

Implementing a localized version of the CEFR-based curriculum in Israel

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This research addresses the implementation of the new Israeli English curriculum based on the CEFR and its introduction to lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and teacher-educators defined as 'expert' according to Israel's Professional Standards Document (Ministry of Education 2019). To create reciprocal study and interaction with the curriculum document while disseminating it to EFL teachers throughout the country, these experts were led to conduct a multilevel interactive discourse, characterized by the ripple effect metaphor within Professional Learning Communities (henceforth PLCs). Examination of this interactive discourse within the PLC framework reflects the incorporation of a unique application design that draws on EFL curriculum implementation as a national policy and concurrently provides insight into the delivery of the curriculum designed to elicit critical meditative conversations. While applying a PLC setting, we demonstrate collaborative dialogues and knowledge construction by participant 'experts' as they learn the curriculum through social interaction, activating conceptual curriculum language as a mediational tool and verbalizing or 'languaging' the meaning making process (Swain 2006; Watanabe and Swain 2007). Thus, we ascertain that the expert-teachers' knowledge of the curriculum is constructed within the PLC structure as they explore methods to mediate the curriculum. To capture the scope of the interaction and delineate this knowledge construction, we collected, transcribed and analyzed asynchronous logs written by each participant, and four collaboratively written (socially constructed) group logs which together form the source of the current qualitative study.

Keywords: CEFR, professional learning communities (PLC), social interaction, curriculum implementation, curriculum mediators

1 Introduction

Israel's education system has a centralized national English curriculum ensuring the uniformity and standardization of teaching objectives. K-12 English teachers are required to follow a structured framework, as reflected in high-stakes testing; what is not tested is not taught (Shohamy 2001). This testing culture affects how policy is interpreted and implemented by the teachers in class.

English is considered the first foreign language in Israel. However, being an extremely diverse society, language learning in school has different meanings for different groups. For example, Arabic-speaking students consider English as their third or fourth language as they learn spoken and then written Arabic, then Hebrew as the national language, and then, English.

Considering the centralized nature of the education system, implementation of the English curriculum was previously imposed as a top-down policy by the Ministry of Education that determined content and process to ensure fulfillment of goals in the transition to practice. Teachers' perceptions of the changes were not considered, and this often resulted in resistance to the changes.

The introduction of the CEFR-aligned curriculum into the Israeli context required a definite change in teachers' mindsets and required a deliberate long-term and multi-stage implementation plan.

The most obvious change was the use of CEFR terminology. Previously, teachers prepared or used materials organized according to general benchmarks. The CEFR curriculum relates to task-based activities in the form of Can Do descriptors offering a more student-centered approach and relating to learners as language users who must develop a sense of responsibility in developing their language skills. Additionally, as language users, students are encouraged to focus more on productive skills.

Furthermore, from the earliest stages of implementation, it was clear that the Backward Design Framework to lesson and unit planning was best suited to the new CEFR-aligned curriculum. This can be seen as another change from the previous curriculum, which did not singularly focus on one specific unit or lesson planning framework. Backward Design requires unit rather than lesson planning, and a need to decide on the desired outcome to allow tying teaching, learning and assessment into one cycle.

Other changes were the inclusion of mediation and interaction as language activities, and preparation of a list of most frequently used vocabulary (BANDS 1-4) according to the levels of progressions as outlined in the CEFR. Consequently, the learning of the curriculum required a less top-down process. Teachers were encouraged to be involved in the curriculum implementation stages and provide input and reflection while internalizing the new concepts. In addition, the construction, writing and implementation of the CEFR-aligned Israeli English curriculum document was different.

Once the draft document was published, the English Inspectorate began the task of turning policy into practice. Relaying the document as a draft was intentional and reflected a belief that the various stages of implementation required the direct input of active teachers to receive ongoing feedback on the appropriateness of the document for Israeli classrooms, suggesting a combined bottom-up and top-down approach to implementation. Thus, the first stage of dissemination required a professional development (PD) course designed to present the curriculum document to English lead-teachers and teacher-mentors. The purpose of the first eight-session course and the following 40 courses of 30 hours each was to allow the lead-teachers to develop a deep understanding of the rationale during the writing of the curriculum. During this stage, the lead-teachers and teacher-mentors in the first PD courses asked questions, which obliged the writing committee to critically evaluate and review the written document through the lens of the course participants and other teachers. Some of the challenges experienced were resistance to the changes, a lack of understanding of the new terminology, and a clash with terms from the previous English curriculum in relation to newly introduced ones. Many of the issues raised by the course participants and teachers led to some revisions to the document, decisions for further implementation and a clearer perception of the practical implications of the policy document.

2 Context of study

The first draft of the A1 and A2 levels of the CEFR-adapted curriculum was published for Israeli schools in 2020, and the introductory courses were followed by the start of the second stage of implementation. This second stage focused not on the 'what' of the new curriculum but rather on the 'how' of its application. The course was designed for experienced or influential EFL educators from schools around the country to allow for curriculum cascading and dissemination from them to other English teachers. The second stage aimed to focus more on how a smaller group of lead-teachers and teacher-mentors could develop their strategies to mediate the written document to teachers in the field.

At this time, many teachers had not yet completed a curriculum course or had done so but were still unable to adapt their teaching practices to the CEFR mindset. The English Inspectorate decided that the PLC framework was the most suitable and effective way to move to the second stage of implementation. The structure of PLCs encourages participants to collaborate as a community to consider their individual and collective roles within this process. These PD courses were aligned with the bottom-up approach of professional learning (DuFour 2004).

Based on the success and some comments of participants in the first course, such as *“Teacher colleges have to make sure their courses – especially methodology and practicum are aligned with the principles in*

the curriculum” (G1, T7) and “For preservice teacher training, this means that those devising program content and courses need to be aware of the principles and rationale of Curriculum 2020, and teach accordingly” (G1, T2), it was decided that the second and third courses of stage two would not just be for EFL lead-teachers and teacher-mentors but should also include college preservice teacher educators. Those chosen to participate were expected to have attended the introductory curriculum course or have a good understanding of the curriculum document. Teacher training instructors in colleges were invited to join the second and third round of these courses so that they could learn alongside teachers in the field. Thus, participants were encouraged to relate to the curriculum as a continuum from schools to colleges so as to create continuity and allow for long-term planning starting at the preservice level. 81 participants in total took part in three courses over three years. EFL school lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators were recommended and chosen by their English inspectors and college heads to take part in these three PLCs as ‘expert teachers,’ as defined in the Israeli Professional Standards Document (Ministry of Education 2019).

2.1 Sociocultural perspective of the study

This study is theoretically informed by Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development (1978) known as sociocultural theory (SCT). Although proposed to investigate children’s cognitive development, SCT has been shown to be relevant to L2 and FL (Foreign Language) teaching and learning (Frawley and Lantolf 1985; Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Williams 2013; Gánem Gutiérrez 2008, Gánem Gutiérrez 2013; Swain and Lapkin 1998, Swain and Lapkin 2000), which is the context of the participating lead-teachers and teacher-mentors described in this study.

Why is it useful to talk about curriculum implementation applying a PLC format from a Vygotskian theoretical perspective? How might Vygotsky’s theory be helpful in developing the understanding of best practices in disseminating a curriculum to a group of English teaching experts whose role is to mediate their learning to other English teachers? To answer these questions, it is essential to discuss the concept of mediation. Vygotsky (1978) saw language as a psychological tool, that is, a tool that mediates thinking. He asserted that the most important tool for developing and mediating thinking is language. Vygotsky saw language as a symbolic thinking tool through which we can explain the central concept of mediation. Mediation refers to how humans use actual or symbolic artifacts to assist both their physical and mental thinking activity while developing their understanding and concept-based knowledge of the world (Lantolf 2006: 69). The most important of these tools is language, as it is used to mediate mental activity and how the world is observed and understood. Language allows the exchange of information, talking and thinking about the present and connecting to events unrelated to the current time and space (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 201-202). Beyond these, language is used as the tool that mediates higher mental processes and can be described as ‘the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language’ (Swain 2006: 98). When language is used to mediate conceptualization and problem-solving, meaning-making, verbalization or languaging takes place.

Some L2 studies demonstrate how verbalization is considered a source of learning (Swain 2006; Watanabe and Swain 2007) and how L2 learners make use of language as they both develop their own thoughts and collaborate with others (e.g., Donato 1994; Lantolf and Appel 1994; Ohta 1995). When learners interact and collaborate to generate thoughts, they are constructing through interaction and applying a collaborative dialogue (Swain and Lapkin 1998), that is also used to explain development and learning (Swain and Watanabe 2013).

In the current study, construction of curriculum knowledge and languaging were designed to enable curriculum understanding manifested by group logs written by colleagues and peers.

2.2 Relaying the English curriculum through PLCs

The PLC can be defined as any group with a common interest in education (DuFour 2004). PLCs have been identified as an effective setting for sustaining learning and for developing teachers' motivation, skill, positive learning, organizational conditions and culture within an infrastructure of support (Stoll et al. 2006: 221). PLCs are a world-wide initiative with broad and varied foci such as "a deep sense of moral purpose, knowledge of the change process, capacity to develop relationships across diverse individuals and groups, fostering knowledge creation and sharing, and the ability to engage with others in coherence making amidst multiple innovations" (Fullan 2003: 7). PLC features include: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and enhanced group and individual learning (Stoll et al. 2006). A rich body of research has investigated PLCs as professional teacher learning (e.g., Stoll et al. 2006; Fullan 2003), however, there is still a need to scrutinize the process of participants' knowledge construction within the PLC. This study will look at how EFL lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators construct knowledge during a PLC.

2.3 Social construction of knowledge in PLCs

Scardamalia and Bereiter (2003) define knowledge construction as, "the production and continual improvement of ideas of value to a community, through means that increase the likelihood that what the community accomplishes will be greater than the sum of individual contributions and part of broader cultural efforts" (1371). This definition aligns with two key features of PLCs, interactivity and collaboration. Knowledge construction is a collaborative effort that relies on the interaction of the members of the community through discourse or professional conversations (Kim and Wilkinson 2019; Lefstein et al. 2020). The interaction of the members of the community is essential to the learning processes (Popp and Goldman 2016) within the PLC.

Therefore, observing the interaction and knowledge construction within a PLC of EFL experts affords an additional layer to this research.

2.4 PLCs for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

Considering the importance of EFL instruction in certain countries, there is surprisingly little research on EFL and PLCs (Pang 2019). Borg (2006) relates to English language teachers as having distinctive characteristics from other subject-matter teachers. Teachers of EFL are committed to the learning of the English language, not only the pedagogy of teaching. Consequently, it is necessary to investigate foreign language teachers separately as a distinct group in addition to the PD courses they participate in. In their research on subject-matter PLCs for English Language Arts teachers, Popp and Goldman (2016) suggest the importance of expanding studies exclusively on knowledge building in a subject-matter focused PLC.

The focus of this study on EFL lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators defined as experts in EFL, broadens our understanding of knowledge construction related to EFL teaching in a PLC setting.

The aim of lead-teachers and teacher-mentors is to make the practitioner's knowledge visible for the novice and experienced teacher and provide the means by which such knowledge can be understood and subsequently implemented in the classroom (Becher and Orland-Barak 2016).

Tillema and Orland-Barak (2006) researched collaborative knowledge construction in professional conversations. They determined that activity in context, particularly collaborative inquiry, contributes to knowledge construction. The mentors who participated in that study stated that engaging in professional conversations with their colleagues was a necessary component of teamwork. Therefore, activity and participation, supported by a framework of conversation contributed firstly, to the success of the PLC by building a sense of community, and secondly, to the construction of curriculum knowledge (Tillema and Orland-Barak 2006).

3. Research questions

For this study, two research questions were posed:

1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of the Israeli lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators regarding their ability to mediate the implementation of the CEFR-based curriculum?
2. How do EFL lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators construct their knowledge of the CEFR-based curriculum in a PLC?

4 Methodology

This longitudinal study conducted a qualitative in-depth case study analysis of three PLCs. Researching the process of knowledge construction using more than one data collection type allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the process (van Schaik et al. 2019). Two sources of rich qualitative data were collected through: 1) written personal logs; and 2) group logs, and were analyzed through content analysis in terms of themes and codes.

4.1 Participants

The participants were 81 lead teachers, teacher-mentors and teacher-training instructors who participated in three PLCs from 2020-2022 (see Table 1). They were chosen by the English Inspectorate with the aim of improving, developing and enhancing teachers' mediation skills with structured guidance and opportunities to build a specially designed knowledge base (Ambrosetti 2014; Feiman-Nemser 2001; Genç 2016). All 81 teachers were elementary, junior high and high school English teachers and or preservice teacher educators from around Israel.

In the first course, 30 lead-teachers and teacher-mentors participated. In the second course, 13 of the 24 participants (54%) were preservice teacher educators. This was the first time that lead-teachers, teacher-mentors and college instructors were brought together in a course initiated by the English inspectorate of the Ministry of Education. The third course also aimed for this balance and 15 of the 27 (56%) participants were preservice teacher educators (see Table 1). The belief of the English Inspectorate was that in order to promote the continuum from the school system to the colleges, the college teacher educators need to be partners throughout the process. The connections, discussions and artifacts that came out of this collaboration were informative and granted a better understanding of the process of curriculum implementation over four years.

Table 1. Number of participants in each group as lead teachers, teacher-mentors and teacher-training instructors

3 PLCs	Teacher-training instructors	Lead-teachers and teacher-mentors
Group 1, 30 participants	Group 2, 13 participants	Group 1, 30 participants
Group 2, 24 participants	Group 3, 15 participants	Group 2, 11 participants
Group 3, 27 participants		Group 3, 12 participants
81 total participants	28 total Teacher-training instructors	53 total lead teachers and teacher-mentors

4.2 Data collection, analysis and research ethics

Within these three PLCs, all the participants documented their learning in four individual logs (Appendix A) and then in groups of three or four, they wrote group logs (Appendix B) throughout the entire process.

The aim of the individual log was to encourage the participants to independently consider four aspects of curriculum implementation: (a) mediation, (b) backward design, (c) recorded lessons as representations of practice, and (d) simulations (live case studies that were acted out and debriefed, and then analyzed by the participants). After writing each individual log, the participants worked in groups to write a policy document on the same aspects of curriculum implementation dealt with in the individual logs. Each PLC was planned to allow all participants to discuss each aspect of implementation mentioned above in an online zoom session, then each wrote the individual log as an asynchronous task followed by the group log, which allowed for the participants to discuss their individual logs in their groups and write the group policy document together.

Validity of the data was reached by including a large database that covered all teacher-mentor participants. In fact, the study sample involved 81 participants and thus provided a sense of saturation to offer a level of coverage that made it possible to draw meaningful conclusions from the qualitative data (Dushnik and Tzabar Ben Yehoshua 2001). Additionally, confidence in the procedures was achieved by gathering data through sampling from three groups; thus, covering a wide range of research participants.

Reliability was addressed by applying rater-judgment to examine criteria and then analyze the log entries. They were analyzed and coded by the researchers for emerging themes using a grounded theory approach. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define four requirements for judging a good grounded theory: (a) it should fit the phenomenon deriving from varied data that is allied with the general field of knowledge; (b) it should provide understanding and clarity; (c) despite the data being comprehensive, it should provide a general view while including extensive variation that is abstract enough to be applicable to different contexts; finally, (d) it should state the conditions under which the theory applies, describing a reasonable basis for action.

Thus, in the current study, two rounds of analysis were conducted to fully understand the mediation sessions through the log entries. The first round was devoted to identifying recurring patterns and categories. This was done by each researcher independently and then discussed and compared while themes were identified and then categorized as they emerged using color-coding to highlight and manage log entries. Themes were then reviewed by an independent reader to determine whether they completely fit the data arising from the discourse in the implementation sessions. A comparison of the observations of both the researcher and the independent observer regarding the categories indicated a consistency rate of 90% and 92%, respectively.

It should be noted that the researchers took a central role as instructors of the PLCs. To eliminate possible sources of bias which might originate from the researchers' reasons for conducting the study, the motivating factors were viewed constructively and as a source of incentive leading to the desire to conduct research. This connects to Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990: 42) who refer to the "theoretical sensitivity" of the researcher.

5 Findings

Seven themes were identified in the individual and group logs (see Table 1). Four themes related to RQ1 and three to RQ2. The first three focused on the perceptions and attitudes of the lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators regarding their ability to mediate the implementation of the CEFR-based curriculum in the local context. The other three themes related to RQ2, which focused on how EFL lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators construct their knowledge of the CEFR in a PLC.

Research Question One: Perceptions and attitudes

The first theme appears in the first set of individual logs and relates to the participants' confidence in understanding the curriculum document. It is worth initially considering the participants' feeling of confidence in understanding the curriculum and only then the research question which presents the second recurring theme, the reported ability of the participants to mediate the curriculum. After separately addressing these themes, a third theme emerged which demonstrated a connection between the participants' understanding of the document and their ability to mediate it. The fourth theme discusses the participants' reporting of the teachers' resistance to the new curriculum.

60 of the 81 (74%) participants in the three PLCs described their feeling as confident when talking about their understanding of the curriculum document.

"Generally, I think I have a good grasp of the rationale and principles of the curriculum." (G1, T21)

"I believe that I have a good understanding of the 2020 Curriculum document." (G2, T1)

"I feel that I understand the curriculum quite well. I use it when preparing lessons and assessment tasks together with teachers and I actively teach the curriculum in the teachers' college where I work." (G3, T17)

In contrast, the remaining 27 described varying degrees of understanding and confidence. Their comments presented the spectrum and continuum of understanding with the addition of phrases which demonstrated some level of uncertainty.

"I feel I have some understanding of the new curriculum, but for me I feel I need more work to really understand and work with it." (G1, T6)

"I am not very familiar with the curriculum in depth." (G2, T8)

"While I understand the general concepts, I haven't fully "internalized" them as of yet." (G3, T4)

"I understand the curriculum well. However, there are many elements I don't know." (G1, T20)

*"I am familiar with and thoroughly understand **most** of its elements. So, what is the reason for my lack of confidence?" (G1, T19)*

"I am familiar with the new curriculum but definitely do not feel at the expert level yet." (G2, T21)

It is then interesting to see if the same participants described a feeling of confidence to mediate the curriculum to others. 51 (63%) participants reported feeling completely confident about mediating the curriculum. This is eight less than those who reported they were confident with their understanding of the document. This seems to show that there is a correlation between being confident in their understanding of the curriculum and being able to mediate it to others.

"I feel well versed in the 2020 Curriculum and feel moderately confident in mediating it to others." (G1, T11)

"Generally, I think I have a good grasp of the rationale and principles of the curriculum. I've now perfected a way of explaining the rationale and the relationship between the four skills and the four activities." (G1, T10)

"Now that I feel more confident with the curriculum, it is easier to mediate it." (G2, T2)

As highlighted by the previous comments of participants who feel confident about their understanding of the document and the following comments of participants who do not feel confident about

their understanding of the curriculum, all these participants connect their feeling of confidence in understanding the document to their ability to mediate it to others.

"I don't feel confident that I can explain all the information ... I need to be more knowledgeable about everything. I have been trying to explain the curriculum with partial success." (G1, T22)

"I am not very familiar with the curriculum in depth ... I will be able to mediate it in a more precise way only after I understand it completely." (G2, T8)

"I feel that I am not familiar enough with it in order to teach the pertinent information to my colleagues at school." (G3, T4)

An additional theme that arose from the participants' perception of their ability to mediate the curriculum was the resistance of the teachers to whom they were mediating it. In the first course, 14 of the 30 participants, 47% mentioned the resistance of teachers to the introduction of the new curriculum. T18 said *"a teacher could not see the difference between the old and the new curriculum except the wording ... The teachers don't understand. There was a lot of resistance. A feeling of continuous change."* (G1, T18) and T30 claimed; *"Teachers are sometimes resistant to change and automatically feel it will give them 'extra work'."* (G1, T30)

However, with the occurrence of each course the number of participants who related to the resistance of the teachers decreased. In the second course, 38% wrote about teacher resistance and in the third course, only 30% mentioned resistance in their individual logs.

Research Question Two: How teachers construct their knowledge

The next three themes relate to RQ2 dealing with how EFL lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators construct their knowledge of the CEFR in a PLC. The individual logs at the beginning of the course were coded and compared with the final individual reflections written at the end of the course and common themes were found in the written discourse.

In the final reflection, participants reported an improved understanding of the document and an increased feeling of confidence to mediate the curriculum document to others. At the beginning of the courses, 51 out of 81 (63%) participants reported feeling confident to do so, but at the end of the course 67 out of the 81 (83%) participants stated that they felt more confident about the mediation. This is an increase of 20% of the percentage of participants reporting their feeling of confidence to mediate the curriculum. If more teachers reported a better understanding of the document and enhanced confidence to mediate it to other teachers, this is evidence that throughout the course they actively constructed knowledge.

"My current perception of my ability to mediate the curriculum to teachers has changed. I feel that I better understand the curriculum, its components, rationale and 'spirit', and I am able to convey the message to other teachers." (G1, T19)

"I am amazed at my professional growth ... I learned extensively about the mindset ... and accumulated ideas for improving my teaching for my preservice students." (G2, T10)

"I feel more confident than before this PLC. I feel that I should still read some parts over again to inculcate the message they convey, but all in all I feel I now have the necessary knowledge to mediate and advise my student teachers." (G3, T16)

Analysis of the individual reflections yielded two dominant themes, which may explain the participants' increased self-efficacy regarding their understanding and ability to mediate the curriculum. The first relates to the framework of the course as a PLC, which encouraged different levels of interaction. The

following quotes relate to the benefits of working within the PLC framework; T19 said, *“The course was given in the form of a PLC with meaningful and interesting professional development. It was an excellent demonstration of a PLC which was run effectively and efficiently.”* (G1, T19). T11 said, *“it also gave me a sense of a professional community ... all along I felt like a ‘lone soldier in the field’.”* (G1, T11)

The second theme relates to the writing of four individual logs and four group logs. 67 out of 81 participants (83%) claimed that their enhanced ability to mediate the curriculum occurred due to the bottom-up process of writing the individual logs and then the social interaction in the group logs. This is the majority of the participants.

“I feel that this method of working with individual and then group logs was very empowering.” (G3, T24)

“The work on the group and individual logs was quite a unique experience for me. It was the first time that almost an entire course was designed around the logs which, in turn, forced us to constantly reflect and use meta-cognition on the work processes needed for mediating.” (G2, T5)

“Much of my learning came about by working with three experts in the field who each work in completely different settings.” (G3, T27)

“I found the Curriculum course last year to be quite theoretical and I gave my course not feeling very confident about the subject. [...] I am happy to say that my initial impression of what this course would offer compared to how I felt at the end was vastly different. I initially thought that this would be another theoretical based course and how would I be able to apply this when mediating the “can-do” statements. I learnt so much from the other participants in the group and enjoyed the way the course was built – personal logs and then group logs. I found it very empowering.” (G3, T27)

These quotes emphasize the participants’ feeling that while writing the individual and group logs, they underwent a process that allowed them to develop and improve their knowledge base individually and then as a group. The social interaction in their groups was particularly beneficial for knowledge construction.

83% of the participants felt that the course made a difference to their ability to mediate. The preservice teacher educators, however, referred to an additional benefit, the social interaction was very important for the transition of preservice teachers to the school system. It was an opportunity for these two often separate contexts of preservice and in-service instructors to connect and interact. *“The sessions highlighted the importance of joining forces in all layers of education in Israel to benefit all stakeholders.”* (G2, T22)

6 Discussion

The individual and group reflective logs provided rich data with multiple recurring themes to answer the research questions. The perceptions and attitudes of the lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators regarding their ability to mediate the implementation of the CEFR-based curriculum in the local context could be seen in the correlation found in the data between the participants’ understanding of the curriculum document and their confidence to mediate it to others.

The additional theme of resistance is perceived by the participants throughout the courses, but the data shows a decrease in the participants reporting of the resistance. This, too, can be linked to the increase in the number of participants at the end of the course who reported an enhanced ability to mediate the curriculum (63% to 83%). This could indicate that when expert teachers feel more confident about their knowledge base, they are better able to mediate that knowledge to others, and thus, it results in a decrease in resistance from the mediatees, even if it requires a revised mindset.

Another reason for less resistance could be the introduction of materials and course books approved

by the Ministry of Education which were aligned with the mindset and concepts of the CEFR. The availability of example materials and model units could be a contributing factor to the continuum from policy to practice. However, further research is required to comprehend and explain the reason for the participants' decreased reports of resistance.

The second research question relating to the participants' changed perception of their ability to mediate the curriculum can be answered by addressing the remaining themes. A 20% increase of EFL lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators who reported feeling confident or more confident to mediate the curriculum at the end of the PLC is evidence that knowledge construction of the CEFR in general and the curriculum documents in particular had occurred. Many participants (80%) recognize the importance of the bottom-up framework of the PLC which allowed for collaboration and sharing of ideas. Vygotsky's theory was helpful in explaining the process. Within the framework of the PLC, language was used as the tool that mediates the higher mental processes (Lapkin et al. 2010), and thus was referred to as a mediational tool expressed as verbalization or languaging, and could be described as "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain 2006: 98). When the participants interacted and collaborated during the PLC, they were constructing knowledge through interaction and applying a collaborative dialogue (Swain and Lapkin 1998).

The additional theme highlighted by the participants' comments identifies the format of writing the individual and group logs as the contributing factor to the co-construction of their learning of the new curriculum. By first focusing on the individual perspective of a concept in the individual log and only then discussing the same concept in groups while writing a group log, the participants could initially clarify their personal beliefs and then construct a deeper and broader understanding informed by the perspectives of all group members. Furthermore, the unique integration of teacher-mentors facilitated a dialogue between two often-disconnected preservice and in-service contexts. Hence, the EFL lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators collaborated and shared their difficulties and dilemmas.

7 Conclusion

This study explored a model of implementing a localized CEFR curriculum in two stages, inspired by a social-cultural perspective in planning, design and activation. The curriculum implementation process can be seen in Figure 1. The ripple effect was clearly portrayed in the different stages of implementation. In the middle of the vortex, curriculum document policy was adapted from the CEFR. In the first year, the document was introduced to the field with PD courses as seen by the light blue arrows. The participants in these courses grappled with the terminology and the mindset while changing their thinking about practice, as they compared the old to the new. The second stage of implementation required a different approach to PD. To this end, it was found useful to talk about curriculum implementation applying a PLC format (dark arrows) from Vygotsky's theoretical perspective. Moreover, it was found effective for grappling the meaning of the curriculum with a group of English lead-teachers and teacher-mentors whose role was to mediate their learning to other English teachers by adopting the concept of mediation, especially to EFL language educators. The PLC framework was adopted because it allowed the participants to collaborate and interact to develop their ability to mediate the curriculum to themselves and to others. The aim is clearly to reach the practice level whereby the curriculum is implemented by teachers in the field. The ripple effect metaphor is the most apt, considering the desire to disseminate the curriculum to a broader audience and to ensure that it becomes more than a policy document.

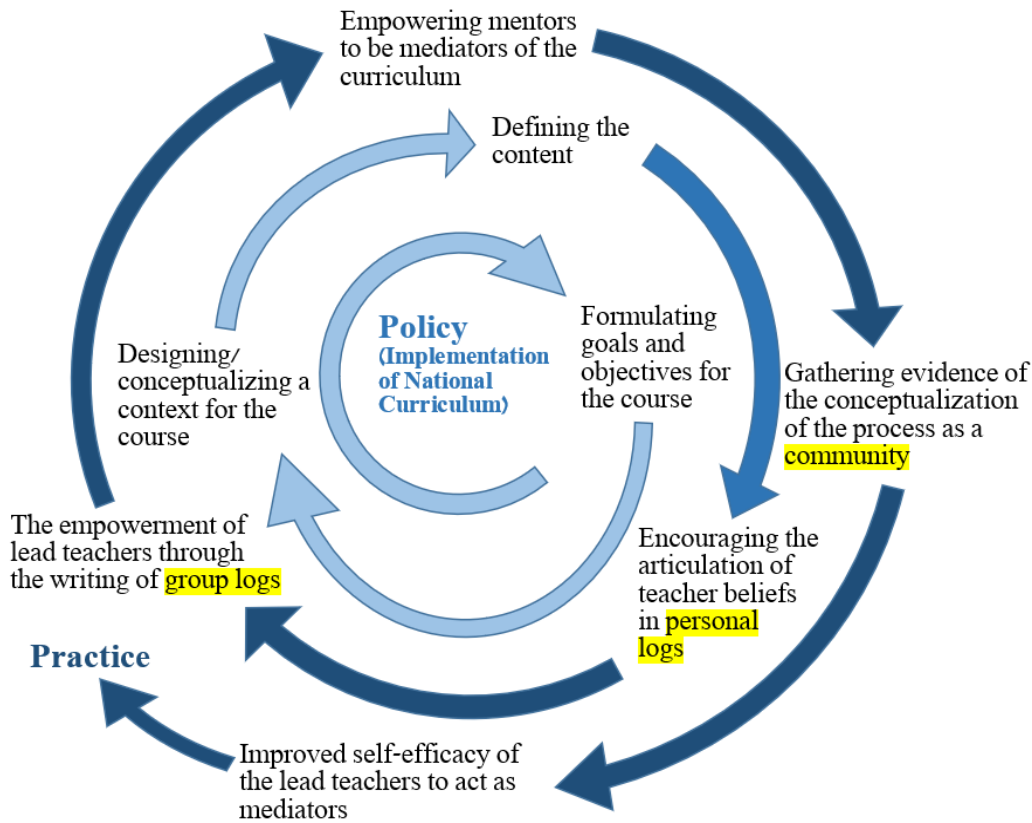


Figure 1. Curriculum implementation process

8 Further research

Based on the results of this study, a third stage of implementation is required in addition to further research. From this study, we cannot equivocally claim that the principles of the CEFR have influenced actual teaching practices. Based on the individual logs, the mindset of the expert teachers and the teachers they work with has, indeed, shifted. However, this is not evidence of a direct impact on teachers' planning and students' learning in the classroom. Lead teachers, teacher-mentors and preservice teacher educators now need to facilitate courses with teachers in the field to prepare materials according to the guidelines of the CEFR-based curriculum. Such a process will allow practical discussions about classroom teaching and will empower these experts to guide the teachers to adapt current materials in addition to preparing materials suited to their individual classroom context. The case study protocol could be a suitable framework for Stage 3 implementation. There is a need to observe the classroom setting in order to evaluate the ripple effect and that policy is disseminated to practice.

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10 Biographies

Dr Tziona Levi is the director of the department of languages and the chief inspector for English Language Education at the Ministry of Education in Israel. Her fields of interest include applying dynamic assessment (DA) to various EFL teaching and learning contexts and promoting plurilingual/pluricultural agendas in school. She has established 68 teacher Learning Communities nationwide to promote professional development among English language teachers and English oral proficiency in schools. She headed the process of rewriting the Israeli national English curriculum to be aligned with international standards, mainly the CEFR.

Simone Duval is the District English Superintendent for Jerusalem, Israel. She has 29 years of experience as an EFL school teacher in Israel. She is a teacher trainer in Education courses and has developed online courses for teachers and students. In addition, she coordinated the implementation of the revised Israeli English curriculum.

Appendix A

Individual Logs

LOG 1 Curriculum Implementation

Name:	Date:
Questions	My log entry
<p>Write up to 100 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How well do I understand the curriculum? 2. What actions should I take to enhance my understanding of the curriculum and my ability to mediate it to others? 3. What are my strengths in this area? 	
<p>Write up to 100 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider all of the interactions you have had with teachers or student-teachers regarding implementation of the new curriculum. Describe two of the interactions. 2. Give one example of how you mediated the mindset of the new curriculum during these interactions. 3. If you have not yet interacted with teachers or student-teachers, suggest how this should be done within your professional context. 	

LOG 2 Backward Design

Name:	Date:
Questions	My log entry
<p>Write 50-100 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How well do I understand the concept and application of backward design? 2. What actions should I take to empower teachers to implement backward design in their planning? 	
<p>Write up to 200 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask the teachers in your course to prepare the backward design template. Explain with examples. If you are not teaching a course, give examples from your experience working with teachers in the field. 2. What were the issues you encountered with the teachers and how were they solved? 3. What were the difficulties that arose during the teachers' process? 4. What would you do differently next time to ease the process? 	

LOG 3 Ministry Resources

Name:	Date:
Questions	My log entry
<p>Write 100-150 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you know about the Ministry of Education's recorded lessons and teaching units and the English Inspectorate's emphasis on them as a teaching resource other than the online teaching during the COVID 19 era? 2. To what extent do you see these resources as a tool for the continued implementation of the curriculum? 	
<p>Write up to 200 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain how you would or did incorporate these resources into your courses or counseling. 2. Give specific examples of how you think this rich and extensive resource can be used to enhance the noticing of the teachers with regards to the implementation of the Curriculum. 	

LOG 4 Simulations

Name:	Date:
Questions	My log entry
<p>Write 100-150 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe an experience you have had in a simulation center or session as a participant or observer. 2. How did you feel and what was your take away? Explain with specific examples. 	
<p>Write up to 200 words.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a counselor or PLC leader what considerations did you take into account when you prepared the session? (If you have never taken a group, discuss considerations you feel need to be addressed.) 2. Possible considerations; logistics, scenarios, expected outcomes. 3. Describe the feedback session you had with your group after the simulation (If you have not taken a group then answer this question instead of the one above; Which questions would you ask the group in a post simulation session.) 4. What lessons were learned by the participants and you as the leader? (Or define the role of the PLC leader or course instructor that takes a group to a simulation center or simulation session.) 	

Appendix B

Group Logs

LOG 1A

In groups of 5 share your individual LOGS with the members of your group.

You are now the member of an advisory committee to the English Inspectorate.

They have asked your group to suggest a framework for the effective implementation of the new curriculum.

Committee members: _____

What is the issue? (Describe the need for an effective framework for the implementation of the revised curriculum in 5 sentences).

This framework takes into consideration:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Describe your suggested framework for the implementation of the revised English curriculum in Israel. Outline the steps and relate to the various stakeholders. (Write 200-250 words.)

LOG 2A

In your groups, share personal LOG 2 with the members of your group.

In your advisory committee, discuss the following.

Suggest a framework for the effective implementation of backward design as a tool to plan towards achieving learning outcomes (can do statements).

Committee members: _____

1. Explain why backward design planning is an important framework for teachers to understand and adopt within the new curriculum and especially now during this time of blended teaching and learning.
2. Suggest the stages (smaller units) of how you would present the backward design framework to the teachers. (Up to 4 stages)
3. These suggestions take into consideration: (For example; synchronous, asynchronous counseling, teacher resistance, preservice/ in-service training etc.)

LOG 3A

In your groups, share personal LOG 3 with the members of your group.

In your advisory committee, discuss the following.

Suggest a framework for the practical use of the filmed lessons as a tool to improve the teachers' understanding of the curriculum.

Committee members: _____

Explain how you would present the filmed lessons to the teachers. Which guiding or high leverage questions connected to the language activities would you ask the teachers?

- Suggest the stages (smaller units) of how you would present the filmed lessons to the teachers. (Up to 4 stages)
- These suggestions take into consideration: (For example; preparing a viewing tool)

LOG 4A

In your groups, share personal LOG 4 with the members of your group.

In your advisory committee, discuss the following.

Suggest a framework for the practical use of the simulations as a tool to improve the teachers' understanding of the curriculum and more effective teaching practices.

Committee members: _____

- Define the aims and desired outcomes of taking a group to a simulation center.
- Considering the enormous expense of simulations, your committee has been asked to suggest an alternative framework that will achieve the same or similar aims.
- Even in the post Corona era, distance learning will be a viable alternative in many situations. Compare and contrast the online simulation to the conventional face to face simulations at the center.
- Write a possible scenario that can be useful for a simulation with your teachers on implementing the curriculum.

Guidelines for writing a scenario:

4. Who are the people involved in the scenario? (teachers, coordinator, principal, parent, ...)
5. What is the topic of the scenario? (Implementation of backward design/ resistance, ...)
6. Describe the scenario and include the point of view of the individuals in the scenario and a difficulty or conflict.
7. Consider the desired outcome of the scenario.