2003). Consequently pedagogical innovations in so called Third world countries, especially in Asia and Africa, have not been very successful as a review of studies in those regions show. The problem is that most of the innovations that are introduced in third world countries such as Botswana follow top-down models or centre-periphery models of change, as they are usually borrowed or imported from outside, including from western countries like the United Kingdom or the USA. The innovation is sometimes seen to be incongruent with the prevailing social and cultural values of the classroom and therefore does not receive the support of both teachers and students and hence fails to take root. The importation of innovations is usually done through bilateral or multilateral aid agencies.

### Aid Agencies and Innovations

Markee (1997) reports his experience with an English Language Teaching Officers (ELTO) project funded by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) through the British council in Sudan. He was working as an expert in English for specific purposes (ESP) in a technological university where the official medium of instruction is English. He was part of a team of eight ESP teachers consisting of four expatriate British and four Sudanese. The brief of the four British ESP experts was to implement learner-centered teaching approaches and to influence the local Sudanese staff to do the same. The ESP experts had to do so because the job of ELTO personnel included the training of counterparts to transform imported pedagogical ideas into appropriate solutions to local problems. The hope was that the counterparts would, in the course of time, influence their local colleagues to change their educational practices and values.

Phillipson (1992) has criticized this kind of aid, as not promoting development, but rather perpetuating the dependency of underdeveloped countries on developed countries by implementing a centre-periphery model of development. Slightly exaggerated though Phillipson's thesis may seem to be, it has a lot of merit in it. It seems to me that proponents of what Phillipson calls the centre-periphery model of development seem to consider pedagogical issues such as aid packages like learner-centered teaching approaches, in technicist terms, and ignore the fact that such issues come laden with the values of the donor countries and as they are imported into other countries they would have to function within the new socio-cultural and systemic structures, which impose new parameters. It should also be taken into consideration that the recipients of the aid may perceive language aid projects to be irrelevant to their local needs. For example, in the Sudanese case Markee (1997) was told by the Sudanese official in charge of the bilateral Anglo-Sudanese aid project he worked on, that the language component of the technical assistance project put together by ODA and the British Council had been imposed by the donor agency even though he had told them that language aid was not needed.

Markee (1997) gives very important insights into why the project he worked on failed in Sudan. He says his

project was affected by complex cultural, ideological, historical, political, economic, administrative, technological, sociological, and language planning factors. For instance, he asserts that the students probably learned most of their English from their technical teachers, who gave the students 25 hours of technical lectures a week and taught in a Sudanese variety of English. They only received four hours of ESP from language specialists of whom four were British and four were Sudanese. Furthermore, the native speakers of English had no competence in Sudanese English, which was the de facto target linguistic norm at Sudanese institutions; in addition, none of the expatriates was fluent in Arabic. The expatriate 'experts' were therefore at a significant linguistic and cultural disadvantage compared to their Sudanese colleagues, who had a far better intuitive understanding of the learning problems that students had trying to master the target norm-Sudanese English.

The importation of innovation from more developed countries to underdeveloped need not be straightforward and clear as in the Sudanese case, in some case it is more subtle and may use local personnel as the Bangalore Project in India indicates. The procedural or the communicational syllabus emerged out of the Bangalore Project in southern India (Markee 1997). Instead of organizing the instructions in terms of pre-selected language items, the procedural syllabus used tasks as the principal carrier of language content. The methodology was meaning-focused in which ESL students in Southern India learned language by communicating. The focus was on meaning and form-focused activities were avoided in the classroom. Therefore there was no explicit grammar teaching or error correction. The Bangalore Project was formally evaluated and it was found that 47% of Bangalore Project teachers reached a routine level of implementation, and only 13% reached an expert level of implementation. Therefore 40% of project teachers were not well informed about the project's task-based methodology and did not understand how to use it.

It was also found that few teachers felt that they owned this innovation. The results of the innovation evaluation demonstrate how difficult it is to promote fundamental educational change. A number of reasons why the Bangalore Project failed have been suggested. First it was suggested that although it was the project director's aim to use a bottom-up approach to change in this project, only teachers who felt that they were part of Prabhu's (project-director) small inner circle perceived that Prabhu relied on a bottom-up strategy of change (Beretta 1990; Markee 1997). The inner circle consisted of non-regular teachers who were curriculum specialists and teacher trainers with advanced qualifications in second or foreign language teaching and who were affiliated with the British Council or the Bangalore Regional Institute of English. Teachers who did not feel part of Prabhu's inner circle seemed to have regarded the project's communicational methodology as an immutable decision that was imposed on implementers by top management (Markee 1997).

With regard to how open and democratic the management style of the project director was there are conflicting views with outside commentators saying the management was democratic while local observers say it was not. For instance, (Brumfit 1984); 240) claims that the project's organization was "a model of openness and genuine connection with classroom realities". On the other hand, Tickoo (1996), a local Indian observer say it was not that open and democratic. Therefore, this perceived lack of openness and democracy in the running of the project might have contributed to its failure.

With regard to whether the project's communicational methodology was compatible with the socio-cultural context, Tickoo (1996) criticizes the project for its inappropriate methodological radicalism in the acquisition-poor environment of English language teaching in India primary and secondary schools. It has been argued that though the developers and implementers of the innovations were Indians, they were not regular Indians in that they were either affiliated with outside organizations or were trained outside India. For instance, the project director, though he was Indian, was formally affiliated with the British Council as an English studies officer and also held a PhD from a British university. Furthermore many of Prabhu's Indian colleagues also held advanced degrees in language from British or Indian institutions, which have always been strongly influenced by the British tradition of applied linguistics (Markee 1997). The project may therefore have been culturally inappropriate for some participants because it has been observed that there exist a cultural gap between applied linguists and teachers not just in India but all over the world (Markee 1997).

The other reason why participants might have regarded the project as culturally inappropriate might have been because participants had widely different individual experiences. Some, especially those who had traveled widely, were highly educated and had well developed professional connections, perceived the innovation to be culturally appropriate while those without similar experience, professional connections, and education perceived it as inappropriate. Lastly there was a feeling that the task-based methodology was imported from Britain. Tickoo (1996) notes that at least two project participants felt that the project had imported unacceptably radical foreign ideas into India. This would imply that the Bangalore Project which was thought to have been based on a problem-solving model of change was actually based on a subtle form of centre-periphery model of change.

Some innovations fail because they come laden with values that may not be appreciated in the socio-cultural context into which they are imported. Such seems to have been the case with the introduction of the Communicative Language teaching approach (CLT). The most pervasive innovation that has come from the West is the CLT approach to language teaching. In this approach the learners themselves are the central players in the learning process. Learners are given the opportunity of learning the target language through

communicating in it and the teacher's role is to create a conducive environment for this to take place. Therefore this approach is learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. Many teaching methods and innovations under CLT have been developed in the West and then exported to Asian and African countries. One of these was the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC)

Carless (2005) reports on the implementation of the TOC innovation in Hong Kong primary schools and examined the reasons why the innovation failed. The educational context of the Hong Kong primary school system was characterized by traditional teacher-centered, textbook-oriented teaching methods, which were reinforced by conservative views among parents, who demanded large quantities of homework and frequent summative testing. However, in spite of the seemingly unpromising conditions, such as large class sizes and repetitive drilling for examinations, the existing system produced quite positive results, due to a complex array of factors, including diligence, perseverance and high motivation to achieve (Biggs 2001; Carless 2005). It is not surprising that the TOC innovation, derived from Western Models, was viewed as unnecessary and impractical (Adams, 1981).

The TOC innovation promoted a learner-centered pedagogy and emphasized formative rather than summative assessment. It should be noted that formative assessment is associated with approaches to learning which emphasize constructivism, while summative assessment is associated with those that emphasize an objective positivist view of knowledge. Therefore asking teachers to adopt a learner-centered teaching method and to use formative assessment (which is intended to help the learner by providing useful feedback on the learners' learning) was asking them to make a paradigm shift, which is not easy. Shifting paradigms entails the giving up of the taken-for-granted classroom world of the teachers and the students, a world view that is also usually shared by the general community at large (Clarke 2003; Tabulawa 1997).

The TOC innovation generally failed except for pockets of success for a number of reasons. The innovation's epistemological assumptions and values were incongruent with those that were held by the stake holders (teachers, students, parents, education authorities etc). While the stake holders generally had an objective-positivist view of knowledge, the innovation was based on a constructivist epistemology. Therefore the innovation failed because both its student-centered pedagogy and its emphasis on formative assessments implied constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. It was reported that the teachers did not have the time, skills or support in feeding back data from assessment into the classroom. Teachers' workload was also increased by collecting assessment data but they did not experience any reward in the form of enhanced pupil learning (Black, 2003). Teachers also resisted TOC assessment processes because they held beliefs that favored what they believed were more reliable, formal assessment and a strong separation between teaching and assessment (Morris, Adamson, Chan et al, 1999; Carless 2005).

Another important reason why teachers resisted TOC formative assessment was because of the presence of a high-stakes summative examination. Therefore teachers could not reconcile the TOC assessments with the examination (Morris & Adamson 2000). Other important stake holders like parents did not understand the TOC way of reporting information and expressed preference for raw scores and class ranking rather than profiles of achievement (an indication of what the student is able to do) (Carless 2005). Furthermore teachers were reported to doubt the accuracy of formative assessments (Carless 2005).

Some innovations gain only partial success because within the culture in which they are imported there might be constructs that may either promote or discourage adoption. That was found to be the case with the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) in India. Clarke (2003) explores the impact of the reform process on teacher thinking and classroom practice in a multi-donor funded project, DPEP in Karnataka, India. The study which used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies examined a variety of aspects dealing with teaching and learning in order to understand the extent to which changes in the classroom were taking place. The study analyzed the impact of four Indian societal cultural constructs, which influence teaching and learning in India: holism as a shared world view that encourages openness to regulation; the hierarchical structure as a regulative social framework; knowledge as discovered and attested collectively; and the 'sense of duty' that defines the role of the teacher and the students. Clarke (2003) found that two cultural constructs, holism and the 'sense of duty' that defines teacher and student roles, were conducive to reform while the other two were not. The teachers were given in-service training in a new pedagogy. The training was aimed at transforming a pedagogy in the classroom that consisted of children watching, listening, copying, reading aloud or memorizing textbook information. All these activities were based on a hierarchical relationship between teacher and the students characterized by fear and deference. Peer interaction was discouraged (Clarke 2003).

The new pedagogy consisted of a variety of activities in the form of narration of events, peer group discussions, storytelling, drama dialogue, question-answer, quiz, competition, riddles, word-play, debates during school functions and song, which were organized for making language learning a joyful activity. Self-learning skills and functional use of language were further developed by encouraging the development of interesting children's books, picture dictionary and peer group activities (Clarke 2003).

Teacher training also attempted to introduce teachers to the use of instructional aids in the classroom in addition to a more active, student-centered form of teaching and learning. The use of low-cost and easily available

instructional aids was emphasized. Textbooks were based on the new curriculum which helped learners achieve expected learning outcomes, which included a list of basic competences enumerated in a document called 'Minimum Levels of Learning' (MLL).

Analysis of the extent to which teachers understood MLL and were able to implement MLL in the classroom indicated that two cultural constructs; teachers' openness to regulation and the perception of their task as duty were conducive for reform. Both constructs enabled teachers to adopt certain aspects of the reform. Teachers' classroom activity was found to have changed in that it reflected important aspect of MLL. Children in classrooms observed were found to be relaxed and without fear. Teachers were observed to be dutifully performing two instructional practices consistent with what they perceived to be the essence of the new pedagogy which included activity and demonstration. Activities commonly observed to be in use included games, singing with and without action, reciting with and without action, counting objects, picking up objects and pointing to information on charts (Clarke 2003).

Teachers made use of a variety of instructional aids in the classroom. Students in the classroom were found to be enthusiastic and involved with the activities. Demonstration or display included using created or actual charts or objects. One of the aims of the reform was to change the way teachers treated female and lower caste students. Teachers' attitudes and treatment of children from disadvantaged castes or classes appeared to have had changed. Teachers were observed to be impartial in their intervention allowing females and lower castes or tribal students to answer questions. These children were also observed participating in class (Clarke 2003).

The result of the study reported above suggests that holism as a feature of Indian society with its regulatory trait, was a construct that made teachers feel at ease when being regulated by the state or central authority as it defines the contents and parameters of the new pedagogy. Thus, regulation by central authority did not produce any conflict or a sense of being imposed upon in teachers' minds. Teachers also felt it was their duty to accept the directions given by people in authority and to follow their instructions by implementing the new methodology in the classroom (Clarke 2003).

However, two cultural constructs, the hierarchical structure as a regulative social framework, and knowledge as discovered and attested collectively, were not conducive for reform. The majority of teachers who were interviewed on how they found implementing the learner-centered pedagogy to be said they found it very difficult. When interviewed teachers were found to be unclear as to what was meant by accommodating instruction to an individual child. They found it difficult to understand the accommodation that took into account the experiences and knowledge of the individual child as that was contrary to their conception of knowledge as discovered and attested collectively. Teachers were reported to have said that they were taught to be friendly and to be impartial toward all students, especially with regards to gender, intellectual level and caste background. Therefore except for establishing a cordial relationship with students, avoiding partiality and making student feel good, teachers did not seem to have a clear conception of what was meant by understanding individual learning profiles, and adapting instruction to varying levels of student ability and empowering students from disadvantaged communities (Clarke 2003). It seems that these teachers were merely following instructions from their instructors without really understanding what being impartial to disadvantaged communities meant apart from being nice to them. The concepts of understanding individual learning profiles, and adapting instruction to varying levels of student ability and empowering students from disadvantaged communities seemed to be foreign to them. In other words, when dealing with imported innovations, change in attitudes may appear to have taken place when it has not.

The hierarchical structure as a regulative social framework was found to restrict teachers from fully appreciating the concept of going down to the child's level, their prior knowledge, interest and needs. Classroom interaction also where only teachers asked the questions implying the importance of teacher authority and command over all valid knowledge clearly illustrated the role of hierarchy and collective decision making. Teachers were observed to be asking low cognitive-level questions such as 'how', 'when', and 'what', and rarely asked 'why'. Teachers responded to students' answers by saying whether the answer was correct or incorrect, and rarely did they ask the student to provide a rationale for their answers. Though instruction has been transformed with activity and demonstration classroom interaction continues to be teacher-dominated as teachers are in control and define the parameters for student participation as portrayed in their questioning patterns (Clarke 2003).

The study revealed that the DPEP has a superficial success in that while there were observable changes in the classroom in the use of instructional aids and activities during instruction, the essential characteristics of traditional practices, namely rote and repetition has not changed. Both teachers' openness and resistance to reform were portrayed as embedded in the cultural construction of teaching and learning.

### **Pedagogical Innovation in Africa**

As in the above reviewed cases the importation of learner-centered pedagogies, such as the CLT, into African contexts has not met with much success, as an examination of a number of case studies will also show.

The first case study that is examined relates to a curriculum innovation in post-apartheid South Africa. Appropriating innovations has not proved easy even in South Africa where people wanted to make a break with

the old racist apartheid regime and its authoritarian educational system.

Howie (2002) reports on a huge curriculum reform that was embarked upon in South Africa since the dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of the black majority government. Curriculum 2005 (C 2005), the new curriculum which was developed through an extensive process of participation and consultation was released in 1997. Its developers, according to Howie (2002) considered it one of the most progressive of such policies in the world. It was driven by principles of outcome-based education, learner-centered education and the critical outcomes of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and it specified outcomes and achievements of standards across eight learning areas. These outcomes reflected a major change in what was supposed to be learned in schools, emphasizing competences rather than particular knowledge. The concept of learner-centered pedagogy meant that learners were to be involved as participants in curriculum and learning, in a way that responded to their learning styles and cultures, and built on their life on their life experiences and needs (Howie 2002).

Curriculum 2005 was replacing the one that was followed during the apartheid period, which was very prescriptive, content heavy, detailed and authoritarian, and provided little space for teacher initiative (Jansen 1999). Teaching under the former curriculum primarily consisted of teacher “chalk and talk” and was heavily dependent on textbooks and rote learning (Jansen 1999; Howie 2002). Therefore the introduction of C 2005 which emphasized learner-centered outcome-based education was an attempt to depart from this status quo.

Implementation of the new curriculum was in phases. It began in 1998 with grade one, followed by grade two in 1999, grades three and seven in 2000, grades four and eight in 2001, and was supposed to be followed by grades five and nine in 2002. Classroom support from the following organizations was made available: national provincial education departments, NGOs, television and newspapers, higher education institutions, and private publishers.

The implementation of C 2005 proved problematic and concerns were raised. The first concern related to policy documents which were subject to various interpretations. Another major problem was that the teachers’ and trainers’ experiences and habits, which were gained under a teacher dominated authoritarian educational system, were very different from those outlined in C 2005. C 2005 required teachers to change their roles from being transmitters of knowledge to pupils who were considered to be basically devoid of any valuable knowledge to facilitators of students’ learning. They were required to change their view of learners from seeing learners as mere receptacles of knowledge to considering them as active participants in the construction of classroom knowledge. They were required to see learners as people with experiences and knowledge that could be used in the construction of new knowledge. Therefore, C 2005 required a paradigm shift on the part of all the major players in the education system: from education administrators, managers, to teachers and pupils. A paradigm shift cannot be hastily brought about because it requires effort, education to bring about new mindsets or worldviews and time (Fullan 2001).

Moreover very few schools were reported to have the capacity to manage the change. Even where schools and teachers embraced learner-centered pedagogy, the original vision of C 2005 was lost in the implementation (Howie 2002). Partial understanding of the principles underlying C 2005 created problems; for example, because of the attention drawn to integrating learning areas, the progression of concept development from grade to grade was often lost. Continuous assessment which was the preferred mode of assessment was interpreted by a lot of teachers to mean frequent testing. Teacher training and support were reported to be inadequate and did not model the principles and approaches they were promoting. C 2005 was also criticized for having a top-down bureaucratic approach as evidenced by its lack of recognition of teachers’ educational experience and professional insights as inputs in their learning. This example demonstrates how difficult making a paradigm shift is and how it eludes even those who are supposed to be promoting it.

Implementation became so problematic that a committee, the Chisholm Committee was appointed by the minister of education to look into the problems that were being experienced. The committee concluded that the complexity of the structure and design of the curriculum had compromised the implementation of C 2005. Other problems highlighted included poor departmental support to teachers; weak support of teachers’ training; tight timetables; lack of enough learning support materials; and the general lack of resources (Unterhalter 2000; Howie 2002). The Chisholm committee recommended that C 2005 be revised. Unterhalter (2000) also reports difficulties in the implementation of the new curriculum and adds that this is exacerbated by racial tensions that have survived the dismantling of apartheid. She asserts that this is indicated by new identities with exclusive schools for Jewish, Greek, and Afrikaans children that have emerged and which threaten the goal of a common citizenship. Though in other contexts this would seem to be compatible with multiculturalism, in the post-apartheid South African context this is considered a perpetuation of the old policy of racial segregation. Unterhalter (2000) reports that some schools that appear multi-cultural on the surface, are actually plagued by widespread racism, in the form of verbal or physical abuse by white Afrikaans speaking children against Black English speakers. (Dolby, 2000) also reports an ethnographic study he did in 1996 in one school in Durban, South Africa. The study focused on how students negotiated and lived race and racial identity in a multiracial high school. He describes how the administration used the discourses of the sport code rugby and standards to

maintain the 'whiteness' of the school, thus going against the official curriculum, which emphasised multiculturalism.

A ministerial committee was established by the Minister of education to refine the C 2005 policy document. Also a task team of eight coordinators of learning areas working group was established to lead and plan the process. The main findings included the following: there was a lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policies, with insufficient clarity in both areas; though there was wide support for the curriculum changes envisaged (especially its underlying principles), levels of understanding of the policy and its implications were highly varied; and time frames for implementation were unmanageable and unrealistic; the policy was released before the system was ready, with rushed time frames.

The South African experience indicates the need for careful planning and clarity of the resulting documents with regard to curriculum policies themselves and the accompanying assessment regimes; careful planning of implementation time frames; comprehensive manpower development to make sure that all the major players such as teachers, principals, education managers and officers understand the policy and its implications; careful planning and provision of necessary resources such as teacher support materials, student work books and appropriate assessment materials. If the above things are not adequately planned for and put in place as was the case when C 2005 was implemented, educational reform cannot be expected to achieve any meaningful level of success. Botswana, a neighbor of South Africa has not been successful with educational innovation either, as research that is discussed later shows.

Even though the last example does not deal with the implementation of a learner-centered pedagogy, it relates to how educational innovations can fail due to rushed politically motivated policies designed to create a sense of rapid development and progress after gaining political independence. Tanzania decided to introduce Universal Primary Education (UPE) in order to extend access to education to every primary school going child in the country. The introduction of UPE was strengthened by the decision to make Kiswahili the sole medium of instruction at primary level, but unfortunately the implementation of UPE was not well planned and was hastily done. Hyden (1979) and Rubagumya (1994) assert that UPE is one of the many popular distributive policies that introduced nationalization without proper studies and preparation having been made. They further contend that UPE is an example of a politically motivated project which was hastily introduced to produce a sense of rapid advance after independence. Whereas experts planned a gradual increase in expansion of primary education commensurate with preparations to be completed by about 1989, the Tanzanian ruling party decided to have it completed by 1977. Rubagumya (1994) asserts that the Tanzanian ruling elite was eager to impress the people with the figures (not quality education) and emphasized the quantitative success as a unique feat in Africa. He further argues that the Tanzanian masses for a long time continued to believe that remarkable success was being made and thus accorded the political elite an unquestionable legitimacy.

The decision to ignore expert recommendation for an implementation strategy which involved a gradual increase in the expansion of primary education which is proportionate to the preparations to be completed by 1989 resulted in an acute shortage of teachers and other educational inputs (Mahenge 1981). Ishumi (1984) reports that the teacher pupil ratio in some cases reached 1: 70, a proportion that is well beyond professional specification of an ideal classroom and anticipated teacher-pupil relationships and interactions. Therefore while the UPE program could boast of quantitative achievement, the quality of education is reported to have plummeted.

### **Educational Innovation in Botswana**

What follows is a discussion as to why learner-centred approaches have failed to be institutionalised despite being recommended by the Botswana government and bilateral and multilateral aid agencies since the beginning of the 1980s (Botswana 1977; Tabulawa 2003).

In Botswana learner-centered pedagogy was heavily emphasized in both the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) 1981-1991 and the Junior Secondary Education Improvement Project (JSEIP). These projects were largely financed by USAID. Justification for the adoption of learner-centered pedagogy was couched in educational and cognitive terms, such as the pedagogy leads to improvements in learning outcomes and is more effective: however, this is questionable. Guthrie (1980) argues that there is no causal relationship between improved quality of teaching with learner-centered teaching styles. Proponents of the pedagogy do not refer to any studies that have conclusively established that learner-centeredness is necessarily superior to traditional teaching in the third world countries in terms of improving students' achievements in tests scores. He argues that the pedagogy has a hidden agenda in that it aims at inculcating psycho-sociological traits for individuals and for society (Guthrie 1990). Because this pedagogy reflects the norms of a liberal Western sub-culture, it is not necessarily desirable for developing countries.

With regard to the PEIP the aim was to promote democratic social relations through a constructivist and cooperative approach to teaching and learning. It could be asked why USAID would be interested in a democratic pedagogy in Botswana. USAID's interest in a democratic pedagogy can be understood in the larger context of the USA's foreign policy. Promotion of democracy globally is an important aim of the USA

government and projects that are aimed at promoting it are funded through USAID. In the 1980's and 1990's the USA government initiated two projects, Project Democracy and the Democracy Initiative. The two were aimed at integrating democracy into the USAID program. Through the Democracy Initiative, democracy was to be incorporated in all developments projects and programs both as a desired end in itself and as a means to increase effectiveness (Crawford 1995). This is the reason why PEIP, a USAID funded project, aimed at democratizing classroom social relations ostensibly through learner-centered pedagogy. PEIP introduced two innovative instructional interventions, the Breakthrough to Literacy in Setswana and the Project Method.

The Breakthrough to Literacy approach was imported from Britain where it was first used. It was first introduced in Botswana in the 1980's and it was aimed at improving standard one children's reading and writing abilities. Its philosophy of teaching was based on the ideology of learner-centeredness. It involved children taking control of their learning and cooperating with each other in the learning process. It was intended at changing the prevailing authoritarian student-teacher relationship to a more democratic one in which the teacher was a facilitator of the students' learning, not an arbiter of all knowledge. For example, it emphasized a shift from whole class teaching to group and individual teaching, from competition to cooperation, from students as followers to students as leaders, from students working in isolation to cooperative and differentiated learning in which students freely discuss their work. The approach as is typical of most learner-centered approaches recognizes the value and legitimacy of students' existing knowledge and daily experiences (Tabulawa 2003). Since one of the criticisms of African education systems was that they produced people who cannot think independently and critically, Breakthrough aimed to develop questioning individuals capable of carrying out empirical investigations and arriving at rationale conclusions. Also since African educational systems were believed to be producing people who unquestioningly accepted authority, PEIP, as a USAID-sponsored project, supported the Breakthrough approach because it aimed at eroding traditional habits. A comment by Arthur (1998) who studied the Breakthrough approach in Botswana indicates that the innovation might have succeeded to some extent to erode the traditional habits, by pointing out that it has

Prompted expressions of concern on the part of parents that children in these classrooms are being socialized ...into culturally inappropriate behaviors such as approaching adults (for help or showing off their work), instead of waiting at a respectable distance (p220).

The Breakthrough Project therefore was an imported innovation utilizing the center-periphery model of change and true to its intentions not only eroded cultural norms and habits but also challenged the prevailing hierarchical social relations that characterize Botswana culture. However, this has not been enough to bring about a social transformation of the whole Botswana society as it still largely remains as traditional as before. Classroom interaction as well, as research that is discussed later in this paper shows, remains largely traditional and teacher-centered.

Like the Breakthrough approach, the Project Method, was a child-centered method of teaching and learning. It was incorporated in primary schools to consolidate the successes of the Breakthrough Approach. In this method students work independently as individuals or in groups to investigate identified problems. What was considered important in this method was that the students became less dependent on their teachers. This was seen as a way of empowering them, and giving them the freedom to exercise choice, an important aspect of liberal democracy (Komba 1998). Therefore it was thought that in the process of carrying out investigations, students would develop psycho-social skills that are congenial to a liberal democracy.

However, the two innovations have failed to be institutionalized despite the huge investment put into establishing them, and creating the infrastructure for sustaining them. For example, at its termination after ten years in 1991 PIEP had accomplished quite a lot in the form of having established a fully functioning Department of Primary Education and a Masters of Education Degree program in primary education at the University of Botswana, curriculum and institutional developments at the Primary Teacher Training Colleges, and an In-service Education Network. In spite of these infrastructural successes learner-centered pedagogy in Botswana primary schools remain only a dream as classroom interaction continue to be predominately teacher-centered (Arthur 1995; Prophet & Rowell 1993). It might not be too farfetched to attribute this failure to resistance by the education players to this cultural invasion by donor agencies and the countries they represent (Tabulawa, 2003).

Other studies have indicated that learner-centered pedagogical approaches have also failed to be institutionalized at junior secondary where they have also been advocated for since the early 1980s. Prophet (1995), taking heed of Long (1983) advice concerning the importance of conducting classroom research in order to find out what happens inside classrooms, reports on an ethnographic study conducted in two junior secondary schools in Botswana. Data was collected through non-participant classroom observation and unstructured interviews with teachers and students. While a variety of approaches and interactions between teachers and students were observed, certain features were observed to characterize classroom interaction to a greater or lesser degree. These included the continued teacher dominance of classroom talk which consisted of a mixture of lecturing and questions asked, generally to the whole class; a minimum of active participation by students,

especially verbal interaction; and a continued dependence on whole class teaching with little evidence of group work being developed. Prophet extended his study to other subjects in the curriculum and generally observed the same pattern. He concluded that the JSEIP English curriculum was having only a minimal impact on the two schools he studied. He came to this conclusion because the main thrust of the JSEIP English curriculum was to move away from the rigid teacher-centered approach to learning, and through group work involve the students much more actively in the classroom environment (Education, 1989).

Prophet (1995) suggests that the reason for the failure of the JSEIP English curriculum might be that the innovation was incongruent with classroom cultures in the schools. For example, from extensive interviews with the students, they were reported to be happy with teacher dominated classrooms and when offered the opportunity to take more control of the classroom situation through group work resisted it by working silently individually even though seated in a group formation. Prophet (1995) suggests that organizational demands for cooperative group learning may not be congruent with current classroom culture in Botswana secondary schools. Yandila et al. (2003) found similar results when they investigated science classroom interaction in senior secondary schools in the light of the introduction of a new syllabus-the BGCSE biology syllabus in 1997. The new syllabus also recommended student-centered approaches. The study was aimed at finding out if teachers were implementing the recommended teaching approaches. The results indicated that most of the respondents did not employ the prescribed learner-centered approach. It was also found that most of the respondents did not use a variety of highly recommended teaching methods such as enquiry, demonstration, practical work, project work, case study, field trips, discussions and computer guided learning. All these methods that the teachers neglected to use are methods that involve the active participation of students and students working independently with minimal teacher supervision. The study also found that most of the respondents did not make any effort to inculcate the recommended process skills of using and organizing apparatus and materials, collecting data, handling experimental observation and data, and planning for investigation. The skill of asking questions and giving well-thought out answers was not developed in students. Most of the questions asked by teachers and students were of a low order level. Lastly most of the teachers were not implementing the recommended assessment procedures for course work.

When asked why they were not using the recommended approaches teachers were reported to have given the following answers: teaching large classes made it hard for them to use student-centered approaches; lack of exemplary teaching materials; inappropriate textbooks; lack of understanding of the breath and extent of the new topics such as biotechnology; pressure of examinations; inadequate preparation to carry out continuous assessment during pre-service training; not being provided with sufficient orientation in appropriate teaching method; and feeling aggrieved for being inadequately consulted during the design and development of the new biology syllabus. Yandila et al. (2003) suggest the following as solutions to the list of problems that teachers identified as making it difficult for them to use the recommended teaching approach: teachers should adopted a problem-solving model of change; they should engage in action research; and utilize research findings generated by the research of other teachers and other educationists.

However, this was found to be farfetched with regard to teachers in Botswana as Mooko (2005) found that they neither conducted action research nor consulted and utilized research findings in their teachings. Mooko (2005) conducted research to find out the extent to which English language teachers in Botswana secondary schools embrace research and theory related to language teaching and learning in their teaching. The study was done in the context of the perceived challenges of teaching and the need for teachers to keep abreast of methods, techniques and curricula which are evolving all the time (Education 2002). The results of the study indicated that teachers in Botswana rarely if ever referred to language research in their teaching. It also emerged that less value was placed on the theoretical information acquired during training. Instead, the respondents said that their teaching was largely based on utilizing their teaching experience and individual creativity.

One might be tempted to believe that learner-centered pedagogies might be common where lecturers are more exposed to them through journals on curriculum development and instructional methods. However, a study conducted at the University of Botswana (UB) indicated that this might not be the case. Alimi & Ellece (2003) examined course outlines and past examinations and tests in the English Department at the UB with a view to establishing the relationship between course objectives and tests. They found from their analysis of course outlines and interviews with lecturers in the department that tests were based on aims, i.e. what the lecturer has taught and not on course objectives, i.e. what the students were able to do. This was because the majority of the courses did not have any learning objectives indicated in the course outlines. In a situation where students are not made aware of the skills and abilities they are expected to acquire many students may end up with memorized knowledge of things taught but unable to apply this knowledge in real life situations or in the work environment (Alimi & Ellece 2003). The majority of the course outlines were found to be geared toward helping the teacher in his/her teaching and not the students. This was seen to be clearly an indication that the bulk of the teaching in the department was teacher-centered although the university espouses learner-centered teaching approaches. The researchers concluded by recommending a change to this situation by inviting experts in curriculum design from the faculty of education to help lecturers in the department keep abreast of pedagogic principles that will enhance



learner autonomy and learner-centered teaching.

The reviewed studies on teaching and learning and on classroom interaction in Botswana have indicated that teaching and learning in Botswana classrooms, as it is in other third world countries in Asia and Africa, is heavily teacher-centered. The studies also showed that attempts at introducing learner-centered pedagogical approaches have largely failed not just at the primary and secondary level but a study at the UB's English department has indicated that this might be the case even at tertiary or university level.

### Conclusion

The research reviewed in this paper indicates that curriculum innovation implementation should take a comprehensive approach, involving many stakeholders and mobilisation of the whole educational system, for it to be successful. The socio-cultural context of classroom interactions—the taken-for-granted classroom world of teachers and students—which give their classroom practices meaning, stability and consistency, should also be understood and steps taken to change it, if that is necessary. For this reason imported curriculum innovation, has largely failed as it comes laden with foreign worldviews involving socio-cultural values which are incongruent with the prevailing social and cultural values of the classroom in the recipient country and therefore does not receive the support of both teachers and students.

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