Voices Imprisoned Within Classrooms: A Critical Approach to Curriculum Development and Teacher Voice on a Preparatory Year English language Program in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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Abstract: There is a serious lack of literature on teacher voice and curriculum development within a TESOL framework in Saudi Arabia. This small scale critical study reports the findings on perceptions of teacher voice and curriculum development by five male teachers who teach English as a foreign language on a preparatory year program in Saudi Arabia. Data collection methods included open ended questionnaires, semi structured face to face interviews, document reviews and member checking, as a technique for establishing the validity of an account. The study had an interpretative element at the level of data analysis, as the data was analysed using narrative analysis but remained critical in its agenda as it focused on oppression through lack of teacher voice in curriculum development. This research wanted to understand the lived experience of real people in context. A main facet of the critical paradigm is the belief that a certain group has an explicit political agenda, which struggles with culture and other groups' interests Two main themes emerged, Firstly, a lack of teacher voice due to issues related to power, oppression, culture and managerialist ideologies, where the fundamental social units are not individuals, as capitalism would declare, but rather the fundamental social units are organizations, and secondly, a severe lack of involvement in curriculum development. Data showed that teachers believed they could be empowered if they were involved in this process. Findings indicated strong feelings of oppression due to a rigid hierarchical organizational structure and that teachers perceived their role as passive bystanders, who simply did as they were told. Implications for empowering teachers through their voice and including them in curriculum development and recommendations for future research are made.

Keywords: teacher voice; curriculum development; emancipation; power; culture; oppression; leadership, empowerment, English Language Teaching, Saudi Arabia
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Introduction

There has been much research into the notion of 'voice' in educational discourse and curriculum development (Hymes, 1996; Thorpe, 2013; Gunter, 2001; Hargreaves, 1996; Brooker & Macdonald, 2010; Skhedi, 1998; Sharkey, 2004; Omoniyi, 2010). Teachers are an invaluable asset of any educational institute and whether they have the opportunity to contribute expressively to developing curricula is a question that requires substantial attention. Voice should emancipate and empower teachers, allowing them the right to actively exercise professional judgement. Voice should be integral to transformative leadership.

The question arises as to why this philosophy is deeply rooted in Saudi Arabia? If history is revisited, one can see that colonialism was at the forefront of promoting moderate education in the Arabic expanse, whilst simultaneously, limiting the scope of education. Colonialism's ideological attack, did not want indigenous people to surpass them in knowledge and skills (Akkari, 2004).

This paper reports findings to the following two research questions: 1) What are English language teachers' perceptions of their 'voice' in their place of work? and 2) To what extent are English language teachers involved in curriculum development? These questions will be answered through an exploratory study which utilizes a questionnaire, semi structured individual face to face interviews and narrative document analysis.   The concept of teacher voice that I propose throughout this paper is one that encapsulates democracy and freedom.

Contextual background and current practice

In Saudi Arabia, English would like to be recognised by many as a second rather than a foreign language. Saudi Arabia has an expatriate community of over eight million and English is the language used for communicational purposes. I have spent nearly twelve years in the kingdom and have personally witnessed a greater push to accommodate the English speaking community. Nowadays, many roadside advertisements, motorway signs, information boards and street names are in English.

English also has a strong presence in the country's mass media like broadcasting, the internet and print media. The Arab News and Saudi Gazette are two of the main English newspapers sold in the country and nowadays, address issues that were seen as taboo not so long ago. More and more people are finding opportunities to voice their opinions and thoughts on pressing issues such as women driving and social reform. So in essence, the issue of 'voice' is rapidly spreading and mediums like the internet, specifically 'face book' and 'twitter' are being utilised to actualise the voices of the masses.

In contrast, there is an antithetical body at the other end of the podium that would like English minimized and some who would like it totally abolished. They are sceptical about this innovative ideology of teaching English, believing it may surpass the national language, Arabic. In fact, on March 7th 2002, the then Minister of Education, was quoted as saying that Saudi Arabia will never allow anyone to impose changes in its national educational curricula[1]. Even though he was referring to the national Arabic curriculum, which was under the spotlight for its alleged 'anti-western' sentiments, this individual 'voice', which could easily be perceived as the 'voice' of the nation, provides a vital insight into how change is perceived. With this in mind; is it possible that Arabic would be eradicated as a language? I do not think so. However, in this day and age, English is a global language that is used by millions of people across the globe as Crystal (2003) acknowledges that a global language will eventually come to be used by more people than any other language.

This instinctive drive from English as a foreign language (EFL) to English as a second language (ESL) is having a huge impact on the education sector within the country. Nowadays, it is common to find private schools teaching English to students from grade one; something that has not been implemented before. Freshman students entering into university are subject to a mandatory, one year preparatory year English language program. It aims to empower students with the language and life skills in order for them to excel in their chosen discipline. Even though this practice aims to cater for the students, this 'necessity' of learning English is questionable for a critical perspective, as in this context, English, albeit a national language, is not the medium of instruction at most, if not all, universities. Many students opt to study Arabic, Islam or poetry in Arabic at a higher academic level, so the compulsion of a year of English is or can be, oppressive for some students.

Theoretical framework and literature review

The central theme that directs this research project is a critical approach to curriculum development; specifically teacher voice and curriculum development. It is important, from a critical paradigm, to truly understand real circumstances in the given institution. Marc Poster (1989) advocates 'critical theory springs from an assumption that we live amid a world of pain, that much can be done to alleviate pain, and that theory has a crucial role to play in that process', (p.3). Critical theory is based on the assumption that access

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[1] http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/saudis-will-not-allow-changes-imposed-on-national-curricula-1.380226

to power, that includes but is not limited to economic capital, social and cultural capital, is inequitably distributed in society in a radical fashion. Critical theorists believe that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know and this inevitably influences inquiry. What can be known is inextricably tied to the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group. In order to fully understand this phenomenon, the political and social circumstances were examined to see their influence in the institution and their impact on teacher voice and curriculum development. This was achieved by observing power relationships that were embedded in the institute, intending to facilitate teacher participation in curriculum development. Instances of interaction between those in charge and responsible for decision making and teachers were recorded in a diary for the sole purpose of trying to understand and appreciate political and social circumstances.

An objective of this study was the attempt to raise awareness for teachers to realize that they should raise their voice about the fact that they are not represented. This was an important point of the study, as teachers may realize that they are not involved but feel incapable of taking action. This emancipatory process, it is hoped, will lead to teacher empowerment by providing opportunities and awareness to change their own circumstances and the perception of curriculum development. Eisner (1990) contends that 'good curriculum materials both emancipate and educate teachers'.

Power relationships play a pivotal role in Saudi Arabian society and are heavily influenced by the Islamic milieu that governs the country. Obedience to authority is emphasized and this can be seen in the Quran where it is stated, 'Obey Allah and His Prophet and those in authority'[2].

Lukes (2002) suggests that covert power channels people's thought so that 'they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable' (p.43). Interestingly, Albert Shanker, from United Federation of Teachers, argued that American education would not be improved until teachers could have a voice [3].

Teacher Voice

Voice within the education spectrum has been subject of discussion for some years now and many researchers have attempted to investigate issues related to teacher voice (Snook, 2012: Carter, 1993: Hargreaves, 1996). Generally, voice can be defined as who says what. The connection between what gets said and who says it (Juffermans & Van der Aa, 2011). Within the ambit of education, voice represents a multifaceted ideology and it includes, but is not limited to, test writers, curriculum designers, students, teachers, parents and publishers. This study focuses on the teacher's voice and how it is positioned within its didactic framework. I suggest that in educational settings, teachers' voices are situated, socially determined and institutionally organized. Teachers may not be seen as policy or decision makers, but they encounter issues that are fundamental to education on a daily basis. Within their communities of practice, they become deeply connected to the intellectual, emotional, educational and physical well-being of students. It is therefore, only natural for teachers' opinions to be heard. Voice can allow opportunities for the marginalized to be heard and as a result, their concerns or suggestions may transform both the lives of their students and the social and political system that excludes them. Giroux (1988) argues that voice "constitutes the focal point" for a critical theory of education, where voice is intended to be a critical and political version of language use, a view that acknowledges the struggle to make one heard.

Teachers and Curriculum Development

During curriculum development, teachers are expected to respond in ways that build broader political support, at both the empirical and pedagogical levels. It is this ideology that may be a preventative factor to teacher voice and involvement in this process. Mata (2012) acknowledges that change and innovation in curriculum are necessitated by factors in a country's political, social, economic, cultural and technological

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[2] Holy Quran: Verse 4 Ayat 59

[3] http://www.uft.org/who-we-are/history/albert-shanker

environment. The ultimate goal of critical pedagogy, as Kanpol (1997) describes it, remains tied to a vision of a more inclusive social democracy. It is pedagogy of inclusion and emancipation. In critical applied linguistics, the concept of 'praxis' opens up much discussion and has been described as the form of action, which is the expression of emancipatory interest. If we try to understand it in Marxist terms, it refers to the process of applying theory through practice to develop more informed theory and practice, specifically as it relates to social change (Doherty, 2008; p.109). It refers to a form of action of the emancipatory interest consisting of action and reflection, occurring in the constructed social or cultural 'real' world, where even though meaning is socially constructed, it assumes a process of meaning-making (Grundy 1987, p. 104-105).

A goal of praxis is to change our vision that theory is not more important than practice neither is practice more important than theory. As is stands, there is a continual interplay between the end and means and a continual interplay between thought and action. This process involves interpretation, understanding and application in 'one unified process' (Gadamer 1979: 275). In light of this study, teacher voice would be central to this ideology, where the curriculum is informed by an emancipatory interest, where both students and teachers are engaged as active participants in the construction of knowledge (Grundy 1987, p.101).

An example of this can be seen in research conducted by Riquarts & Hansen (1998) where they investigated across-boundary collaboration as teachers, administrators, researchers and in-service providers sought to reform the science curriculum.

Studies on teacher voice and curriculum development in Saudi Arabia
There has been little, if any research, into teacher voice and curriculum development in TESOL in Saudi Arabia. However, some studies have concentrated on curriculum. Al-Murabit (2012) investigated an English Language Curriculum of a Community College in Saudi Arabia, analysing how a curriculum should be developed and what challenges it faced. His findings revealed that new curriculums should cater to the learners' needs and fulfill their expectations as well as the expectations of the educators and other stakeholders who are concerned with the outcome of education. Elyas (2008) examined the hidden curriculum and how English was viewed by Saudi students. He briefly discussed how Saudi authorities do not oppose development of educational methods in a manner that do not run counter to the country's deep-rooted principles (p.31). Al-Sheri (2001) concluded that a reassessment of the objectives of the curricula was needed and that it should be based on the country's development plans, social trends, and economic factors (p. 320).

Much research has been conducted into teacher voice and curriculum development in countries like South Africa, Columbia, America and other countries. However, literature on this topic is seriously underrepresented in the Middle east. It is hoped that this research study will raise awareness and encourage further research into this critical phenomenon.

Methodology
This exploratory, small scale research study takes a critical stance in the role of teacher voice and curriculum development, in a tertiary institution in Saudi Arabia. Employing a critical methodological approach, aids in the manipulation of practice through ideology critique and action research. The former is rooted in self reflective practice (Morrisson 1995a) aiming to illustrate how participants are part of a system that keeps them invariable, albeit empowered or not. The latter focuses and impacts on practice and affords power to those who apply it as they are both the engines of research and practice (Cohen et al. P 29). It is this notion that propagates that it is both empowering and emancipating, bestowing practitioners a 'voice' and control in their environment and professional lives (Grundy 1987).

Critical agenda
As a researcher, the ideology of fostering dialogue between the participants was central, enabling a more erudite understanding of teacher voice and curriculum. I wanted to address social inequalities and social transformations within the institution. From a critical standpoint, this approach, offers researchers the platform to excogitate factors such as disparity, desire, power, access and difference rather than simply thinking about relationships between language and social contexts (Pennycook, 2010).

Critical theory's methodology is dialogic and dialectical. Dialogical referring to dialogue with participants combining observation and interviewing with the aim of nurturing conversation and reflection and dialectical, which is often described in direct opposition to positivist approaches, where misapprehensions and ignorance are transformed into more informed consciousness seeing how structures might be changed and comprehending the actions required to effect change. (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.110).

This study attempts to disclose reality, analyse it critically and recreate that knowledge (Freire, 1970, p. 51). This, interestingly enough, gives participants a transformative voice. They take an active role in the research process as they are involved in data collection, data analysis with the aim of benefitting from the actual research (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). Ideology manipulates practice through ideology critique and action research. The former is rooted in self reflective practice (Morrisson, 1995a) aiming to illustrate how participants are part of a system that keeps them where they are, albeit empowered or not. The latter focuses and impacts on practice and affords power to those who apply it as they are both the engines of research and practice (Cohen et al. P 29). It is this notion that propagates that it is both empowering and emancipating, bestowing practitioners a 'voice' and control in their environment and professional lives (Grundy,1987).

Quality research in critical theory is dependent on the type of methods used whether they are quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Notwithstanding this, there are three main decisive factors that must be achieved if research is deemed to be good. Research must be explanatory, practical, and normative simultaneously. Explanatory, meaning that it must be able to identify issues that are incorrect with social reality; practical in that it must identify how to change it and normative by providing both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation. It does not just involve collecting facts but gives the subjective side of the object of study and promotes future development. Consequently, empowering, participants, in this case the teachers, to reflect upon and attempt to change their oppressed condition (Grundy, 1987).

Participants

The participants in this study were five, male, native speakers of English teaching on a preparatory English course in Saudi Arabia. Three of the participants had a Masters degree in TESOL and two had a Masters degree in curriculum. Each participant had over five years teaching experience at the university and had been in Saudi Arabia for ten years. All the participants presently taught 20 hours but had previously held an administrative role in curriculum development.

Participants for this study, were selected using 'purposive sampling', in particular critical case sampling, as I wanted them to suit the criterion for this study. This allowed for those who were unsuitable for the sampling study to be eliminated, so only the most suitable candidates remained. A single case (or small number of cases) can be decisive in explaining the phenomenon of interest. The idea was to purposefully select informants, who will best answer the research questions and who are "information rich" (Patton, 2002, p. 169). I wanted participants to exhibit common characteristics such as: gender, native speakers of English, teachers, qualifications, teaching experience and previously in an administrative role in curriculum development.

The sample size was determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer brings additional insights to the research questions). Purposive sampling was the most effective method in selecting participants, as the data review and analysis were done in conjunction with data collection (Mack et al, 2005). When selecting the sample, I had to carefully consider the following points. If it happens here, will it happen anywhere? If it does not happen here, will it not happen anywhere? If the group is having problems, then can we be sure all the groups are having problems? (Patton, 2002, p.237). Whilst it was understood that critical cases should not be used to make statistical generalisations, I argue that they can help in making logical generalisations. However, such logical generalisations should be made carefully.

Unfortunately, it was not practicable to access the 'girls' side of the university, as education in Saudi Arabia is gender segregated and many constraints are associated with that. Shaw (1994) mentions that research methodologies should be sensitive to culture and that methodology can be adapted to correspond with the culture and context the research is being conducted in.

Teachers are expected to teach 20 contact hours weekly, made up of four 50 minutes classes daily. In addition to teaching, they are also expected to fulfill ten office hours as well as other administrative duties such as, data input and exam invigilation. All teachers are obliged to attend mandatory workshops and professional development sessions. As part of the 'quality assurance' process, teachers are subject to two summative lesson observations in each semester by a group of observers that include members who have no or little observational experience or credentials.

Research tools and data collection

Data was collected via two main sources; questionnaires and semi structured face to face interviews. Validity and reliability were central to this study. Seale (1999), states that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). As qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, I made sure I constantly checked and re-checked between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis. Ongoing analysis results in the dynamic formulation of conjectures and questions that force purposive sampling. Another strategy to ensure validity and reliability was to try to achieve methodological coherence by ensuring congruence between the research question and the components of the method. I was aware that as the research unfolded, the process may not be linear. Data may demand to be treated differently so that the questions may have to be changed or methods modified. Golafshani (2003) mentions that reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm (p. 604)

Questionnaires

As the sample size was small, I opted for open ended questionnaires, with the intent to capture the specificity of the situation. This format allowed the respondents to write a free account in their own terms without any limitations of pre-set categories of response. Pre-planned open ended questions were used that aimed to elicit the same information from the participants about teacher voice and curriculum development. This was achieved by using both divergent and convergent questions which were piloted, allowing for the revision of the questions before administering the questionnaire and to strengthen validity. Brown (2001, p.6) defines questionnaires (a subset of survey research) as 'any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers'. I argue that the data should not have been distorted as the sample size was small and representative.

Semi structured face to face interviews

I decided on using semi structured face to face interviews as it allowed for a more detailed collection of background information and authentic perceptions about teacher voice and curriculum from the participants. The interviews focused on the questions relating to the research questions and general aim of the study. Interviews were validated by making sure any researcher bias was eradicated as much as is possible by ensuring questions asked, actually measured what they claimed to measure (Cannell and Kahn, 1968). This was achieved by ensuring that the questions related to the purpose of the study and had a good probability of yielding the kind of data desired.

I was also aware that even though a question may be relevant to the study, it may not be answerable by the people to whom it will be asked. I also made sure I did not help the interviewee and made sure I did not change the wording of a question or introduce inflections in my questions. Finally I made sure I did not react too overtly to respondents answers. I had to maintain objectivity at all times.

In order to further validate the strength of the findings, the data collection process involved data triangulation: 'collecting accounts from different participants involved in the chosen setting' (Tindall, 1994 p.146) and method triangulation: 'the use of different methods to collect information', (Tindall, 1994 p.147) in this context the questionnaire and semi structured face to face interviews. Mathison (1988) further states that 'triangulation has raised an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation to limit control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. (p. 13)

Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration was another crucial aspect of this study. Written permission was attained from the director before approaching any participant or data collection. All procedures for the protection of human participants were stated and I addressed all concerns in relation to planning, conducting, and evaluating research. Pseudonyms were allocated to all participants to ensure their anonymity and the reasons why they were used were also explained (Heath and Luff 1995:308, Newell 1995:110, Procter 1995:258). I ensured there was minimal risk to participants pertaining to experimental treatment or exposure to physical or psychological harm by briefing them about the study procedures. I made sure they fully understood the nature of the study and the fact that participation was voluntary. A statement was created that informed participants that confidentiality of recovered data would be maintained at all times and that their information would not be available during or after the study to anyone except me and them individually if they wanted. I explained that they had the right to withdraw from the study as well as withdraw any data received from them at any given time of the research. Finally, all participants were told that any data they provided would be destroyed on completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Data collected during this study were analysed and reported using narrative analysis. Two over-arching principles guided the analysis. Firstly, ensuring that data analysis and interpretation began from and was based on the teachers own understanding and their individual responses. Secondly, the adoption of a hermeneutic perspective on text; that is, a perspective that views a text as an interpretation that can never be judged true or false (Schutt, 2012, p.352)

Data was analysed with the goal of discovering patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. I concentrated on the whole data primarily, then attempted to dissect it and re-construct it again more meaningfully. The data was organized into critical themes, patterns and meanings that emerged from the questionnaire and interviews. The aim of this was to provide a framework for further analysis. The data was theoretically sampled in order to keep adding to the sample until I had enough data to describe the perceptions of teacher voice and curriculum development from the participants until theoretical saturation was reached (Cohen et al . 2007). Data was coded from the questionnaires and interviews into lines, paragraphs and sections, in order to produce a new understanding that allowed the critical exploration of the phenomenon of teacher voice and curriculum development. To achieve maximum understanding of the data, open, axial and selective coding was applied, allowing constant comparison between new data and existing data.

Findings

A lack of teacher voice.

Teachers' absence of voice was a frequent reoccurring theme in the data.

The overall analysis of data revealed that participants viewed voice as an foreign concept. In fact, data revealed that teachers' voices were ignored as Martin commented that when teachers mentioned something, it was 'shot down' most of the time. Andrew also commented;

> *'...what is the point of having native English speaking teachers when their ideas and suggestions are rejected?'*

When reflecting on this concept, the participants displayed anger and frustration as they had never reflected about teacher voice in this manner before. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Carl (2002) who affirmed that the 'voice' of the teacher is to a large extent ignored in research conducted in South Afica. This led to the next question of why participants felt that way. What were the influencing factors that shaped these sentiments? Feelings of resentment and oppression were relayed as well as seeming to be powerless when referring to teacher voice as David remarked;

> *We have a top down structure. Sometimes is very oppressive as we are told what to do without any explanation even when we know that there are better avenues to take and we raise this with proof, we are told no it is my way…hmm..our suggestions are not heard at all.*

This statement reveals the oppression and reality of the teachers' situation. Lukes (2002) suggests covert power channels people's thought so that 'they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because

they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable' (p.43). In contrast, if teachers spoke with an 'acceptable' voice, in this context agreement with whatever is put forth, they may be heard. Luna (2000) investigated voice issues of Latin professors and found that voices were not heard as they were too emotional and not appropriate for the university (p.62).

Oppression
Some statements show a sense of imprisonment as teachers experience subordination through an imposed assimilation policy. Findings showed that teachers are afraid to confront and see these issues unveiled. It seems their voice has become lost as a prisoner within their system, where the dominant elite increasingly structure their power so that they can dominate and depersonalize. However, Jason also mentioned that when he felt that positive, well educated suggestions were given, they were not accepted and this led to much frustration. He further mentioned,

> *'..teachers who make valid comments about education, I don't think they stop talking because they are scared but I see they stop talking because no one will listen and it is pointless. You see a system that's top down…you don't really have any real voice in it…you end up talking...people nod their head and say yes yes and nothing really changes.'*

There is a top-down approach to educational management which unfortunately results in inequality within the workplace. Teachers have almost given up hope in visioning any change. Frustration leads to anger. It can also take an adverse course of action where suffering is caused as a result of not being able to do what you want and not being heard. Freire (1970) suggests that, when addressing oppression, that 'it attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power efforts to act responsibly are frustrated, when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, people suffer. This suffering due to impotence is rooted in the very fact that the human equilibrium has been disturbed. But the inability to act which causes people's anguish also causes them to reject their impotence, by attempting to restore their capacity to act. But can they, and how? One way is to submit to and identify with a person or group having power. By this symbolic participation in another person's life, [men have] the illusion of acting, when in reality they only submit to and become a part of those who act (p. 78).

The lack of involvement in curriculum development.
The findings revealed that all participants unequivocally believed that teachers were not involved in the curriculum development at all. Simon mentioned that in his opinion, curriculum development is carried out at the publishing house and the teachers just teach what they are forced to teach. Andrew also said;

> *'I don't think that anyone owns the curriculum, actually…the publishers own it, they put together a book and it's taken on wholesale…'*

Martin also added;

> *The current curriculum is designed by an unholy alliance of higher administrative staff and course book publishers.*

This study found that this perception of curriculum making, deliberately favours the voices of some stakeholders who believe they are acting in the best interest of others. However, due to the lack of teacher voice, the question of whose interests are being served remains ambiguous. These responses show that they were just receivers of a one way transmission of information that they were expected to impart in their classrooms. This finding is consistent with the work of Carl (2002) who revealed that the voice of the teacher is not heard and ignored to a large extent when referring to curricula innovations. Yigzaw's (1982) study, found that 85% of his 110 participants had not been involved in curriculum development.

Curriculum development is a process that should involve teachers as was found by Bowers (1991) and more recently Handler (2010). All curricular materials are subject to the interpretation and individual application of the teacher and McCutcheon (1988) advocates that teachers are the filters through which the mandated curriculum passes. Their understanding of it and their enthusiasm, or boredom, with various aspects of it, colours its nature. Hence, the curriculum enacted in classrooms differs from the one mandated by administrators or developed by experts. (p. 198). Another concern with this ideology is that when teachers utilize a curriculum prepared by external bodies, they may find suggestions that are incompatible with the

dynamics of their classroom and students; using their own agenda for curricula that sometimes conflict with what is presented.

Teacher empowerment through curriculum development
Another recurring theme in the data was the notion of teacher empowerment through involvement in curriculum development. Jason responded to question seven on the questionnaire that;

> *..it is absolutely necessary for teachers to be involved in the curriculum design process. After all, they are the ones who have firsthand knowledge of what is taking place in the classroom, the practicality of using the material within the allotted timeframes and the suitability of the material to both the level of the students and the achievement of the course objectives. Their involvement should therefore be on two levels: they should be consulted during the planning stage of the curriculum and their feedback should be sought during the critical review stage of the curriculum design process.*

David's response to the same question was;

> *Yes. They should be part of the process of choosing books. Their previous experience and understanding of the struggles of Saudi students can be very helpful in choosing an adequate book.*

Simon responded by writing;

> *Most certainly teachers could and indeed should play an integral role in the development of the curriculum of any institution. Teachers are at the forefront of instruction and assessment in the class, so it is only logical to involve them in the process that leads up to this. A committee comprising curriculum specialists and teachers should be involved in the curriculum cycle, right the way through from initial planning to final review.*

The thought of teacher involvement in curriculum design seems to be critical to the participants. The ultimate goal of critical pedagogy, as Kanpol (1997) describes it, remains tied to a vision of a more inclusive social democracy; a pedagogy of inclusion and emancipation. Involving teachers in curriculum development would give them power to create curricula, administer their own lessons and as a result, have the ability to effectively teach their students. Research shows that teachers store a rich knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social process academic tasks and students' understanding and intentions (Carter, 1993). Without doubt teachers are central to education. However, strangely enough, they are not consulted when it comes to curriculum development (Dyson, 1995).

When empowered, teachers claim ownership of their work and invest in it accordingly. Furthermore, when teachers have a personal stake planning the curriculum, they usually do a better job and as Oloruntegbe et al (2010) state, curriculum development can only be successful if teachers and communities are involved in the development of curriculum change and structural changes (p. 707).

The aim of this study was to investigate teacher voice and curriculum development in a university in Saudi Arabia. Two research questions dictated the research: 1) What are English language teachers' perceptions of their 'voice' in their place of work? 2) To what extent are English language teachers involved in curriculum development? Analysis of the data revealed that teachers perceived that they had no opportunity to voice their opinions and when they did, they were either ignored or reprimanded. Findings also revealed that teachers should be involved in curriculum development, but due to the ideology of education in Saudi Arabia, they were completely left out. A significant finding was that the participants acknowledged that other factors such as tribal origins, control and the ideology of slavery in the kingdom, all impacted on the lack of teacher voice and curriculum development.

Reflection and conclusion.
This study has presented the findings to an exploratory, small scale research study underpinned by a critical agenda, focusing on teacher voice and curriculum development. The study was positioned within the critical approach as I wanted to raise awareness and empower teachers to 'raise their voice' and become a crucial part of the curriculum development process. The framing of questions and the selection of particular 'voices' for interview was instrumental in defining the boundaries of this study. Their voice has become a silent cry in the wilderness. Teachers exercise little voice in matters of education, curriculum, testing and policies.

I have tried to present a vision of teacher voice founded on the principles and values of social justice, democracy and critical inquiry. The study shows how ideology and power operate in seemingly blameless,

rational ways to perpetuate social hierarchies within an educational setting. It has negatively influenced the profession of teaching by reducing teacher autonomy, deskilling teachers work and introducing scripted non relevant curricula. Teacher voice needs to be revisited and reviewed as this study reveals that the educational environment in Saudi Arabia seems to be refashioned in ways that are markedly authoritative and dominant.

The study found two emerging themes; an austere lack of teacher voice and lack of involvement in curriculum development (CD), which were further dissected into sub themes;

Organisational Structure		Power and Culture
	Lack of Teacher Voice	
	Lack of involvement in curriculum development	
Teacher empowerment		Oppression
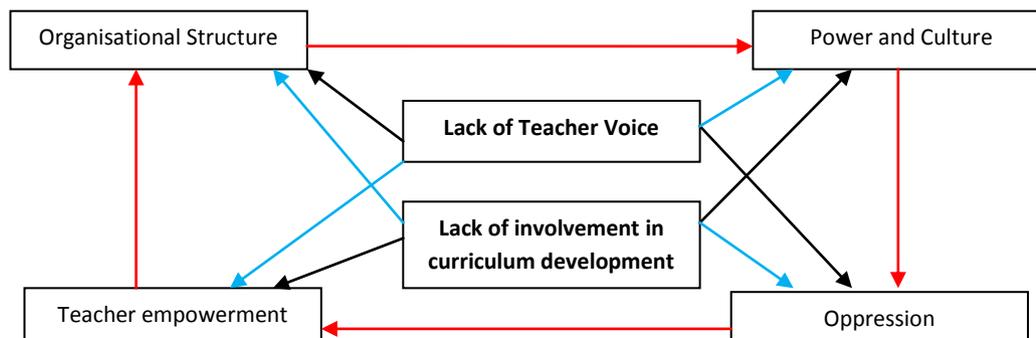
Despite their sense of expectation, enthusiasm, and energy, participants in this research study echoed the overriding feeling of being assimilated into educational cultures that were characterised by cynicism, resignation, and, ultimately, compliance. Issues such as power, representation, empowerment, voice, tribal and cultural prejudice and oppression were recurrent in the data. These issues however, are not exclusively pedagogical, as one may expect in an educational framework, but rather, they had a reflexive relationship with the society in which they are embedded.

Participants informed this study that there was an abundance of top down expository, rhetorical discourse describing methods of instruction and the construction of curricula, but there was virtually no critical discourse. As a result, the tone and level of teacher engagement rarely moved beyond the prosaic. Another major finding was the sentiment that when teachers did adapt a critical stance about current practices or provide examples of alternative models of teaching and learning, they were viewed as being radical, impractical, or, at the very least, controversial. In part, this framing of the critical stance as extreme occurs because teachers no longer set the agenda and are negated voice. Teachers have been imprisoned to their classrooms and become accustomed to administrative duties, producing teachers who are robotic technicians. It is all too common to find teachers following the instructions of others and lacking the confidence to ask how well those instructions serve their students (Down & Smith, 2012). This disavowal of teacher voice provides a key to understanding the perennial problem of oppression in regards to involvement in curriculum development. Beirstein (1990) suggests a theory of the social construction of pedagogic discourse as a framework that allows us to locate and position teachers in relation to other partners in the process of producing new versions of, in this context, curriculums. Curriculum development is a process where the authoritative voice of the teacher is imperative and in light of Bernstein's theory, teachers' intimate knowledge of their students, their background, learning styles and proficiency, would make an invaluable contribution to curriculum development.

The main implications of this study are that higher level management need to provide an opportunity for teachers to express their voice. This marginalisation of teacher voice raises concerns especially when voice is linked to democracy and freedom. Another important standpoint is that voice is ideological; it contains explicit or sometimes more implicit ideas about language and social relations as well as educational discourse and identity (Juffermans & Van der Aa, 2011, p.2). They need to reconsider the role of the teacher and process of educational reform as this study revealed that few teachers, if any, are afforded the voice to discuss top-down curricular and instructional mandates. Teacher voice needs to critically challenge the technocratic demands of state-mandated curricula.

A limitation of this study was the lack of female participation due the makeup of the education system in Saudi Arabia. All educational institutes are segregated. Future research should include females as they may give a totally different perspective on teacher voice, as the female side of the institute is run and managed differently. Another area for further research could be critically analysing the impact of tribal origins, control and the ideology of slavery in the kingdom on the lack of teacher voice and curriculum development.

Finally, this was one of the first studies of its kind in Saudi Arabia in its focus on teacher voice and curriculum development. It has attempted to shed light on a serious issue within the framework of education. It is hoped that it will act as the springboard for other research to be conducted into the same phenomenon.

'The vision of voice unites two kinds of freedom: freedom from denial of opportunity due to something linguistic; and freedom for satisfaction in the use of language. In other words: freedom to have one's voice heard, and freedom to develop a voice worth hearing. One way to think of the society in which one would like to live is to think of the kinds of voices it would have' (Hymes 1996: 46).

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