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## Key Stakeholders' Lived Experiences While Implementing an Aligned Curriculum: A Phenomenological Study

Pedro P. Aguas

Universidad de Córdoba (Montería), [aguaspedro@yahoo.com](mailto:aguaspedro@yahoo.com)

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## Key Stakeholders' Lived Experiences While Implementing an Aligned Curriculum: A Phenomenological Study

### Abstract

Furthering innovation in English as a foreign language curriculum has been a concern for the Colombian educational system for many years. Nevertheless, the major attempts at the national level continue to fail. Through this phenomenological study of 12 participants at an urban public school in grades 6-12 I attempted to answer the phenomenological question, "What were the lived experiences of key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned curriculum at an urban public school in a northern city in Colombia, South America?" The theoretical framework that guides this study included innovation, the theory of policy attribution, and the learner-centered philosophy. The study employed Moustakas' modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi's-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology. The researcher collected the data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and reflective diaries. Seven themes emerged from the data: (a) aligned curriculum and political aims, (b) awareness of the significance of affectiveness, (c) a sense of ownership and lifelong learning, (d) communication as the cornerstone of implementation, (e) ability to face uncertainty and challenges, (f) ability to create transformational leadership, and (g) transcendence toward innovation. The study highlights the feasibility of curriculum innovation at the secondary level with key stakeholders' commitment and full potential.

### Keywords

Curriculum Innovation, Aligned Curriculum, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Lived Experience, Bracketing

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Pedro P. Aguas

Universidad de Córdoba, Montería, Córdoba, Colombia

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*Furthering innovation in English as a foreign language curriculum has been a concern for the Colombian educational system for many years. Nevertheless, the major attempts at the national level continue to fail. Through this phenomenological study of 12 participants at an urban public school in grades 6-12 I attempted to answer the phenomenological question, "What were the lived experiences of key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned curriculum at an urban public school in a northern city in Colombia, South America?" The theoretical framework that guides this study included innovation, the theory of policy attribution, and the learner-centered philosophy. The study employed Moustakas' modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi's-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology. The researcher collected the data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and reflective diaries. Seven themes emerged from the data: (a) aligned curriculum and political aims, (b) awareness of the significance of affectiveness, (c) a sense of ownership and lifelong learning, (d) communication as the cornerstone of implementation, (e) ability to face uncertainty and challenges, (f) ability to create transformational leadership, and (g) transcendence toward innovation. The study highlights the feasibility of curriculum innovation at the secondary level with key stakeholders' commitment and full potential. Keywords: Curriculum Innovation, Aligned Curriculum, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Lived Experience, Bracketing*

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The Colombian education system is divided into early childhood education, preschool, primary school, secondary school, and higher education. English as a foreign language is taught at the secondary level and in higher education. Over the last four decades, the Colombian government has attempted to implement foreign language curriculum innovation to improve the quality of English as a foreign language education in the country (Botero Alvares, 2005; Gómez Sará, 2017). In Colombia, a number of curriculum reforms mark the history of foreign language curriculum innovation - the implementation of English and French language teaching because of the need for foreign languages as globalization increased, the English syllabus (the students' language proficiency, curriculum goals and objectives at schools, and the use of communicative materials for language teaching), the Colombian Framework for English Project (COFE), the General Law of Education, the Curriculum Guidelines for Foreign Languages, and the National Bilingual Program (Usma, 2009). Despite these attempts, studies of educational reforms at a national level concluded that innovative attempts continue to be unsuccessful. Usma (2009) stated, "[D]espite the impetus behind these ... reforms and the public support for the idea of learning another language, research in the field evidenced some difficulties at the ground level" (p. 5). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experience of key stakeholders (school administrators, teachers, and parents) during the implementation of foreign language curriculum innovation in order to understand

how current school leadership practices support school innovation in an urban public secondary school in a northern city in Colombia, South America.

An aligned foreign language curriculum refers to a mixed core syllabus consisting of mandated standards; a common reference for teaching, learning and assessment; specific teaching resources and materials; and a qualified team of teachers for classroom implementation (Martone & Sireci, 2009; Richards & Renandya, 2002). The focus on implementation at the secondary school level, particularly in Colombia, requires consistency, specificity, stability, authority, and systematization to ensure success and prevent educational institutions from stagnation (Desimone, 2002; Horibe, 2003; Patterson, Campbell, Johnson, Marx, & Whitener, 2013). The common point is that despite the national governments' numerous attempts at improving the quality of foreign language education in the country, neither public and private educational institutions' innovative initiatives have been unsuccessful.

Research shows that a significant number of curriculum innovation projects have failed despite school leaders' apparent interest in adopting them (Iemjinda, 2007). Since 1968, the Colombian national government has attempted to assess the quality of foreign language education in Colombia (Delgado-Ramírez, 2013; Pardo Adames & Cabarcas Acosta, 2015). Since then, however, there is no clear evidence that the quality of foreign language teaching and learning has improved substantially. The lack of information regarding the underlying etiology of the failure and issues associated with foreign language curriculum implementation is a part of the problem as well. This persistent failure of foreign language curriculum innovation warrants attention because in times of globalization, rapid technology advancements, accountability demands, and diverse lifestyles, foreign language curriculum innovation can become the key to ensuring relevance, sustainability and successful implementation of foreign language policies (Bowonder, Dambal, Kumar, & Shirodkar, 2010; Thompson & Purdy, 2009).

Educational innovation requires the contributions of policy makers, community members, and the educational institutions themselves. The failures of some education innovations have captured the attention of key stakeholders at the higher level (Watson, 1994). The issue is associated with some factors that may support or hamper school reform at the various educational levels (i.e., primary, secondary, and higher education). All these levels may be influenced by these factors when a particular change comes into play. Sashkin and Egermeier (as cited in Norman, 2010/2011) stated that educational innovation was contingent on the interaction of multiple related factors, such as curriculum (teaching methods and materials), the school climate and culture, and the human talent involved (i.e., role and expectations of key stakeholders). Marsh and Willis (2006) found that curriculum implementation needed more exploration regarding key stakeholders' perspectives and perceptions in implementing curriculum innovation alternatives in diverse contexts and educational levels. De Segovia and Hardison's (2009) study to determine the coherence between the policy behind the mandated curriculum and curriculum implementation revealed a lack of coherence between curriculum policy and curriculum implementation, namely the implementation of a communicative language teaching approach. This implementation proved to be ineffective because of the absence of the principles of a learner-centered curriculum in classroom practices. Johnson (1989) contended that the lack of adequate teacher training, resources, mentoring, and support were common obstacles to successful policy implementation. The scant research on curriculum innovation in Colombia (e.g., Cárdenas, 2006; Sánchez & Obando, 2008; Usma, 2009) has focused on political issues connected with the potential success of innovation from the outsiders' points of view, rather than curriculum implementation itself from the insiders' perspectives (Kirkgoz, 2008). To address this gap in understanding, this study sought to answer four questions:

*What is the lived experience of key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned curriculum at an urban public school in a Northern city in Colombia, South America?*

*What factors influence the implementation of a new curriculum from the perspectives of the three groups of stakeholders involved in the study?*

*What processes influence the implementation of a new curriculum from the perspectives of the three groups of stakeholders involved in the study?*

*How does curriculum innovation reflect in the school and classrooms as perceived by the three groups of stakeholders participating in the study?*

*How do key stakeholders perceive curriculum innovation?*

Understanding foreign language curriculum innovation can contribute to the continual process of quality improvement and development. To the best of my knowledge, this research reflects the first phenomenological study to explore curriculum innovation from all the key stakeholders' perspectives. Results of this study can benefit foreign language education stakeholders in Colombia, including policy-makers, curriculum leaders, teachers, parents, students, and the community at large.

## **Literature Review**

### **Innovation**

In education, innovation has meant creating new ways to approach educational challenges at various levels, deviating from traditional perspectives and practices and challenging the status quo (Privady, 2008). Barnett (as cited in Godin, 2008) referred to innovation as a human production that differed from others. With this definition, Barnett tried to distinguish innovation from the specific idea of the technological invention. In foreign language curriculum innovation, the topic of the study has translated into innovation projects, which in turn emanated from innovative policies, systems, or reforms (Berestova, 2009). Many researchers note the importance of innovation to improve performance, to avoid stagnation, or to prevent failure (Dewi, 2018; Naz & Murad, 2017; Serdyukov, 2017).

The innovation and development of foreign language education in the world has required concrete policies, perspectives, and methods (Zheng-dong, 2006). In Colombia, the National Bilingual Program, the latest foreign language curriculum innovation, suggests clear implementation to ensure sustainability. The challenge for policy-makers, researchers, and teachers is to keep language education sustainable and functional to comply with globalization requirements and each country's specific policies and cultural projections. In the last 20 years, three main innovations in English teaching and learning have attracted the attention of educators, researchers, and teachers. They are as follows: (1) the introduction and application of a new approach or method (Abdyhalykova, 2016; Chirițescu & Păunescu, 2017), (2) key stakeholders' reaction or reactions to innovation, namely language teachers (Liu, 2009), and (3) factors that affected teachers' curriculum implementation (Wang & Cheng, 2009).

## **The Theory of Policy Attributes**

Porter et al.'s study (as cited in Desimone, 2002, p. 438) proposes a successful comprehensive school reform consisting of five pillars: specificity, consistency, power, authority, and stability. These researchers found that the application of the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) model has resulted in the use of its components by the teachers. Nevertheless, some difficulties still affect the implementation of innovation. According to Patterson, Campbell, Johnson, Marx, and Whitener (2013): policy attributes theory suggests "fidelity of implementation of a CSR is strongest when it is specific, consistent, authoritative, powerful, and stable" (p. 36).

## **Learner-centeredness**

Learner-centeredness as an approach to language teaching and learning focuses on two main factors: characteristics of the learner, and teaching practices (Brown, 2008; Marwan, 2017; Moate & Cox, 2015). Learners' individual differences (diverse needs and styles) lead teachers to adopt more learner-centered instructional strategies and assessment techniques (Friedman, Harwell, & Schnepel, 2006; Hunt, Wiseman, & Touzel, 2009). Learner-centered curricula, in addition, embrace the idea of curriculum alignment (Martone & Sireci, 2009; Penuel, Fishman, Gallegher, Korbak, & López-Prado, 2009). In this study, the implementation of an aligned curriculum suggests a focus on the student, the learning process, policies, and instruction that have ensured effective learning for learners through student-centered leadership. Kobalia and Garakadidze (2010) found that education students' perceptions do not include learner-centered professional characteristics (e.g., tolerance, openness to innovation, humanness, enthusiasm, classroom management, and sense of humor). The study suggested that these education graduates' main concern about their professional competences was not the implementation of the learner-centered perspective but the knowledge of subject matter, i.e., the structure of the discipline perspective (Posner, 2004). The current study represented an effort to make education a more human, social, and less authoritarian activity. In various contexts, including those in Asia and Colombia, the implementation of the communicative approach has reflected the common purpose of following a learner-centered philosophy in implementing foreign language curricula.

## **Context for the Study**

The author is a novice researcher, and a foreign language curriculum innovation leader. This study was inspired by casual conversations with national colleagues and official representatives of the Colombian Ministry of education during the implementation of a teacher development program for teachers of English in Colombia. Colombian EFL classroom realities suggest the need to offer secondary school students a high quality foreign language education using aligned curricula to ensure academic achievement. The author's first experience in doing phenomenological research led to the understanding of the methodological demands of this research approach as well as the research participants' difficulties in dealing with phenomenological interviews about declarative knowledge related to curriculum design and curriculum development. The author struggled to achieve bracketing during both the data collection and the data analysis, namely in the interviewing process. According to Sorrell and Redmond (1995), educated people tend to answer according to the specifics of the topics they address. This current research may inspire the interest of foreign language policy makers, government agencies, curriculum developers, researchers, and school curriculum leaders at the local, regional, and national level.

## Method

The phenomenological hermeneutic research design enabled the researcher to focus on the participants' lived experience (Gall et al., 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). According to Ary et al. (2010): "a phenomenological study is designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it" (p. 471). The study centered on the perspectives of a group of stakeholders who described their lived experiences of an educational phenomenon (Gall et al., 2007). By using the principle of the lifeworld (Finlay, 2008), the study led to the understanding of the external world and the way the participants perceive and experience it in relation to themselves. The lifeworld is the world that is lived and experienced, that is, the world that is meaningful to consciousness in its qualitative sense, not the objective world but the subjective one. (Finlay, 2008). In essence, the inquiry combined empirical phenomenological research and hermeneutic research (Dowling, 2004). The fusion of descriptive and interpretive processes allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of how administrators, teachers, and parents experienced the implementation of a foreign language curriculum as a national strategy for improving the quality of foreign language education in Colombia. At the descriptive level, the study focused on the lived experiences of key stakeholders who play different roles in the implementation of an innovative curricular proposal. At the interpretive level, this inquiry implied interpretation to delve into the meanings of the experience described. Essence in this regard refers to the individuals' relations of meaning with the world and its intentionality's (Ary et al., 2010).

The selection criteria used to determine the actual subjects for the sample included involvement in the implementation of the aligned foreign language curriculum, participation in the Teacher Development Programme (TDP), a national teacher-training project, and willingness to participate in the study. Teachers of English represented a larger number of stakeholders than the other two types of stakeholders due to their more direct and frequent contact with the implementation of the aligned curriculum. This is the reason why they were the only ones to take part in the focus group discussion as well. The sample for this study consisted of 12 stakeholders: two administrators, six teachers of English and two subject teachers who taught grades six to twelve, and two parents. The 12 twelve participants were asked to participate in face-to-face interview and a focus group discussion.

Recruitment of the actual study participants was achieved through a three step process. First, the researcher obtained written permission from the school principal to conduct the study. Second, through the informed consent, the three groups of stakeholders received ample information about the study to determine if participation was suited for them. Third, the research participants signed an informed consent as evidence of their willingness to participate and commitment to the research study. The researcher knew the six teachers of English due their participation in common projects related to the teaching and learning of English at the local and regional level. Unlike his familiarity with this group of stakeholders, the researcher did not have any relationship with the participating subject teachers and parents.

These participants are Colombian and have lived in the country throughout their lives, and two of them have taught English as a foreign language for more than 25 years. Most of them hold an official position at the target institution and work for the Colombian government, that is, they are teachers in the federal system. The two school administrators are specialists in school administration and part of a permanent administrative team. Four of the teachers of English were specialists in foreign language teaching, and two of them were undergraduates doing practicum. The two undergraduates have experience in both primary and secondary school as pre-service teachers of English at the local and regional level. Therefore, they know the system sufficiently. Only one of these two teachers of English does not work for the target

school, but worked temporarily at this institution as a pre-service teacher. Both subject teachers are specialists in their subject areas (Spanish and social sciences) and are full-time in-service teachers. One parent is a specialist in nursing and the other is a lawyer. Both are permanent members of the School Parent Association

## **Data Collection**

The research participants signed an informed consent as evidence of their willingness to participate and commitment to the research study. The University of Phoenix's IRB approved the informed consent. All documents related to consent and description of the research were provided in both English and Spanish. A professional translator made the translation. It is worth highlighting that collecting data in two languages and translating into one might have affected the results or the way they were interpreted. There is no perfect or the best translation (Taber, 2018). Therefore, linguistic equivalence does not always ensure functional or cultural equivalence in translating quotes from Spanish into English in this study (Peña, 2007).

I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and kept a reflective diary to collect information about the lived experience of key stakeholders in the target school. Following Seidman's (2006) framework for phenomenological interviewing, the participants engaged in a series of three interviews over six months guided by an instrument I designed. The interview protocol consisted of three types of interview. Interview one probed the participants' context of experience and lasted 30 minutes. Interview two focused on the reconstruction of the participants' experiences in the present and lasted one hour. The focus of interview three was meaning and lasted one hour as well.

The interview protocol as a self-designed data collection instrument was validated through a pilot study to provide credibility and trustworthiness to the investigation (Chenail, 2011). "A usual procedure for testing the quality of an interview protocol and for identifying potential researcher biases is the pilot study in which investigators try out their proposed methods ..." (p. 257). In this study, I conducted a pilot study to ensure validity, wording, clarity, redundancy, and sequence of the interview questions. In addition, the pilot study assisted in determining the alignment between the central question and the sub-questions with the interview questions (Scales, 2009).

In the focus group interviews, the six teachers of English discussed four main topics: innovation, curriculum innovation, aligned curriculum, and leadership, topics that the researcher proposes to obtain a collective view about the central phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2011). This group of stakeholders formed a homogeneous group with the same academic status, facilitated understanding of the social dynamic among the research participants, and promotes discussion of diverse perspectives (Ary et al., 2010; Redmond & Curtis, 2009). The teachers met once for a two-hour focus group discussion (Ary et al., 2010). The reflective diary provided research opportunities for me to use my bracketing skills (Nicholl, 2010). The use of the reflective diary allowed me to accomplish bracketing during the data collection and data analysis process. The data collection process resulted in thirty-seven individual interviews and one focus group interview. Data collection from the school administrators, the subject teachers, and the parents was done in Spanish. The Spanish content in the form of key verbatim examples was translated before the coding process and after the selection of these quotes to illustrate the findings of the study. Data saturation was achieved when the participants deviated from the interview questions topic.



## Data Analysis

Moustakas' (1994) modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology (Finlay, 2009b; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007) guided this study. The study approached hermeneutic phenomenology as a necessary component of true phenomenological research. In practice, hermeneutics transcends mere description of essences. Description of human experience implies interpretation to delve into the meanings of the experience described. Van Manen (1990) states, "[a]ctually it has been argued that all description is ultimately interpretation" (p. 25). Description and interpretation become simultaneous processes when research participants interact in the pursuit of meaning from lived experiences. These two processes are the expression of a dialectical continuum in which subjectivity is inevitable (Dowling, 2004; Finlay, 2009a; Van Manen, 1990).

In practice, the role of the researcher in this study included not only the description of the participants' lived experiences but also the discovery of the current and potential meanings of those experiences in a specific context. The fusion of descriptive and interpretive processes, in addition, allowed me as the researcher to gain understanding of how administrators, teachers, and parents lived the experience of participating in the implementation of a foreign language curriculum as a national strategy for improving the quality of foreign language education in Colombia. Also, I gained useful understanding of key stakeholders' leadership practices and strategies for supporting innovation in their institution. The unit of analysis as an aspect of the phenomenon under inquiry (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) was Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) model of analysis (leaders, followers, and situations). These were the two main stakeholders of the school community and the various situations associated with the target school's management and leadership. Administrators emerged as school leaders, teachers, and parents as followers, and the dynamic of curriculum implementation, as the situation. The consideration of data related to these three aspects did not preclude the researcher from including emergent data.

The key to reducing data into themes was coding (see Figure 1). The analytical operations in phenomenological data analysis in this study included grouping the information through a progressive refinement of codes. The database was not large enough to use word processing software or a specialized analysis software for data analysis. Therefore, I analyzed the data manually and used highlighting in different colors to identify significant statements and grouped them into initial codes, categories, and themes. Using initial coding helped to refine codes and major categories to develop themes, the actual level of abstraction in phenomenological research (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005; Saldaña, 2013). Eight steps epitomized the process for phenomenological data in this study as described in the next paragraphs.

In Step one in the combined approach, the I transcribed the interviews verbatim, translated 18 interview transcripts from Spanish into English, and read and reread the data obtained from data collection to describe and understand the research participants' lived experiences (Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994; Smith & Flirth, 2011). This activity required using eight first cycle coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). These methods assist in initiating the data coding process by breaking them into specific parts for later examination. Initial coding led to the development of initial categories. Magnitude coding assisted in presenting the progressive refinement of the coding process, determining the number of research participants who endorsed the major themes in the form of percentages. Subcoding enriched the coding process by assigning more than one code to make a text segment more detailed or specific. Holistic coding as opposed to "line-by-line" coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 142) helped to capture meaning from an entire excerpt from the interview transcripts. Structural coding assisted in identifying content for a category in specific research questions. Process coding suggested

meaning in terms of research participants' lived experiences. Descriptive coding implied analyzing specific topics identified in the data. In vivo coding, finally, allowed me to use the research participants' original words to extract meaning from the data. In Step two, I identified preliminary significant statements leading to the development of initial categories guided by the principle of horizontalization (Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994). The revision of these statements led to the exclusion of those that did not fit into the initial identification process. A total of 243 significant statement were identified for subsequent analysis. After this revision, the researcher developed broad categories to complete step three. In step four, I developed specific subcategories from broad categories (Saldaña, 2013). This step included classifying these subcategories by research questions, which in turn translated into final categories. Step five was for me to create initial and final themes from final categories. This analysis resulted in seven themes with their associated invariant constituents (Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1994).

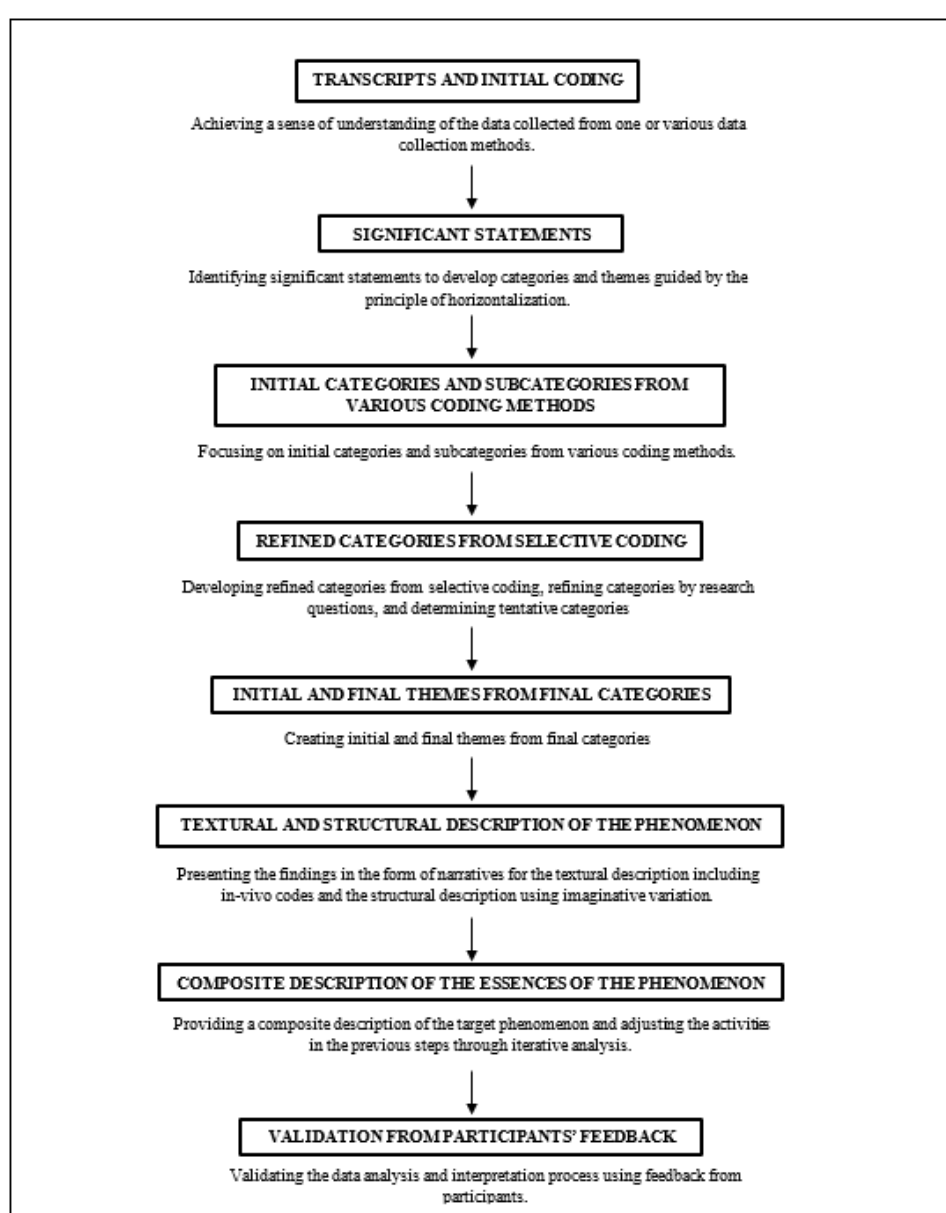


Figure 1: The Progressive Refinement of Codes leading to eight steps. The connections and interconnections between and among the various boxes show how the refinement of codes progresses from first-impression data condensation to more intensive data analysis, leading to the consolidation of thematic aspects of the analysis.

The completion of the five steps of data analysis was followed by a composite description of the target phenomenon that incorporated the findings in the form of narratives for the textural description of the phenomenon under study (what the research participants experienced) and the structural description of the same phenomenon (how the experience occurred) using appropriate language and thoughtfulness (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Step six then adjusted the activities in the previous steps through iterative analysis. Step 7 allowed for validation of the data analysis and interpretation process. The findings were sent to the research participants to make sure that the seven themes reflected their actual experiences (Colaizzi, 1978). Nevertheless, they never responded to indicate they did not agree with the findings reported.

## **Findings**

The Colombian government has attempted to improve the quality of foreign language education in the country including English. Nevertheless, such changes have been ineffective, and the Ministry of education continues to strive for better results. I attempted to answer the central question: *What is the lived experience of key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned curriculum at an urban public school in a northern city in Colombia, South America?* The essence of the responses of 12 stakeholders' experience of implementing an aligned foreign language curriculum was reduced into seven themes and resulted in the complex interaction among the various themes. The description of this human experience implied interpretation to delve into the meanings of the experience described. Van Manen (1990) stated, "[a]ctually it has been argued that all description is ultimately interpretation" (p. 25). Two themes (aligned curriculum and political aims and ability to face uncertainty and challenges) related to Research Question One. Two more themes (a sense of ownership and lifelong learning and communication as the cornerstone of implementation) responded to Research Question Two. One theme (awareness of the significance of affectiveness) portrayed Research Question Three. The two other themes (ability to create transformational leadership and transcendence toward innovation) disclosed Research Question Four.

What follows are the findings according to the four subquestions that refined the central question. For confidentiality reasons, the study participants received corresponding codes for use during the study: SA1 (school administrator 1), TOE1 (teacher of English 1), ST1 (subject teacher 1), P1 (parent 1), and so forth.

### **Research Question One: What factors influence the implementation of a new curriculum from the perspectives of the three groups of stakeholders involved in the study?**

*Aligned curriculum and political aims.* All research participants indicated that implementing an aligned curriculum means a prelude to the consolidation of current political aims in foreign language education. In fact, in the last two decades, the Colombian education system has struggled for compliance with social, economic, and political trends. One of these trends is the implementation of prescribed curriculum models for foreign language teaching and learning. SA1 declared:

We have to consider the inherent aspects in relation to the academic processes, mostly how the curricular design is framed in the procedure of the academic development process. Also, we must know that it cannot be separated from the other inherent processes of the institutional operation and Ministry of Education's requirements.

P2 incorporating the change issue, claiming clarity, and describing it as a real, innovative, and dynamic process that transforms stagnation into active participation and professional activity in the Institution, stated:

Practice is the starting point for change; it is not only the mere intention, which is sometimes what we've been observing progressively in the education field. At least, in our case, Colombia introduced that practice as an innovation in its academic curriculum, which allowed us to pass from a delay process and stagnation to actually giving life to the academic process - and I hope this is clearly understood.

Trying to define and understand the new curriculum, TOE1 stated, "Aligned curriculum, I think is an organized and planned syllabus that the government – with some specialists- have created for public schools in Colombia to follow."

In an effort to relate prior experience to current experience in decision making in curriculum implementation, specifically the lesson planning process, and struggling to align core elements of the aligned curriculum to the students' needs to favor the innovation, TOE3 added:

Before I bring the standards to the classroom, I...I prepare my lessons according to these standards and competencies, trying to choose the ones that I need to develop in a specific lesson. I always try to relate my topics and activities to the standards and competencies that my students need to communicate in English.

***Ability to face uncertainty and challenges.*** A majority of participants manifested that implementing an aligned curriculum means being able to overcome professional and personal fears as well as acknowledging exploration as a fountain of knowledge and success. The implementation of a curriculum having new characteristics in terms of time distribution and the connections with other curriculum subjects causes confusion and uncertainty. ST1 commented, "No, at the beginning the teachers' million-dollar question was: how many hours of social science will be taken away? How many hours of any subject will be taken away?" SA2 said, "Teachers, I knew that would worry you because the most important subjects of the school are Spanish, mathematic and biology, but don't worry since the baggage [the curricular change] will increase the number of hours." TOE1 responded:

We kind of faced with a big question: What are we going to do now? How are we going to do this? Because we never thought about it. We were just waiting for the books and, the books were there. OK, how are going to do it? Are the students going to take them home? Are we going to keep them here? Are they going to write with a pencil or a pen? Are they going to erase?

The same participant described her uncertainty and fears as a professional and indicated that "change implies a challenge that we have to overcome, incorporate into our lives, and enjoy its taste, which is what the most difficult thing to do. You don't enjoy what you don't accept."

Implementing the new curriculum proposal is a challenge for teachers of English. TOE4 stated, "I think a challenge is related to my performance, my professional performance." TOE1, emphasizing the idea of continued learning through living new experiences and situations, added, "Again, we felt like in an unknown territory. We didn't know what to do. We were just starting. Huh...now it is easier. Now we have kind of .... like...it's like a dance, we know."

## **Research Question 2: What processes influence the implementation of a new curriculum from the perspectives of the three groups of stakeholders involved in the study?**

*A sense of ownership and lifelong learning.* All research participants indicated that implementing an aligned curriculum means expressing a sense of belongingness and understanding people's various roles as committed professionals and human beings. This attitude also implies fulfilling various needs as members of a community and society, being able to make informed decisions, and having a sense of self-actualization.

In ST1's words "At [the target school], we easily appreciate the people's sense of belonging and familiarity that we have as a community." SA1 concluded that "So, we like the silent work [the current school responsibilities], but at the same time it must result in real benefits to students, showing evidence of the work done with great devotion and interest." ST2 referred to acceptance and shared commitment in this way, "I mean, there's already an acceptance, both the family and the student have a commitment." He added, "Well, to establish a foreign language new curriculum, it is indispensable to have a commitment, a commitment in which principals, teachers and students are involved." TOE2 responded, "OK, the factors that influence the implementation of a new curriculum could be everybody's involvement with what the institution wants."

Some research participants mention that all members of the school community have a role to play in the institution to help students grow academically and as people regardless of their jobs and positions... ST1, stated, "We are exclusive in that sense. All people in this school, including the gatekeeper and the school administrators have a critical role to play in learners' lives..." Highlighting the integration of the various management instances to make the academic process more dynamic and complete, SA1 explained:

On a dynamic level, at least each management, process take place, but in the daily matters we cannot separate a process from the other one because the academic management is complemented with the Principals' management with the administrative management, with the financial management, and the management offered to the community.

Other research participants mentioned that they are not forced to actively participate in the implementation of the aligned curriculum because all school community members do what is expected of them, that is, the various stakeholders know the needs they are expected to fulfill. TOE3 stated in this respect, "[t]he principal does not need to force us to do something. Everyone in our English curriculum does what they need to do." SA1 highlighted school administrators and teachers' commitment to official requirements when implementing the new curriculum because they need to meet "to construct ... the course contents, the performance indicators, and the competencies that we will develop."

*Communication as the cornerstone of implementation.* All participants indicated that implementing an aligned curriculum implies building and maintaining strong relationships within a school community and a learning community and negotiating at various levels "Because we have to be more connected, more communicative, and more interactive. We need to share more experiences" (TOE3). In the same vein, P2 commented, "We are constantly in contact when we have the chance, those changes that are being introduced through permanent conversations..." SA1, indicating his commitment to creating and operating within a favorable organizational climate (the milieu, the social system, and the culture), highlighting her social and academic commitment to the educational community, and the potential benefits that accrue from education, stated: stated:

I think I try to maintain a good relationship with the different members of the educational community. I've been a person who knows perfectly that our service is for the educational community, so that our students may be the center of our work, but considering the welfare of all of us and the benefit that the community should have.

SA2 refers to a set of values that school community fosters and preserves while implementing the curriculum innovation. These values are the key to moving forward and persevering good relationships in the pursue of effective communication during curriculum implementation. The participant affirmed, "Luggage means values, love, mercy, forgiveness, wisdom, as human beings we have enough richness to move forward and it does not surrender to nothing." SA1 put it in this manner, "We are trying to work within an organized environment that reflects peace, peaceful cohabitation." SA2 indicated that there are no boundaries for good communication, and that there is collective support for bilingual processes in the school. Despite the lack of sufficient knowledge of some of the educational community members about the nature, scope, and benefits of a bilingual initiative, all of them recognize the importance and viability of such an enterprise. SA2' words were:

I describe it as a pleasant communication because there are not stages that we cannot reach, everyone has access, and we are all willing to support this bilingual process in the school. Some of us are honest-we don't know this, but we know other things - so there is humility to recognize and to know how far we can go as a part of the bilingualism program in the institution.

ST2 summarized the common values within the school community explaining that the institution promotes pedagogical values, such as responsibility, respect, and honesty to make students aware of the need to use their knowledge "to be competent in society".

Communication is of major concern for SA1. She indicated that the dialogue between administrators is permanent to communicate and share the institution's achievements and innovation current innovation processes. She stated, "It is easy to pass that bridge when you are involved in the process..."

### **Research Question 3: How is curriculum innovation reflected in the school and classrooms as perceived by the three groups of stakeholders participating in the study?**

*Awareness of the significance of effectiveness.* A majority of participants declared that implementing an aligned curriculum means motivation for foreign language education and curriculum as well as a professional impulse to work and responsibilities for all key stakeholders. Change in this respect is an additional dimension of this theme. The data reflects key affects, such as students' positive reactions toward the use of English, the pleasure of using it in and out of the classroom, and the compatibility of the aligned curriculum with the institutional needs and goals. SA1 perceives a sense of change in the attitude of the school community due to the common use of the target language among the students outside the classroom. Interactions in English among the students bring about a bilingual environment in the school. She explained:

Based on bilingualism, we've seen that change in the attitude of the educational community; as we said previously the use of the language outside the classroom is perceived. During the breaks, you can hear students having English

conversations at different moments during the English classes among themselves.

A teacher of English describes curriculum implementation as an attitudinal connection. TOE1 noted, "It's an articulation because the school principal needs our positive attitude to work toward the implementation of the school curriculum." SA2 mentions that technology has made curriculum implementation pleasant, fearless, and attractive. This participant indicated that technology has become crucial to make the project a curricular reality in the institution. The participant stated, "English is really becoming something pleasant to the students, even more with the technological resources that we have in the school" Parents favor foreign language curriculum implementation despite common problems and obstacles. Although it is not easy to guarantee the continual buy-in of a few stakeholder members, perseverance and the right attitude can be effective tools for persuasion and eventual adherence. P2 noted, "Deserters may exist. I am very optimistic about perseverance, though." The participant's conclusion was, "I always see it from a positive perspective."

#### **Research Question 4: How do key stakeholders perceive curriculum innovation?**

*Ability to create transformational leadership.* A majority of research participants indicated that implementing an aligned curriculum means transcending conventional leadership roles, believing in our own self and the self of others, and transforming inertia into action. SA1 recognizes that management and leadership interact positively in the school when it comes to addressing curriculum implementation. As a school coordinator, this stakeholder group member acknowledges that curriculum innovation implementation requires both management and leadership skills. The participant-defined leadership in this way: "Leadership is the ability that a person has to control all his or her work...that has to be my role as a coordinator. Obviously, I must have leadership skills because I am the head of teachers..."

P1 identified a leader as someone who holds Christian values. The participant highlights the academic preparation of the people responsible for the aligned curriculum project. This groundwork facilitates its implementation. P1 declared: "Undoubtedly, SA2 comes from a good school in which she learned the Christian philosophy very well. Likewise, there are many teachers who have a good knowledge; for example, the school counselor, some teachers, and several teachers whose names I don't remember. Anyway, they are people who have a good orientation in that sense..."

Foreign language curriculum implementation for ST1 is about taking turns exercising leadership voluntarily. In this respect, ST1 explains that there is a need to believe in oneself and believe in the people around us. The participant understands that leadership is not a forced attitude. On the contrary, leaders and followers take turns in the pursuit of a common goal. In addition, true leaders should have full confidence in themselves and their followers in facing innovation to ensure success. She noted, "... Concerning the project implementation, we all have to be leaders in the project development. Today it's my turn, tomorrow is the others' turn, and so on."

During curriculum implementation, teachers of English see themselves as leaders. They seem to understand that success does not depend on an individual but a group of people who have decided to follow a leader and assume leadership positions when necessary using innovative and effective procedures, mainly in the classroom. TOE4 noted that "Yes, but I have to share with my peers because there is not just one leader. We are all leaders. We have to keep talking about new strategies, keep talking about new situations in different moments." TOE2, adhering to the previous comment, added, "In terms of a curriculum leader, I know that I have to change what doesn't work." TOE5 responded, "I think my role as a leader didn't change in

terms of the role you're playing. You're the teacher." TOE4 finally added, "I think I should continue being a guide for my students. I consider myself an example for them."

***Transcendence toward innovation.*** A majority of research participants stated that implementing an aligned curriculum relates to transcendence of innovation. Implementing an aligned curriculum is then the implicit search for socio-political and academic status and means adopting a lifelong perspective on education, and openness to continuous change.

SA2 noted, "I think it [English] makes the institution gain reliability. Also, our students can access higher education and the job market more easily. It helps those who have chances to continue studying as well." P2 clarified, "Well, it is not specifically the same language, but we are actually trying. This is at least one of the schools in Monteria that has been certificated ...," TOE1 suggests abandoning old meaningless practices to make students aware of how they can change their lives and achieve their goals using English as a tool because "English has a significant role..." This participant's suggestion seems to entice institutional authorities to strive to sustain the innovation project despite its potential constraints for implementation

Some stakeholders provide their definitions of innovation in an effort to recognize the results of the national bilingual project in the form of an aligned curriculum in practice. Innovation requires stakeholders' understanding of the need to bring about, adapt to change, and celebrate it, particularly curriculum change at the secondary level. SA2's statement articulated this perception: "I say, my God, how much we have progressed...!" ST1's definition was:

To innovate is to change, to transform, to modify, but the man does not change or transform, or modify, but feel the need, and the state, the government, the family, and society have felt the need that there should be innovations in the curricula of academic institutions...

***Composite description of the target phenomenon.*** In the previous five steps of data analysis, I adjusted the activities through iterative analysis. In this step, an overall description of the phenomenon of curriculum innovation through the experiences of all the 12 participants is presented. This composite description reflects a combination of textual and structural descriptions.

The lived experiences of key stakeholders while implementing an aligned foreign language curriculum suggests distinctive features in each of the three major stages of curriculum development – planning, implementation, and evaluation. Of particular importance is the consideration of both academic and political processes and requirements. Stakeholders take on the responsibility of planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum on the basis of national policies. Foreign language curriculum innovation evokes previous experiences and awakens interest in foreign language teaching. A new curriculum arouses teachers' previous teaching experience and makes them redefine their professional, curricular, and classroom practices, including the use of time. A close bond between school administrators, teachers, and parents permeates curriculum work from start to finish. Total involvement and role fulfillment marks stakeholders' participation and contribution to the implementation of a new curriculum. In this regard, an attitudinal connection and technology facilitate implementation and makes the process easier as experienced by school administrators and teachers, and parents. Parents' positive attitude and perseverance help in solving implementation issues and disagreements. For this members of the school community, working on an aligned curriculum implies dedicated and silent work, and the school community's full commitment. From the beginning, stakeholders engage in permanent communication to develop a pedagogical model, which



guides curriculum implementation in schools. A pedagogical model includes honesty, responsibility, religion, humility, and respect.

For this reason, all stakeholders struggle to fulfill students' need because as school community members, they know what is expected of them. Through discussion and dialogue, obstacles and weaknesses can be overcome in the institution, the school, and home. Despite strong feelings of uncertainty, fear, and confusion, stakeholders can turn obstacles into professional acceptance and enthusiastic engagement. Leadership differs from management. Leadership involves sharing and guiding, not only at the professional level but also at the academic and personal level. However, the various curriculum development moments make stakeholders share common responsibilities. Most community members account for institutional organization, course planning, teaching, student assessment, and student counseling. Curriculum innovation as an overarching goal envisages the collective satisfaction of school stakeholders who work on a project that benefits the entire school community. The school community receives institutional, academic, educational, and professional benefits from the implementation of the aligned foreign language curriculum. In this regard, teachers, school administrators, and parents described success as results, progress, development, improvement, change, and the breaking of a paradigm.

### **Discussion**

The findings did not support the potential success of foreign language curriculum innovation advocated by insiders. In contrast, the results showed that the insiders' perspectives might shed more light into the phenomenon under investigation as evidenced by the 12 research participants. The improvement of foreign language curriculum innovation in Colombia has traditionally been contingent on political transitions and particular administrations' programs (Bonilla Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2015; Gómez Sará, 2016; Ramírez-Lamus, 2015). The national bilingualism program, launched from 2004 to 2016, for example, has been changed by the latest two national governments on the premise that "they have had limited results" (Gómez Sará, 2017, p. 147). Nevertheless, the current study contradicts this assumption and found that besides short-term political programs, there is a need to include clear state policies, which should include new approaches and methods, the voice of key stakeholders, and effective curriculum implementation. As indicated by the discoveries, the research participants shared their lived experiences while implementing a curriculum innovation at the secondary level. In essence, school administrators, teachers, and parents' experiences primarily encompass political, professional, present and prospective motivations as well as a personal component.

The aligned curriculum represents the strategy through which school administrators reaffirm the government presence in both policy and curriculum implementation. Although governmental support is crucial to all aspects of policy implementation of a foreign language curriculum in particular requires the use innovative approaches in language teaching and learning as well as the active participation of primary stakeholders, such as school administrators, teachers, and parents (Jin, Wu, Alderson, & Song, 2017; Joseph, 2015; Lazdowski, 2015). The use of the Basic Standards for English in Colombia along with a learner-centered approach to language teaching implies increasing exposure to real-life topics, using a communicative methodology and appropriate assessment strategies (Marwan, 2017; Zhu & Shu, 2017). Regardless of numerous constraints, school administrators focus on substantial aspects of implementation to transmit a positive perception to other stakeholders, mainly teachers of English, subject teachers, and parents. Implicit in these curricular practices is the purpose of ensuring educational accountability to the central government concerning the overarching National bilingual program (Greany & Waterhouse, 2016; Sasaki, 2018).

Despite their commitment to change, the various stakeholders expressed a sense of uncertainty about implementing the aligned curriculum and take on that responsibility as a challenge. Implementing an aligned curriculum represents a challenge and uncertainty about the demands of the innovation for the school community (Wallace & Dosset, 1973; Hall & Lord, 2011). In line with this assumption, the key stakeholders in the institution started with third stage of concern proposed by Hall, Wallace, and Dosset; and Hall and Lord (as cited in Wang 2014) and gradually went from management to consequence, from consequence to collaboration, and finally to refocusing. This last stage leads to exploration, knowledge, and success through professional curiosity and intuition (Wang, 2014). Zhu and Shu (2017) found that external pressure, such as cognition and high-level responsibilities are critical to the implementation of a new curriculum. The study suggested that teachers and administrators should paid additional attention to these factors to avoid inconsistency when supporting the innovation. The case particularly relates to teachers of English who strive to put an innovation into practice at the various levels of an educational system (Gürsoy & Eken, 2018). This study, however, contradicts research that reported the lack of professional development and knowledge about the students, content overload, and teacher training in the implementation of curriculum innovation in English language teaching (Okoth, 2016; Serdyukov, 2017).

Most findings in the current study relate to stakeholders' professional reactions, performance, interaction, and general perspectives toward the implementation of an innovation. As regards a sense of ownership and lifelong learning, the majority of stakeholders agree that ownership suggests a sense of belonging, needs fulfillment, professional commitment, informed decision-making, and a sense of self-actualization. At the core of these manifestations are stakeholders' emotional and functional attachment to their institution, their colleagues, and their individual selves as human beings and members of a community and society (Jena & Pradhan, 2018). Their teamwork resulted in a productive synergy through their commitment to the project as well as a feeling of faithfulness to the organization (Dale & Fox, 2008). The sense of belongingness fosters interaction, collegiality, and leadership among the members of an educational community (Radford & Hellyer, 2016). My findings related to participants' reponses about lifelong learning echo research studies by Cendon (2018) and Yilmaz and Kaygin (2018). In an era of continual improvement, institutional stakeholders' committed participation in national endeavors can contribute to subsequent foreign language curriculum innovation in the country.

The research findings suggested that the various stakeholders communicated their views, assumptions, feelings, and professional fears about the implementation of a new curriculum. This discovery is in line with Brenner (2008) who suggests that the diverse members of a community reinforce shared values. Values in education are vital for the success of innovation. Nonetheless, Ferreira and Schulze (2014) reported the gap between policy-makers and teachers' perceptions of these values due to the educators' poor understanding of the issue. In the current study, the stakeholders declared that love, mercy, forgiveness, and wisdom move them as a learning community and strengthen professional relationships. Similarly, communication of goals, stakeholders' impressions, and expectations of the innovation assists in reducing resistance to change and professional concerns and frustrations (Dwyer, 2014). In this regard, the participants' attitudes, dispositions, and professional goals in curriculum implementation are critical to the success of current alternatives to improve the teaching of English not only at the secondary level but also all levels of the Colombian education system.

Most research participants endorsed the salience of an aligned curriculum as transformational leadership and its significance as both pragmatic educational outcomes and innovative endeavors... This finding is consistent with the literature on the issue, which indicates that curriculum implementation needs support from transformational leaders because

their idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration social capital (Chen, Zheng, Yang, & Bai, 2016).

An aligned foreign language curriculum moves stakeholders toward higher socio-political and academic status. School administrators' aspirations, for example, are to become leaders in foreign language education at the regional level. This leadership translates into political, economic, cultural, and technological advancement, which in turn is contingent on curriculum innovation and change. Thus, the government plays an essential role as suggested by the findings of the current study. The educational stakeholders tend to view foreign language education as an open door to a lifelong perspective on education at large in line with the country's societal goals. Openness to continuous innovation is a pervasive attitude among educational stakeholders. Continuous innovation as change, progress, creativity, and improvement consolidates school administrators', teachers', and parents' aspirational statuses, and overarching institutional goals.

Concerning the personal component, collective involvement from the outset reflects stakeholders' motivation for the innovative enterprise and acknowledgment of student achievement as a major reason for accepting innovation and striving for subsequent change. The findings revealed that each stakeholder group has a specific motivation for making innovation occur. School administrators, for example seek academic status sustainability and accreditation. Teachers of English pursue professional development and self-actualization. Subject teachers aim for self-actualization and immersion in a globalized world. Finally, parents strive for a more effective and productive education for their children. . These factors translate into the driving force behind work, performance, responsibilities, and expectations. Educational stakeholders engaged with foreign language innovation, strive to improve their performance, commit themselves to institutional duties, and hold heightened expectations for bilingual education.

### **Limitations**

Regardless of some characteristics that are characteristics of almost all studies (e.g., the sample chosen and the exclusion of potential participants), the specific circumstances to this study that proved to be limitations related to the conduct of the interviews, the lack research participants' the lack of familiarization with phenomenological interviewing, data overload, and participants' involvement in the research process.

A particular issue in the interviewing process was spacing. In this respect, the spacing among the three interviews suggested by the model employed did not ensure connection among them, and this lack of connection can jeopardize the quality of an entire interview in a series of three. Although the interviews in the study followed a specific schedule, it was impossible to follow it strictly. Another specific aspect was that the participants were not familiar with phenomenological interviewing. At the beginning, most of the interviewees evidenced specific preparation for the sessions and a tendency to answer according to technical declarative knowledge, and not based on their individual experiences. This did not help the interviewing process in terms of reflection and deep analysis of the issues under consideration. A third specific circumstance was data overload. In effect, the three interviews with each participant and a focus group discussion, resulted in a huge amount of data. Such an amount of data translated into an overwhelming process, which required time, patience, deep thinking, and experience for the sake of rigor, mainly for a novice researcher. Although the data analysis relied on solid theoretical assumptions and technical considerations, it was possible to think of unconscious omissions or exclusions during the entire process

Finally, keeping the research participants involved in the research process, namely the data collection phase and the data analysis phase, was difficult. Stakeholders' own responsibilities in schools prevented them from devoting time to additional activities.

The strengths of this study were more on the research participants' willingness to participate, their efforts to find time to be a part of the project, and their struggle for sincerity in providing useful and rich information. Although the sample size was limited, the participants all fit criteria. This study is an opportunity for them to explore new educational perspectives and to become change agents within national foreign language education initiatives. Concerning the researcher, he engaged in an intense and detailed process in order to conduct a thorough data analysis.

### **Conclusions**

The research findings suggested that the adoption and success of innovation greatly depends on political, institutional, and professional factors as well as individual stakeholder differences, and motivation as the major individual force. Most stakeholders perceive curriculum innovation as a necessary condition for institutional and professional development. Educational institutions set forth development when key stakeholders take on responsibility for student achievement, professional and personal growth, and the school community's social, political, cultural, and academic growth.

School administrators, teachers, and parents fulfill leadership and followership roles because they understand the importance of ownership and communication for the success of innovation attempts. Ownership moves human beings towards their professional and personal ideals, irrespective of what is necessary to ensure success. Effective communication allows leaders and followers in the target institution to harness not only resources but also its organizational dynamic (Tabak & Lebron, 2017). Through effective communication, community members ensure professional and personal relationships for the benefit of the entire organization and society at large. Effective communication among the members of the school community assists in minimizing current and potential conflicts, fears, frustrations, and professional concerns within a learning community.

The key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned foreign language curriculum in Colombian public institutions strive to demonstrate productive adherence to performance-based approaches to language teaching and learning. The key to success in this respect is results (student achievement). As an innovation in public schools, aligned foreign language curricula ensure political, social, academic, and professional status. The philosophy of lifelong learning guides institutional learning communities. Lifelong learning helps essential stakeholders to continue their professional development by keeping them prepared to face the challenges of the knowledge society (Tovkanets, 2018). Implementing an aligned foreign language curriculum requires key stakeholders to become lifelong learners to guarantee the success of future innovation attempts.

This study makes official governments aware of the need to formulate state policies rather than government guidelines to ensure sustainability of educational processes and potential student achievement. Also, the current inquiry entices researchers to use phenomenology as a research alternative to explore educational issues in general and foreign language curriculum in particular. Although other qualitative strategies could have helped to identify existing factors and processes relating to failure of innovation in Colombia, phenomenology was found to be the most appropriate strategy on the grounds of its emphasis on research participants' lived experiences.

## Suggestions for further Research

Curriculum innovation evolves to meet the needs of specific contexts worldwide. Therefore, more research on curriculum innovation in the Colombian context will be necessary to respond to new demands at the regional and local level. Further research on related topics will be evidence of commitment to national foreign languages policies and institutional short-term goals and institutional ideals. Additional research would include related topics, such as the intended curriculum versus the enacted curriculum and the tested curriculum, teacher leadership and parent leadership, school leaders' and curriculum leaders' response to followers' contribution, current implementation of learner centeredness, teachers' encouragement of lifelong learning in the classroom, and internal communication versus external communication. In the study, the stakeholders highlight the importance of what is current at the national and institutional level and what teachers currently do in the classroom in terms of official mandated requirements, approaches to language teaching and learning, and assessment. Research on this issue would shed light on the alignment between theory and practice (Glatthorn, 1999). Exploration of this type of alignment at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level in Colombia would help policy makers strive for a more unified foreign language curriculum at the national level.

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## **Appendix A: Interview and Focus Group Questions**

**Central Question:** What is the lived experience of key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned curriculum at Antonio Nariño High School in Montería, Colombia, South America?

**Research Question 1:** What factors influence the implementation of a new curriculum?

### **Questions for Administrators**

- a. What does the expression “foreign language curriculum” mean to you?
- b. How would you describe your personal decision-making that prompted your acceptance of a new foreign language curriculum?
- c. How would you describe your experience and perception concerning the implementation of an aligned foreign language curriculum in the institution?
- d. How does it feel to be an institutional leader, to represent the people who are introducing curriculum changes?

### **Questions for Teachers of English**

- a. How would you define this term “aligned curriculum”?
- b. How has teaching an aligned curriculum affected the day-to-day teachers’ educational practices?
- c. What factors do you believe influence the successful implementation of a new curriculum?
- d. Has the use of an aligned curriculum represented any challenges and rewards?

### **Questions for Subject Teachers**

- a. What does the expression “foreign language curriculum” mean to you?
- b. How would you describe decision-making processes that prompt acceptance of a new curriculum dynamics in educational institutions?

### **Questions for Parents**

- a. What does the expression “foreign language curriculum” mean to you?
- b. How would you describe decision-making processes that prompt cooperation in the implementation of a new curriculum?

**Research Question 2.** What processes influence the implementation of a new curriculum?

### **Questions for Administrators**

- a. How would you describe your relationship with the members of the school community?
- b. What factors do you perceive may hinder the implementation of a new curriculum?
- c. How does it feel to be the leader of a major curriculum process?
- d. As a leader, what do you believe is the most important aspect in managing a new curriculum process?

**Questions for Teachers of English**

- a. How would you describe an aligned curriculum in practice?
- b. How would you describe your relationship with your peers, parents, and administrators?
- c. How has your role as a curriculum leader changed in response to the new experience?
- d. As a leader, what do you believe is the most important aspect in managing a new curricular practice?

**Questions for Subject Teachers**

- a. What implications do you think implementing new curricula have for the school community?
- b. What do you think leaders can do to increase the community's acceptance of a new curriculum?

**Questions for Parents**

- a. What implications do you think implementing new curricula have for the school community?
- b. What do you think leaders can do to foster parental cooperation in successful curriculum implementation?

**Research Question 3.** How is curriculum innovation reflected in the school and classrooms as perceived by the three groups of stakeholders participating in the study?

**Questions for Administrators**

- a. How would you describe foreign language curriculum practices in the school?
- b. How do aligned curriculum practices influence the school environment?
- c. How do aligned curriculum practices influence the school community?

**Questions for Teachers of English**

- a. How would you describe foreign language curriculum practices in the classroom?
- b. How do aligned curriculum activities influence the classroom atmosphere?
- c. How do aligned curriculum practices influence the foreign language teaching community in the institution?

**Questions for Subject Teachers**

- a. How would you describe foreign language curriculum practices within the foreign language teaching community?
- b. How do aligned curriculum practices influence general curricular activities in the institution?

**Questions for Parents**

- a. How do parents perceive foreign language curriculum practices in the institution?
- b. How has aligned curriculum practices impacted the day-to-day roles of parents?

**Research Question 4.** How do key stakeholders perceive curriculum innovation?**Questions for Administrators**

- a. What does the expression “curriculum innovation” mean to you?
- b. How does curriculum innovation processes influence the entire curricular dynamics in the institution?

**Questions for Teachers of English**

- a. What does the expression “foreign language curriculum innovation” mean to you?
- b. How do foreign language curriculum innovation processes align with general curriculum processes?

**Questions for Subject Teachers**

- a. What does the expression “curriculum innovation” mean to you?
- b. How does curriculum innovation processes align with curriculum processes in other areas?

**Questions for Parents**

- a. What does the expression “curriculum innovation” mean to you?
- b. How does curriculum innovation processes align with parents’ association activities?

**Focus Group Questions for Teachers of English**

**Topics:** Innovation, curriculum innovation, aligned curriculum, and leadership.

1. Describe your professional decision-making that prompted the acceptance of an innovation curriculum process in the institution?
2. How have curriculum innovation processes affected the school curriculum?
3. How would you describe the communication process during in the last three years?
4. How has the aligned curriculum affected your classroom instructional practices?
5. How has curriculum innovation affected teacher attitudes in the institution?
6. What effect do you think the aligned curriculum has had on the students?
7. What perceptions have heard from administrators, subject teachers, and parents about the new curriculum?
8. How would you describe leadership roles within the foreign language teaching community?

**Author Note**

Pedro Aguas holds a Master’s degree in Education from Universidad del Norte, Colombia and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Phoenix, U.S. He currently works as full time professor at Universidad de Cordoba, Colombia. He also works as a researcher of the research group AHEAD at Universidad de Cordoba. Please direct correspondence to [aguaspedro@yahoo.com](mailto:aguaspedro@yahoo.com).

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