

Saudi Arabia's Education Reform: How School Leaders Can Foster Positive Change

Afaf Mohammed Albalawi

Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology, K-12 Leadership, Western Michigan University, 1903 W Michigan Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49008

Abstract

With Saudi Arabia's nationwide school reforms through the Vision 2030 program, it is important for the country's teachers to be able to successfully implement change. Unfortunately, many education systems around the globe struggle with reform due to teacher resistance stemming from such issues as a lack of resources and insufficient support from school leaders. In this study, four female teachers in Saudi Arabia responded to open-ended interview questions regarding the challenges of implementing school reforms and the ways in which school leaders help the teachers navigate reforms successfully. Data revealed themes in the teachers' descriptions of reform challenges to include: too many responsibilities placed on teachers, a lack of resources, and a lack of shared decision-making. In participant descriptions of the ways school leaders can be more effective, themes included providing more guidance and encouragement, collaborating and communicating with teachers, having awareness of unique needs at each school, providing more resources for implementing change, and showing more appreciation for teacher efforts.

Keywords: Teachers, Leadership, Reforms, Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030

1. Introduction

Today's education system in Saudi Arabia is facing rapid and successive changes to meet the demands of the country's new *Vision 2030* program. The program includes a number of reforms with the goal to "attract and retain the finest Saudi and foreign minds" and to develop the Saudi economy with investments apart from traditional oil revenues (Kinninmont, 2017; Patalong, 2016). Specifically, *Vision 2030* seeks to create better matches between the country's education system outcomes and labor market jobs (Kinninmont, 2017). Also, a reform goal is to increase family involvement in children's education throughout the country (Fakeeh, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2017). In order to meet the goals of *Vision 2030*, the education system is working to improve and change in many ways. For example, there will be more training and development for teachers and improvements to learning environments, curricula, and teaching methods (Patalong, 2016). There will also be more opportunities for private sector involvement in education and an increase in the use of modern technology (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Saudi Arabia is not the only country undergoing vast educational reform. For instance, Kenya also has a "Vision 2030" program in which they are attempting to enhance their public secondary schools and, as in Saudi Arabia's program, develop a more competitive, global quality of education (Lawrence & Orodho, 2014). Likewise, South Africa has been attempting to transform teaching and learning through e-Learning reforms (Vandeyar, 2015). In Russia, educational reform has been in effect since the 1990s resulting in a volatile system of change in the country's schools for decades (Mironov, 2012). Of course, the United States of America is constantly undergoing education reform, particularly since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Mehta, 2012). Because so many countries are continuously undergoing education reforms, it is imperative to find the most successful methods to implement change.

With so many changes on the horizon in Saudi Arabia's schools, it is necessary for the leaders in education to prepare the country's teachers to meet new challenges and adapt to new protocols. However, the process of change is complex and never easy, especially when it comes to education changes that are widespread and complicated. For instance, years of reforms in Russia have led to little effects due to "ill conceived" models of reform that resulted in educators' confusion and lack of a clear path forward (Miranov, 2012, p. 1213). Additionally, in South Africa, policy reforms failed due to a lack of knowledge and skills to implement the reforms correctly (Vandeyar, 2015).

For teachers, change can feel like a threat to stability or even a negative evaluation of past performance. Change can feel overwhelming and akin to higher expectations without further benefits. It is often met with complaints and unenthusiastic attitudes, teacher burnout, or even the decision to leave the education field (Dworkin, 2001). Many teachers simply do not want to take part in any reforms and they often feel forced to be involved in them (Terhart, 2013). In a famous example, a reform model in the United States called "Success for All" resulted in many teachers openly criticizing and refusing to implement the program (Yin, 2013). In order to bring about change successfully, education leaders must have the skills to garner support and collaboration in their educators. Examining which forms of leadership have been most successful in bringing about change will be crucial for Saudi Arabia's success with *Vision 2030*.

Statement of the problem

Saudi Arabia's new *Vision 2030* program involves a number of changes to the country's education system. Many countries and school districts across the globe are frequently adopting new policies and school reform in order to enhance education and keep pace with global rankings. Because of this, it is imperative for school personnel to accept and implement reform efficiently. However, studies suggest that many teachers resist change or fail to implement change successfully. For this reason, educational leaders must have the skills to successfully lead their teachers through the changes.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of school leaders in carrying out school reform. Specifically, this study will focus on the skills and types of leadership that best serve school leaders in successfully implementing change in Saudi Arabia.

The research questions posed in this qualitative study are:

1. How do teachers describe the challenges when faced with implementing school reform?
2. How do teachers describe the leaders who help them to overcome those challenges and implement school reform effectively?

In answering these questions, this research will help school leaders both in Saudi Arabia and around the world by providing an in-depth look at the challenges of school reform and ways that school leaders can mitigate those challenges. Additionally, with this information, Saudi Arabian school leaders may have more success in meeting the requirements of *Vision 2030*.

2. Literature Review

Teachers' Reactions to Change

"Change is war, but a war in disguise" (Terhart, 2013). Change, like war, can be tumultuous and difficult for humans to handle. We have profound responses to many of life's changes including those in our career, personal life, and even physical welfare. Change is an emotional process as well as a rational one (Yin, 2013). When change occurs in our school systems, educators interpret and react to the changes in various ways. Change in schools is especially difficult due to the relatively autonomous, independent, and conservative nature of each school system (Park & Jeong, 2013). When large, sweeping changes such as *Vision 2030* are attempted across an entire nation, each unique school system is not likely to embrace and implement the changes in the same manner. This is because educational reform is a complex and slow process (Alnahdi, 2014). Even in countries that have seemingly excelled for decades in their approach to education, reforms take time, patience, and maintenance. For instance, Finland's comprehensive school reforms in the 1970s spanned three decades and involved consistent review, improvements, self-regulated changes, and maintenance (Alnahdi, 2014).

Of course, reforms cannot occur without the support and work of the teachers, but teachers react to changes in various ways. Depending on the culture and other factors, teachers may respond to reforms merely with compliance even though they lack true support for the changes, or they may even show outright resistance (Yin, 2013). Often, teachers have a negative reaction to school reforms for several reasons. One complaint of many teachers is their lack of voice in the changes themselves. Teachers often feel forced into reforms without a chance to offer their own ideas, opinions, and experiences (Terhart, 2013; Yin, 2013). They feel that the "expert" reformers do not understand what is really happening in the classrooms and that these reformers are simply outsiders in their "ivory towers" (Terhart, 2013). Reform efforts in Russia have faced challenges for this very reason as there is often no discussion about the new policies first with the public or educators in the community (Miranov, 2012). Furthermore, teachers may view the reformers as "unreliable" or "driven by ulterior motives" rather than having the educators and children in the forefront of their minds (Berkovich, 2011; Terhart, 2013).

Another reason teachers may resist changes is because they are already comfortable with their own professional instructional patterns (Park & Jeong, 2013). Many teachers agree that changes need to happen, but they are averse to personally changing what they do themselves. Teachers can grow comfortable with their own methods and feel that while they are doing things correctly and efficiently, it is *other* teachers who may need to change (Terhart, 2013). Likewise, some teachers do not feel well-equipped to implement change (Park & Jeong, 2013). For instance, reform efforts in Kenya have had difficulty due to a lack of human and physical resources (Lawrence & Orodho, 2014). Also, teachers often feel that they do not have enough time or training for the reform requirements (Terhart, 2013). In South Africa, both the teachers and the policy mediators themselves have lacked the knowledge and skills to implement the policy changes, or there are schools so isolated from district centers that they do not even have knowledge about the reforms (Vandeyar, 2015).

Finally, some teachers resist change simply because they do not agree with the values or goals of the reforms (Berkovich, 2011). South Africa's reforms face issues when there is a mismatch between goals of the policy makers and what the districts actually practice (Vandeyar, 2015). With so many different beliefs and teaching philosophies in education, it is difficult, if not impossible, for any single policy to please all educators.

Also, some teachers believe that changes will not do anything to benefit their school or their students specifically (Terhart, 2013). This may be due to negative experiences with past reforms.

Leadership and Successful Change: From Threats to Challenges

Education leaders, such as school principals, have a strong impact on the outcomes of reform efforts since they are the agents of change in their schools (Park & Jeong, 2013). As we have seen, school reforms across the globe often run into many difficulties especially when it comes to teacher support and effective implementation. Teachers often view reforms as threats to the status quo or as confusing policies without clear guidance. For this reason, leaders need to know how to turn school reforms from threats into welcome challenges. Attention to the culture of the schools, leadership style, change management, and specific leadership practices can help bring about change more successfully.

Leadership Defined

Instructional leadership is of high interest in contemporary educational literature; yet, the term is difficult to conceptualize, define, or measure because the role of school leadership and the role of principals have become more complex (Burch, 2007; Al-Mahdy & Al-Kiyumi, 2015). Conceptualization of the term differs among scholars depending on the role ascribed to a principal. For example, Al-Mahdy and Al-Kiyumi (2015) describe two approaches to defining instructional leadership: a narrow approach and a broad approach. The narrow approach views instructional leadership differently from any form of management. Instead, instructional leadership encompasses only those actions that are directly related to learning and teaching, as well as observable behaviors like classroom supervision. On the other hand, the broad view finds that instructional leadership includes all leadership activities and behaviors, as well as managerial behaviors, aimed at promoting student learning (Al-Mahdy & Al-Kiyumi, 2015). Additionally, Joo-Ho & Seung-Hwan (2016) find that the concept of instructional leadership can be defined as the influence of the principal to inspire and motivate teachers with the objective of impacting instructional practice and so lead to increased student achievement. Park and Ham (2016) write that educational leadership involves facilitating change in the school, improving school outcomes, improving school effectiveness, defining the mission of the school, and managing curriculum and instruction (Park & Ham, 2016). For the purposes of this research, we will take a broader view of educational leadership and define it to include all of these ideas with the specific roles of implementing change and supporting teachers in their work to achieve reform goals effectively.

Leadership Styles, Skills, and Practices

According to Alger (2008), one of the most crucial challenges for school leaders is to successfully foster reform and advances in their schools through changes in programs and improvements in teachers' skills. In order to meet this challenge, leaders can have many different styles of educational leadership such as transformational, transactional, managerial, instructional, and so forth (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Bush, 2011; Ngang, 2011; Park and Jeong, 2013). With so many various styles, it can be complicated to discern which of these styles is the most successful in producing reform in contemporary schools. In addition to the leadership varieties, research has shown that specific skills and practices are necessary for effective educational leadership. For instance, gaining trust, encouraging collaboration, instilling motivation, and knowing how to communicate and manage change have all been identified as important skills and practices for school leaders (Bissonette, 2015; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Joo-Ho & Seung-Hwan, 2016; Park & Jeong, 2013).

The types of educational leadership can greatly impact reform success, and leadership style in bringing forth changes has actually been found to be the "most meaningful factor for understanding teachers' attitudes toward change" (Park & Jeong, 2013, p.37). With studies and practices of different leadership styles over time, it seems that many schools have settled on collaborative, transformational styles of leadership as one of the most effective styles (Ngang, 2011). With transformational leadership, leaders focus on building a shared vision and creating a productive school culture in which school decisions are participatory (Bush, 2011). This style is based on raising morale and motivation in an organization and on having commitment among all stakeholders (Bush, 2011; Pauliène, 2012). Additionally, the transformational style is likely to foster trust and respect from followers (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Because one of the reasons teachers resist change is due to a lack of their own voice, transformational leadership would help to mitigate this problem as the leader works directly with teachers in decision-making. In fact, transformational leadership has been shown to have substantial effects on the progress of school restructuring initiatives (Bush, 2011). Furthermore, Park and Jeong (2013) find that teachers' commitment to change has been stronger with a transformational leadership style.

In addition to a transformational leadership style, other styles have been studied specifically in their relation to fostering change successfully. One such method of studying these styles includes the "Change Facilitator Style" measurement which has led to a discussion of three types of leadership in bringing forth change: initiating, managing, and responding (Park and Jeong, 2013). Initiating leaders often have strong opinions and work very hard to attain their visions and to "make school change happen" through motivation (Park and Jeong, 2013, p. 37). One can see how a focus on motivation relates this style of leadership somewhat to the transformational style previously described. Transformational leadership has been described as a style in which the leader is

creative and innovative, much like the initiating style (Blake, 2015). In fact, in a study of teachers' resistance to change, researchers found that the initiating style of leadership led to less resistance from teachers in the face of change (Park and Jeong, 2013, p. 37). On the other hand, managing leaders are more responsive rather than initiative, and they are more likely to attempt to "help school change happen" rather than be particularly resourceful and driven. Likewise, responding leaders are more likely to simply "let school change happen" and, thus, do not make strong attempts to facilitate change in a meaningful way (Park & Jeong, 2013, p. 37).

Along with being a transformational leader who takes initiative, there are specific skills and practices that have been shown to improve a leader's ability to foster change effectively. Effective instructional leader needs to have strong interpersonal skills, such as good communication ability, patience, tact, and flexibility (Bissonette, 2015). These skills and attributes help them to create a positive, caring, and collaborative climate (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). Effective instructional leaders should also have the skills for networking in order to be able to foster teamwork and thus promote the collaborative culture (Bissonette, 2015).

Leaders must have the trust of their own employees (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). To gain this trust, leaders can pay special attention to the emotional changes of their teachers and be sure to support them through these changes (Yin, 2013). Also, social bonding between teachers and leaders can be beneficial in motivating teachers to improve and implement change (Henk, 2010). In addition to supporting teachers emotionally, educational leaders can also gain trust through listening to teachers' concerns about the reforms being initiated. In fact, leaders can even use the concerns or resistance to improve upon the plans for the reforms (Yin, 2013). Furthermore, a partnership approach to communication rather than a top-down approach can strengthen the relationship between teachers and the instructional leaders and make for more effective professional learning and practice as well as change (Kubicek, 2015).

Communication and collaboration are both important skills in order to bring about school reform. Researchers have shown that leaders must encourage communication and collaboration through the changes in order to be successful (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Yin, 2013). As noted by Blasé and Blasé (2000), communication with teachers is essential to promoting reflection and growth. Having conversations about the reform efforts and how teachers can implement the changes as well as feel supported through the changes is crucial. These conversations can focus on the instructional practices of the teachers, their experiences, and their needs (Kubicek, 2015). Collaboration is another important practice in effective instructional leadership and change management. In effective schools, teachers share knowledge in small collaborative communities with the principal providing guidance for teachers as a part of the community (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Kubicek, 2015). Teacher collaboration is an important factor identified in literature as being a mediator for the professional teaching community, student achievement, and teachers' professional development (Joo-Ho & Seung-Hwan, 2016). The ability to promote teacher collaboration as well as to work collaboratively with teachers is therefore an important role for instructional leaders in fostering change successfully (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Joo-Ho & Seung-Hwan, 2016).

Culture and Change

Research has shown that leaders have more success with implementing reforms when they pay attention to the specific culture of their school or district (Ngang, 2011; Yin, 2013). Educational change cannot be separated from the cultural society in which it is occurring. For successful change, the culture of the schools must be cultivated and transformed as necessary (Yin, 2013). Though the concept of culture can be difficult to define, one can think of it as the values and traditions of a group of people that has developed over time or simply the way a people choose to do things and live their lives day-to-day (Yin, 2013). As previously discussed, creating a shared vision and culture of collaboration is one of the tenets of a transformational leader (Bush, 2011; Ngang, 2011). Examining more closely how culture affects school reform and how leaders can give appropriate attention to their school culture will be helpful in finding successful ways to implement change.

A three-year study in China of education reform, culture, and teacher resistance found that teachers reacted to change in various ways (Yin, 2013). Many teachers obediently attempted to implement the changes since they viewed national mandates as an obligation rather than something to question. However, though they complied with the reform efforts, the teachers did not necessarily support or believe in the changes. Other teachers simply appeared to implement the reform mandates even though it was mostly an illusion put on when reform leaders were around. The most successful schools implemented the reforms with a focus on a collaborative culture (Yin, 2013). By having a shared culture where teachers collaborated together to cope with reform challenges, teachers felt relief and harmony with their fellow colleagues (Yin, 2013).

Another study of transformational leadership and school culture as perceived by teachers in the Maldives sheds further light on these concepts (Ngang, 2011). The study concluded that transformational leadership has a positive impact on school culture in "this era of change, reform, and uncertainty" (Ngang, 2011, p. 2579). So, school change that follows a bottom-up model in which there is a culture of teacher participation and collaboration is a preferred method (Pansiri, 2014).

In order to bring about education reform effectively, leaders may need to work to change their school

culture. In many schools, there may be a culture already ingrained that resists change or that values practices that go against reform efforts. For instance, if a reform's goal includes changing the grading policy, some teachers could argue against the change since it does not fit the school or community culture (Reeves, 2007). In order to change culture successfully, there are four stages that leaders can attempt. First, leaders can define what will *not* change (Reeves, 2007). In doing this, leaders can create a sense of stability and security in the school culture. By recognizing current school policies and traditions that will not change but will simply be built upon, it can help teachers feel that their current work is meaningful and important. Next, leaders should remember to be active and available through a change since "actions speak louder than words". Rather than simply announce changes and expect teachers to implement them, leaders need to actively work to implement the reforms by being in the classroom alongside the teachers and listening to teacher concerns (Reeves, 2007). Third, leaders need to use the appropriate tools to implement the changes in their school culture, whether these tools make use of traditions, trainings, role modeling, and so forth (Reeves, 2007). Finally, leaders should be willing to do the more menial work that could be directly affected by the school reforms (Reeves, 2007). For instance, by helping with lunch duty or with janitorial work, the leader shows that he or she is willing to share the burden of work with the whole community through changes in the culture.

These ideas of changing culture may be especially important in the case of Saudi Arabia and *Vision 2030*. The culture of teachers in the country is already suffering according to some researchers (Alnahdi, 2014). For instance, teachers throughout the country are known to lack patience, discipline, and enthusiasm; these behaviors are "a consequence and result of the accumulation of culture and values over generations" (Alnahdi, 2014, p. 3). For these reasons, it is imperative that school leaders in Saudi Arabia learn the most effective ways to change their school cultures in order to implement *Vision 2030* reforms successfully.

3. Method

Participants and Instrument

For the purposes of this study, four female teachers were chosen to participate in order to acquire in-depth information about their experiences with reform. The participants have been chosen based on their accessibility and years of experience in dealing with education reform. These teachers are from two different cities in Saudi Arabia and teach at three levels including elementary, middle, and high school.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews over the phone to allow for in-depth responses. Interviews provided valuable information about how confident and supported the teachers have felt through school reform efforts. They also provided information about the relationship between teacher attitudes regarding reform and their experiences with their school leaders.

Design

This research uses a qualitative, phenomenological approach. Rowan and Huston (1997, P. 1442) write, "Qualitative research, designed to observe social interaction and understand the individual perspective, provides insight into what people's experiences are, why they do what they do, and what they need in order to change". This approach is most appropriate because the research seeks to identify the lived experiences and perceptions of Saudi Arabian teachers in regard to their attitudes about reform and their school leaders' behaviors in implementing those reforms.

Procedures

Interviews with standardized, open-ended questions written by the researcher were used to collect the data in this study. In the interviews, I sought to understand the respondents' genuine feelings about leadership styles and reform, so I took in-depth notes. The validity of the interviews was enhanced through member checking with study participants, use of rich descriptions, and peer debriefing. Also, the reliability of the instruments was enhanced through checking transcripts and appropriate coding of data. Because there was only one researcher completing all of the interviews, this helped to control for reliability as well. To try to account for my own possible biases, I have been honest about my potential biases throughout the research.

Analysis

The interviews were analyzed and coded according to a category system that I developed as I coded. This coding allowed themes to emerge as I immersed myself into the data. Also, having others not involved in the research read through the transcriptions and notes helped to narrow down the themes and coding categories. When the categories were finalized, the themes and data from the research were coded by hand. Finally, I interpreted the data results in relation to the original research questions.

4. Results

In general, findings demonstrate that female teachers in Saudi Arabia have negative feelings toward reforms and their school leaders due to the overwhelming challenges of reforms and the lack of effective support from school leaders. Specifically, teachers cited challenges such as excessive workloads, a lack of resources, the inability to share in decision-making when confronted with school reforms. One teacher even felt that rapid changes from

school reforms lead to “psychological job instability.” Additionally, when asked about the ways in which their school leaders support them through reform efforts, teachers were more inclined to describe the ways their leaders failed to support them. They described these failings in various ways such as the leaders neglecting to share helpful information or resources, focusing only on paperwork, and simply *appearing* to meet reform requirements.

Challenges of Reforms

Participants described the challenges of reforms similarly to descriptions found in the literature. In particular, the teachers focused a great deal of their discussions on their work loads and lack of resources. This is similar to Park & Jeong’s (2013) findings that teachers do not feel well-equipped to implement change and Lawrence & Orodho’s (2014) research in Kenya where a lack of human and physical resources hindered reform efforts. In the current study, all four teachers described how reforms result in an overload of responsibilities for teachers. One teacher said that reforms result in “too many responsibilities that are simply too far above teachers’ energy levels” and another described reforms as providing “too many responsibilities to be effective.” A third teacher said she lacks the time to fulfill requirements, and a fourth explained how teachers are asked to continue adding “many different responsibilities...[with] no preparation at all.” These comments relate back to Terhart’s (2013) findings that teachers feel they do not have enough time for reform requirements.

Along with too many responsibilities, participants voiced the idea that reforms result in a lack of resources for teachers to implement them. One participant said that she simply does not have enough money to carry out all the reform requirements. Another said that she “lacks material resources” for all the new reform decisions that have been made. This lack of resources results in teachers feeling compelled to use their own money for necessary resources. One study participant noted that she feels “financially drained” from providing her own resources including paying to print documents for the students, to buy printer ink, and even to fix the printer and other technology when they malfunction.

In addition to the increase in responsibilities and lack of resources, participants cited the lack of teacher involvement in decision-making as another challenge of implementing reforms. This echoes the literature’s findings that teachers often feel forced into reforms without a chance to offer their own ideas or opinions (Terhart, 2013; Yin, 2013). Without the teachers’ input, the reforms do not serve student interests according to some of the study participants. As one teacher said, “these reforms do not take into account all the circumstances surrounding us.” This connects to Terhart’s (2013) findings that teachers felt reformers are outsiders who do not understand what is really happening in the classrooms. This same participant also noted, “I have not yet discovered anything that serves the student.” She went on to describe changes such as increased school hours that are detrimental to the health of students. Another participant described similar issues in saying that “no teachers’ opinions about what is needed are heard” and that reforms are passed “without putting it to discussion.” These sentiments echo findings in past research that teachers often do not agree with reform goals (Berkovich, 2011) or believe the changes will not benefit their students (Terhart, 2013).

How Leaders Help

When asked to describe how leaders have helped them overcome reform challenges, the study participants seemed to have more negative than positive reflections. In fact, all four of the participants discussed their leaders’ problematic behaviors. Teachers described how their leaders do not cooperate with them, do not provide resources, and “simply talk and talk and talk.” They had suggestions for improvement such as the ideas that leaders should provide more guidance and encouragement, collaborate with teachers more, have awareness of unique needs at each school, provide more resources for implementing change, and show more appreciation for teacher efforts.

In their descriptions of their school leaders, all four teacher participants felt that their leaders were not especially helpful in implementing school reforms. One teacher even said that her leader just completes paperwork to show that reform efforts are progressing smoothly and that “everything is applied in an ideal way in order to portray the school as a perfect model” even if this is not reality. This was similar to findings by Yin (2013) in which studying cultural elements of reform efforts in China also showed how both teachers and leaders would be “obedient” to the mandates and attempt to show “compliance” even if efforts were not completely genuine or successful (p. 396-397).

Another common complaint among the teachers was how they do not communicate and collaborate with their leaders enough. For instance, one teacher explained, “there is not much collaboration” and the leaders “do nothing to reduce teacher workload.” Another teacher said that they “lack...guidance and encouragement to be successful with these new changes,” and a third explained how there is “no opinion from teachers about what is needed.” However, two of the four teachers did seem to feel that these failings were not necessarily the leaders’ faults. One teacher described how she feels her leader just has to follow the rules of the reforms without having any freedom to make amendments based on their unique school environment. Another teacher described how her leader does not “reach to the root of the problems but I cannot blame her...it is something that comes from higher up.”

In their descriptions of their leaders, the teachers volunteered suggestions about how their leaders could help them through reforms more effectively. All four of the participants felt there should be more cooperation and communication between teachers and school leaders. One teacher said she felt like reforms “remove the teacher’s rights” and another said there is simply no cooperation in implementing reforms. Another explained how it is “difficult to interact with some leaders and educational supervisors” and a fourth teacher said, “Leaders should have to express [their] feelings and thoughts.”

Another suggestion by the study participants was for leaders to provide more resources, both monetary and developmental. One teacher said, “Leaders should be assisting teachers in their professional development, trainings, and holding workshops.” A second teacher echoed these ideas in describing how leaders “have to help teachers with creativity and development” in implementing reforms. She went on to describe the need for educational resources to facilitate facing job difficulties. Two other teachers explained how they lack money for the reform requirements, so leaders should ensure they have the appropriate resources to meet those requirements.

Two of the four teachers alluded to the idea that they would appreciate commendations for their efforts. One teacher described how exhausting the work is and how “by the end, we don’t hear any word of thanks.” Another teacher explained how “instead of any rewards, they just keep asking us to do many different responsibilities.” It seems that in addition to better collaboration and communication and the provision of necessary resources, these teachers want to feel appreciated by their school leaders.

5. Conclusions

From this study, it is obvious that there are many issues when it comes to successful reform implementation in Saudi Arabian schools. A lack of resources, too many responsibilities, and the failure of school leaders to collaborate with and support their teachers have all resulted in many challenges when it comes to reform in schools. Similar to teachers in other countries, teachers in Saudi Arabia do not feel supported enough by their school leaders when it comes to implementing changes. In order to have success with *Vision 2030* school reforms, Saudi Arabia’s schools will need to make some changes in how their leaders support their teachers. Based on previous research about teachers’ reactions to change and this study’s findings, there are certain leadership styles and behaviors that could help teachers be more successful in the face of reforms. Specifically, adopting transformational or initiating styles of leadership (Bush, 2011; Park and Jeong, 2013), promoting collaboration and communication (Bissonette, 2015; Blasé and Blasé, 2000; Kubicek, 2015; Yin, 2013), paying attention to the culture of the school (Yin, 2013), and providing more resources, commendations, and general support would help to foster positive change.

References

- Alger, G. (2008). Transformational leadership practice of teacher leader. *Academic Leadership Journal*, 6(2), 1-9.
- Al-Mahdy, Y., & Al-kiyumi, A. (2015). Teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership in Omani Schools. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3(12), 1504-1510.
- Alnahdi, G. (2014). Educational change in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of International Education Research*, 10(1), 1-6.
- Berkovich, I. (2011). “No, we won’t! teachers’ resistance to educational reform.” *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(5), 563-578.
- Bissonette, T. (2015). *K-5 teachers’ perceptions regarding literacy coaching and its impact on instructional practice*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text. UMI 3683485
- Blake, S. (2015). *Transformational Leadership: Transmitting an Educational Reform Agenda in a Low Performing Urban Middle School Using Innovative Strategies, such as Hip-Hop and High Interest Curriculum*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text.
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2013). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (5th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Burch, P. (2007). The professionalization of instructional leadership in the United States: competing values and current tensions. *Journal of Education Policy* 22(2), 195-214.
- Bush, T. (2011). *Theories of educational leadership and management* (4th ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Dworkin, A. (2001). Perspectives on Teacher Burnout and School Reform. *International Education Journal*, 2(2), 69-78.
- Fakeeh, K. (2016). KSA 2030 Vision (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s 2030 Project) and its Focus on Families and Students. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 149(1), 46-48.
- Hao, M., & Yazdanifard, R. (2015). How Effective Leadership can Facilitate Change in Organizations through

- Improvement and Innovation. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 15(9), 1-6.
- Joo-Ho, P., & Seung-Hwan, H. (2016). Whose perception of principal instructional leadership? Principial-teacher perceptual (dis)agreement and its influence on teacher collaboration. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 36(3), 450-469.
- Kinninmont, J. (2017). Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's social contract: Austerity and transformation. *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 1-44. (ISBN: 978178413234 7).
- Kubicek, M. (2015). *Principals Use of Classroom Walkthrough Observations to Improve Instruction: A Grounded Theory*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text. (ISBN: 9781321639575).
- Lawrence, L., & Orodho, J. (2014). Influence of Kenya vision 2030's education policy on quality education in public secondary schools in Nakuru District, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(13), 69-80.
- Mehta, J. (2012). The futures of school reform: Five pathways to fundamentally reshaping American schooling. *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*, (7), 1-6.
- Ministry of Education. (2017). *Education and Vision 2030*. Retrieved from: <https://www.moe.gov.sa/en/Pages/vision2030.aspx>
- Mironov, V. (2012). Reflections on the reform of education. *Russian Journal of General Chemistry*, 83(6), 1212-1225.
- Ngang, T. (2011). The effect of transformational leadership on school culture in male' primary schools Maldives. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 2575-2580.
- Pansiri, N. (2014). Managing educational change: A critique of the top-down primary school management development project in Botswana. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 2(12), 26-37. ISSN: 2235 -767X
- Park, J., & Ham, S. (2016). Whose perception of principal instructional leadership? Principal-teacher perceptual (dis)agreement and its influence on teacher collaboration. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 36(3), 450-469.
- Park, J., & Jeong, D. (2013). School reforms, principal leadership, and teacher resistance: evidence from Korea. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 33(1), 34-52.
- Patalong, F. (2016). *Vision 2030 and the Transformation of Education in Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tamimi.com/law-update-articles/vision-2030-and-the-transformation-of-education-in-saudi-arabia/>
- Reeves, D. (2007). Leading to change/how do you change school culture? *Educational Leadership*, 64(4), 92-94.
- Rowan, M., & Huston, p. (1997). Qualitative research articles: information for authors and peer reviewers. *Canadian Medical Association*, 157(10), 1442-1446.
- Terhart, E. (2013). Teacher resistance against school reform: reflecting an inconvenient truth. *School Leadership & Management*, 33(5), 486-500.
- Vandeyar, T. (2015). Policy intermediaries and the reform of e-Education in South Africa. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 46(2), 344-359.
- Yin, H. (2013). Societal culture and teachers' responses to curriculum reform: experiences from China. *Asia Pacific Education*, (14), 319-401.