

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

PRESENTER: SUNITA COLAI

A QUALITATIVE TRANSCENDENTAL  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON EDUCATORS'  
EXPERIENCES IMPLEMENTING THE CARIBBEAN  
SECONDARY EXAMINATION CERTIFICATE (CSEC)  
REVISED ENGLISH A SYLLABUS.

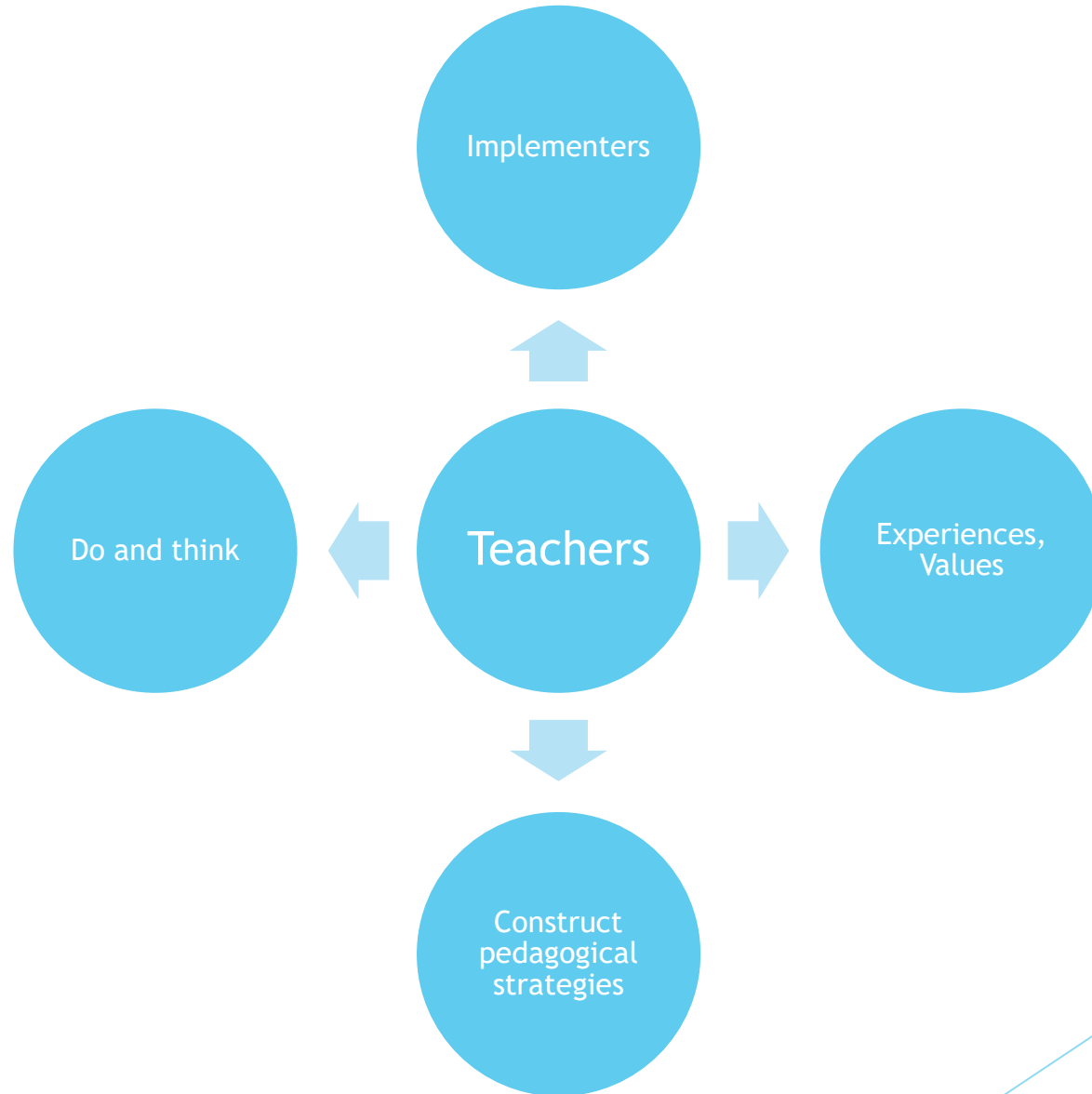
▶ “Neglect of the phenomenology of change – that is, how 50 people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended – is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms ”(Fullan, 2016, p. 4).



## Background:

- ▶ In Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) English A examination is compulsory for all form four and five students, US Grades 10 and 11) and UK (key stage 4). At the form four and five level, there is no national curriculum in use and teachers utilize the CXC examination syllabus for English Language instruction at the said levels.
- ▶ The exam is used to obtain evidence and information concerning students' knowledge, skills and abilities in English language. Students' performance in carrying out language tasks in this examination is used as evidence of their degree of proficiency in the language. In Trinidad and Tobago, language testing plays a very important role; since it affects the lives of students, we may consider those to be high-stakes tests (Crawford & Impara, 2001).
- ▶ Therefore, how this syllabus is implemented is of grave importance since it is such a high stakes exam.

# Background: The Research Issue



# Background: The Research Issue

- ▶ In most cases curriculum implementation is not given the attention it deserves. Thus, the primary focus is on policy development and planning with little emphasis on implementation (Fullan, 2016; Markee, 1997; Orafi, 2008).
- ▶ James (2008) agrees with the preceding critique and highlights the situation in Trinidad and Tobago, “the policy makers are not providing the requisite resources, and support to implement policies effectively. Often teachers are not trained to implement the new curricula, and this is affecting teaching and learning in the classrooms” (p. 8).

# Statement of the Problem

- ▶ Change is chaotic and the demands that it makes on teachers are abundant, thus their roles should not be ignored. (Fullan, 2016). Teachers are seen as the grass root implementers essential to implementing the curriculum change. Emphasis then, must be placed on the people implementing change (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). Yet, curriculum change is oftentimes implemented at schools without establishing opportunities for meaningful teacher input and feedback.
- ▶ The CSEC English A syllabus sought change in English Language teaching in the Caribbean. Teachers were now expected to incorporate an integrated approach to teaching, introduce a new mode of language (reflection), monitor group dynamics for effective communication across different levels namely intra-personal and interpersonal groups, satisfy SBA mandates inclusive of correction and feedback, teach new content and create new resources. Unfortunately, not enough is known about how these new roles affected teachers' experiences and their pedagogy.
- ▶ Additionally, only a relatively small number of studies (Davis, 2011) have looked at teachers' experiences with an innovation in a local context and none has looked at how teachers experienced change in relation to CSEC English A syllabus. Therefore, this research will fill this gap by presenting research on implementation experiences faced by teachers of English in Trinidad, thereby, bringing to the forefront this problematic issue of implementation.

# Significance of the Study

- ▶ This study is significant because it gives a voice to the teachers who are often left out in the process of educational reform and are often seen as “powerless pawns in a system that treats them either with indifference or disdain” (Dombart, 1985, p.71).
- ▶ The teachers’ voice can provide information that can be used to also inform strategies that administrators can utilize to assist in the implementation of the change.

# Purpose of the Study

- ▶ The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive/ transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the essence of English teachers' lived experiences with the implementation of the revised CSEC English A syllabus.



# Literature Review

- ▶ Fullan (2001) conceptualizes curriculum implementation as entailing three possible types of objective change: change in materials, change in practice and change in values and or beliefs. Ornstein and Hunkins, (2004) add that implementation requires: restructuring and replacement, adjusting personal habits, ways of behaving, learning spaces and existing curricula and schedules, shifting from the current program to the new program, time and training and support.
- ▶ An innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption, even if it has been in existence for some time (Rogers, 1995). Thus, with innovations there is the perception of newness and planned. It is planned with the understanding that it would be a more effective approach than what obtained prior to the innovation. Therefore, the critical factor underlying any innovation is that it is supposed to be more effective than its predecessor.
- ▶ In this study the teaching of English Language is guided by the CSEC syllabus since there is no curriculum. Thus, in this case, the syllabus prescribes the content and the pedagogical strategies. The syllabus then that is used “in classrooms is the curriculum” (Richards, 1998, p. 125). Therefore, how the syllabus is implemented becomes highly important to success in the subject.

# Literature Review: Studies

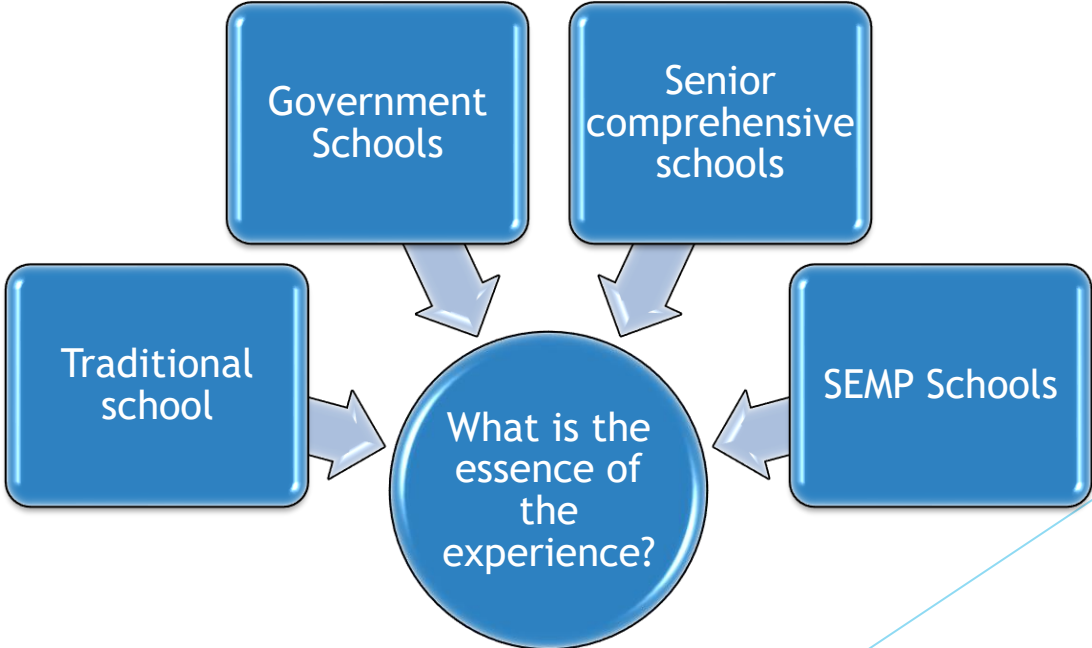
Author(s) / Year	RQs	Methodology	Findings
Bongo and David (2020)	What characterizes Filipino teachers' experiences as curriculum policy implementers?	Phenomenological Qualitative approach	The findings revealed that teachers face a number of tensions. The teachers felt confused, frustrated and powerless
Rahman (2019)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the beliefs and practices of secondary English teachers in relation to the teaching of English?</li> <li>2. What are the perceptions of practicing teachers towards change and innovation?</li> <li>3. What are the issues of agency and meaning making for English Language teachers?</li> <li>4. What are the policy implications of these beliefs and practices in future decisions?</li> </ol>	Life history	The findings showed that many teachers find English teaching using the CLT approach difficult, also, the teaching of English is carried out in an under-resourced context, and thirdly, students as well as common people in the society have lost trust in education and in political systems
Taole (2015)	The aim of this paper is to explore teachers' experiences of curriculum implementation and identify factors that affect implementation. The study was guided by the following research question: What are the teachers' experiences of NCS implementation?	A descriptive survey research design	Taole found that support and resources remain central to the curriculum implementation process. Also, lack of parental involvement, unavailability of follow-up visits from subject specialists and school leadership were cited as some of the factors that affected the implementation of the curriculum as experienced by teachers

# Research Question

Research question	Sources of Data	Data collection Method
How did English teachers describe their experience of implementing the revised CSEC English A syllabus?	Individual interviews	Semi - structured questions

# Methodology

Research Design	Sampling	Sampling Strategies	Data Collection Methods	Theoretical Frameworks
Descriptive Phenomenology	Five schools, comprising one of each of the various school types	Purposive sampling	Interviews	Descriptive Phenomenology, Fullan's change model (2016)



# Descriptive vs Interpretive

Descriptive Phenomenology	Interpretive Phenomenology
<p>Husserlian descriptive phenomenology is a qualitative method derived to extract <b>the essence of a phenomenon</b> as it is or was experienced by the participant(s) (Husserl, 2012; Giorgi, 2009)</p>	<p>Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology uses a theoretical framework as a method of orientation (Lopez &amp; Willis, 2004; Heidegger, 1962)</p>
<p>Husserlian concept, negated the influence of ideals regarding culture, society, and politics on the individual (Lopez &amp; Willis, 2004)</p>	<p>Heidegger asserts that participants must be interpreted through the lens of their social, cultural, and political context (Streubert &amp; Carpenter, 2011; Lopez &amp; Willis, 2004).</p>
<p>Husserl, argued that biases and preconceptions must be bracketed to isolate a person's lived experience of a phenomenon.</p>	<p>Heidegger's phenomenology was context bound. As a result, interpretive phenomenology rejects bracketing because the object cannot be separated from the subject's interpretation of it (Groenewald, 2004)</p>

# Research Design

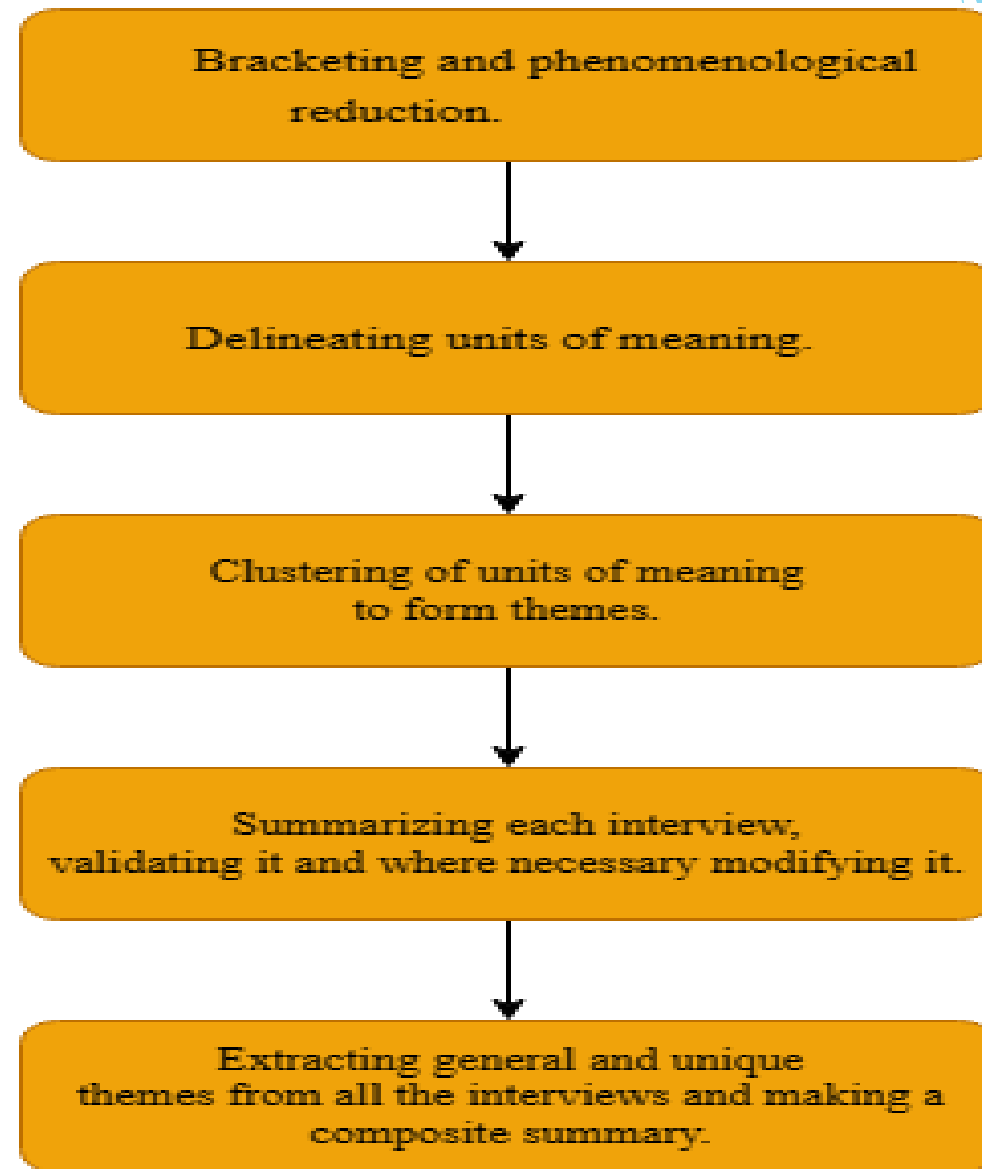
## Descriptive Phenomenology

- ▶ The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illustrate the layer of human experience of interest and search for the essences of the participants' shared experiences (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Thus, the phenomenological design was thought most suitable for this study as it sought to investigate the teachers' lived experiences as they implemented the CSEC English A Syllabus.
- ▶ Also, Swanson-Kauffman and Schonwald (1988) asserted that descriptive phenomenology is the best phenomenological methodology when an inquiry seeks to identify universal qualities of a phenomenon not completely conceptualized in prior research. Since teachers' experiences implementing this innovation has not been properly conceptualized in prior research coupled with the fact that this research is interested in describing the lived experiences of the participants, then descriptive phenomenology can be deemed most appropriate.

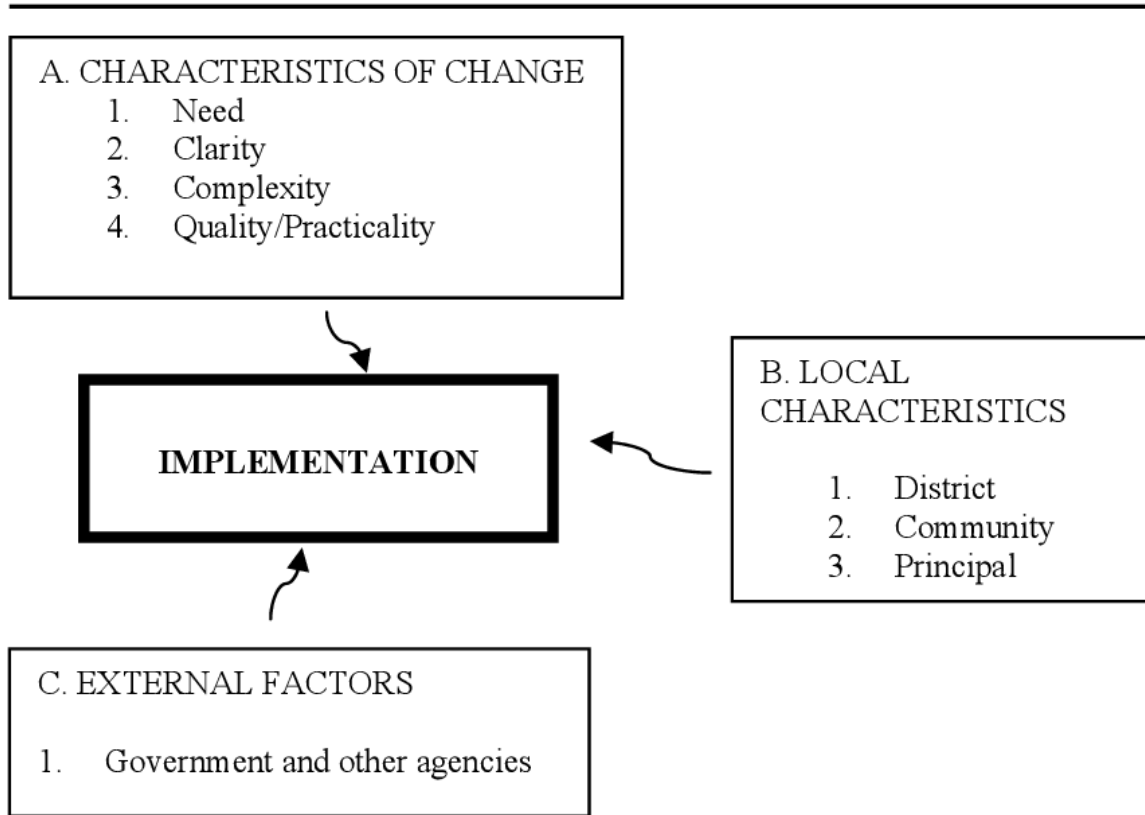
# Analysis of Data

## Hycner's (1999)

### Explicitation process



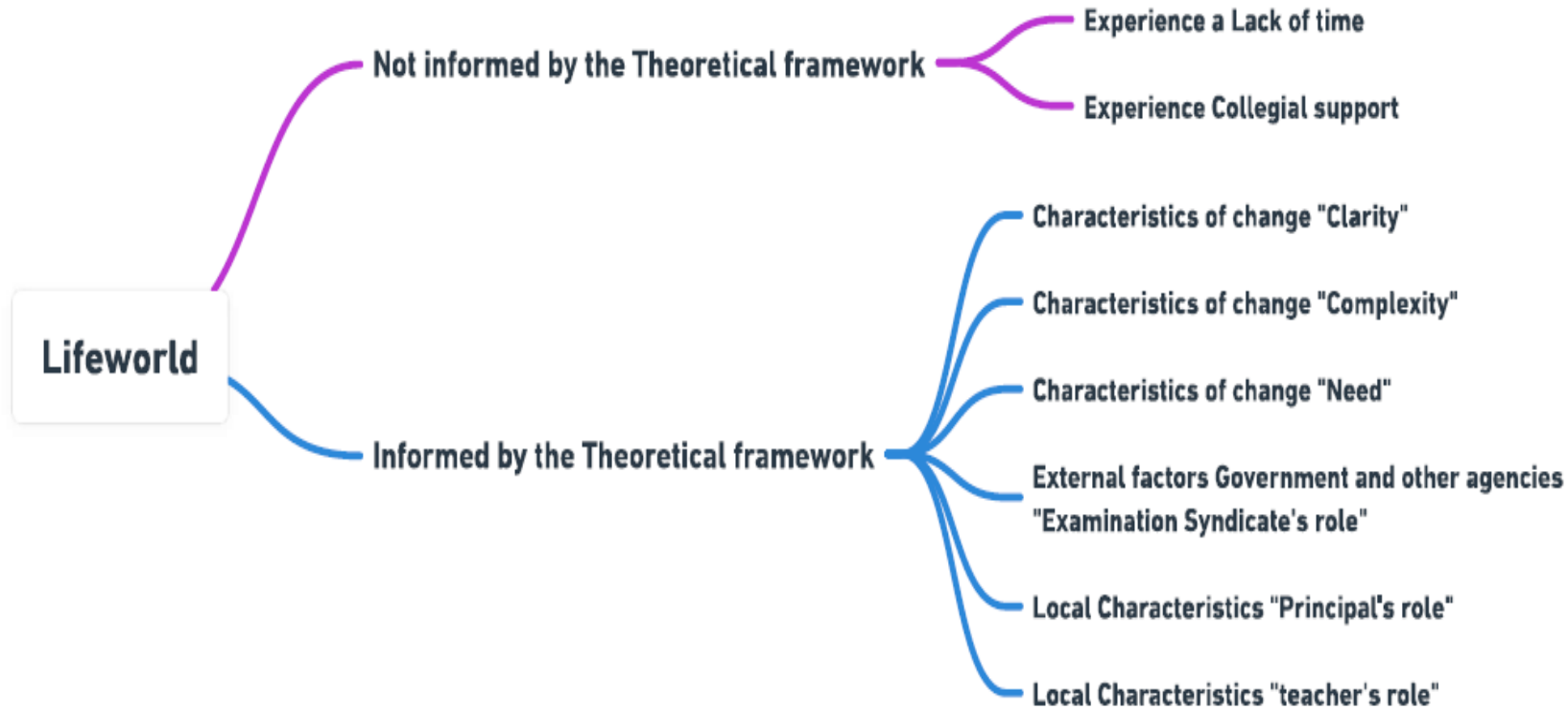
# Presentation of Findings



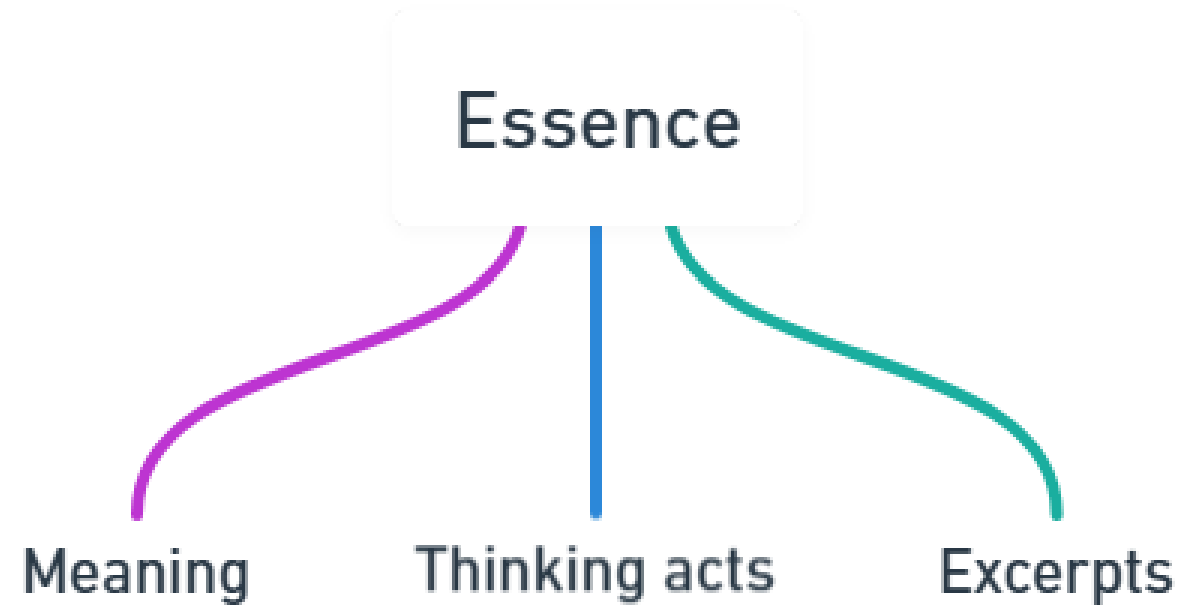
- ▶ Fullan's (2016) theoretical framework
- ▶ Lifeworld- The lifeworld, as defined by Husserl (1970), is the world in which we humans find ourselves, immediately experienced as a "given," before any philosophizing or conceptualizing.



# Themes



# Essence of the Experience



# Presentation of Findings

## Characteristics of Change- Clarity

### Lack of Clarity

► *April (Comprehensive school). It was a little subjective and we were not getting any guidance from CXC. Teachers were upset . The entire thing was a disaster.* April describes her emotional state using adjectives such as ‘upset’ and ‘disaster.’ These can be described as end states brought on by the cumulative impact of the lack of clarity. In addition, the lack of guidance adds to her frustrated state of not knowing.

► *Sacha (comprehensive school): since it (referring to the syllabus) was open to interpretation at the beginning. Then nobody seemed to know exactly what to do.* She notes that it was "open to interpretation at the beginning," indicating that the syllabus lacked clear and unambiguous guidelines. This opening statement describes a sense of uncertainty and vagueness that teachers like Sacha had to grapple with during the initial stages of implementation.

# Presentation of Findings

## Characteristics of Change Complexity

- ▶ **April (Comprehensive school)** *The only major thing (referring to difficulty of implementation) for us was the SBA and the SBA was something **a hurdle** that we had to cross for various reasons. One we had never done an SBA for English before. We **didn't know how we were going to manage**. April's choice of words showed that she faced a formidable task in dealing with the SBA, which was further complicated by the absence of prior experience with SBAs thus it reflects the practical and pedagogical challenges teachers encountered.*
- ▶ **June (Comprehensive School)** *Rough, it was. Difficult, rough and difficult the old (referring to the previous syllabus) was **definitely easier** and it was **definitely more enjoyable** .... I guess it (referring to the previous syllabus) was less content because of the absence of the SBA, but also, I was familiar with that curriculum that was the curriculum that I had gone through as a student, so **I felt more confident** to be able to, you know, enact that part of it. June expresses the challenges she faced during the implementation of the new syllabus repeating words like "rough" and "difficult." These words describe the emotional burden and struggle she experienced during implementation.*

# Presentation of Findings

## Characteristics of Change Need

- ▶ **Sasha (Comprehensive School):** *Students like ours in schools like ours need that time to prepare for the actual written exam. And you know, not taking away time from that to prepare for **an SBA an unnecessary SBA.** Her emotions in this context were a blend of concern and frustration. The imposition of what she perceived as an "unnecessary SBA" left her exasperated, as it diverted vital resources away from what she considered essential exam preparation.*
- ▶ **Allie (Government School):** *Because I don't see the need for the SBA component at all. Not given our amm You know what? The goals are for the English language Syllabus and not even the syllabus Just what is it that we want from students at the end of five years of secondary school? What they should be able to do? You know, I see, I see that we could actually include different things that they want to teach in the SBA into syllabus with the SBA Either it could be something a little bit less time consuming **and tedious to do, or just not there at all.** Her questioning and expression of "not seeing the need for the SBA component at all" conveyed her perplexity about its relevance and purpose in the curriculum. It is evident that she was deeply invested in understanding the rationale behind the inclusion of the SBA, and her emotions may have included a sense of intellectual dissonance.*

# External Characteristics

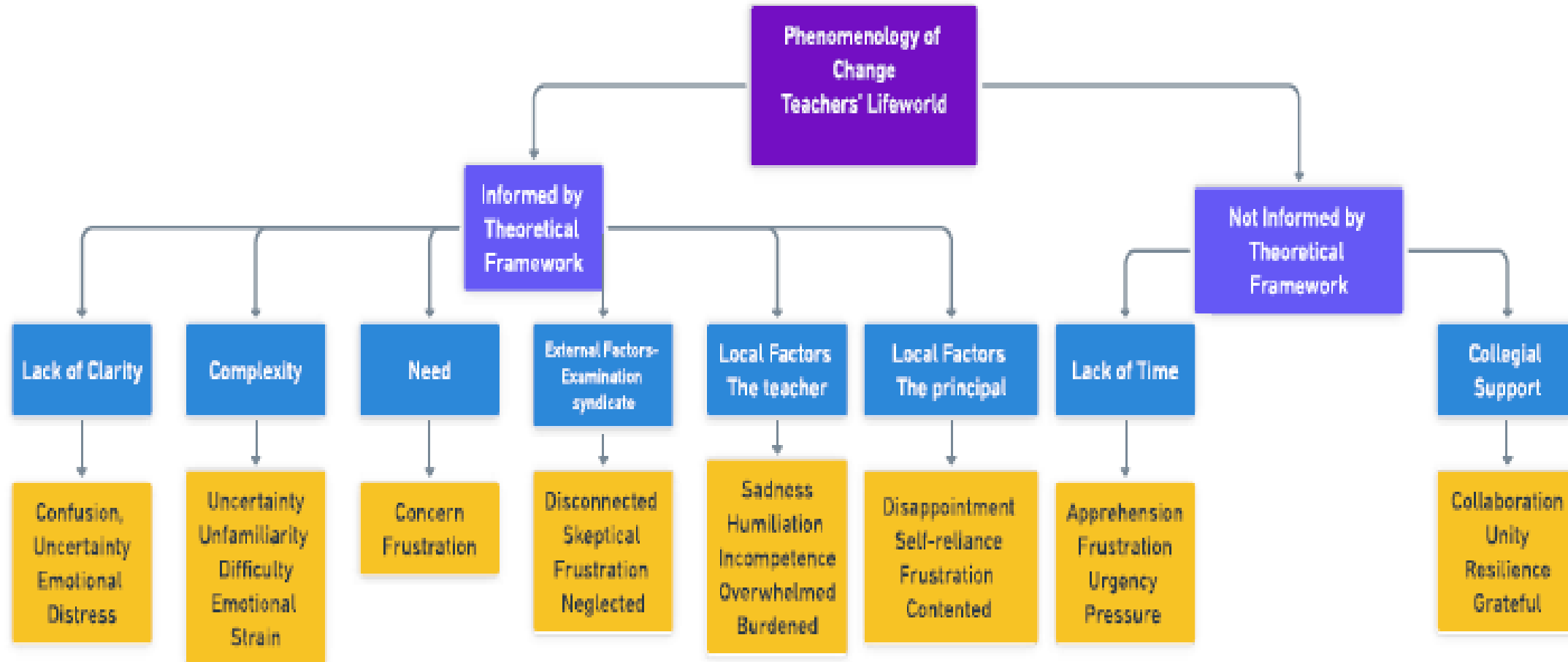
## Examination Syndicate's role

- ▶ *Alexis (traditional girls' school) I always thought that **the powers that be** or CXC and so on, don't really have touch with what's happening in the classroom. And the practical, you know, the practical aspect of delivering this content that they want. Alexis' experience is characterized by a sense of disconnect between the authorities, represented by CXC and the realities of the classroom. Her emotions and sentiments remain steadfast, reflecting a long-standing belief that those in positions of influence lack a genuine understanding of the practical challenges involved in delivering the curriculum content they prescribe.*
  
- ▶ *Catherine (Traditional girls' school) And you know, you (referring to the examination syndicate) just **in your ivory tower** on you're not seeing anything. And **it's laziness**. You know, it's just **laziness on the part of the people on high**.....**the quality controls and CXC are not working** ..... And so that shows **to me laziness**, it shows a lack of quality control. Catherine metaphorically references CXC as being in an "ivory tower," a term typically used to describe a state of seclusion or detachment from the real world, therefore her experience is seen as a state of isolation and disconnection.*

# Local Characteristics Teachers' Experiences

- ▶ **Cintra (traditional boys' school)** *I must say that this transition has been quite challenging and quite traumatic* **Cintra** describes the transition as "challenging" and "traumatic," indicating the emotional impact of the changes on her teaching experience. The use of the word "traumatic" describes a deep emotional distress associated with the transition.
- ▶ **June (comprehensive school)** *well, the news at first was very disconcerting because the idea of having to do an SBA was very traumatic.* She describes the news of having to do an SBA as "disconcerting" and "traumatic." The word "traumatic" underlines the distress she associates with the SBA requirement. These descriptions emphasize the emotional burden experienced by both teachers.

# Essence of the Experience





# Discussion

Research Question	Findings	Previous Research	Implications
How did English teachers describe their experience of implementing the revised CSEC English A?	<b>Lack of Clarity-</b> Teachers expressed frustration and confusion regarding the expectations and guidelines provided in the curriculum. They reported that the goals and strategies outlined in the curriculum were not clearly defined, leading to uncertainty about how to effectively teach the new content.	<b>Mathura (2019)</b> Teachers noted that they received little guidance and encountered difficulty in understanding the curriculum requirements, often leading to modification of the curriculum to fit their understandings. This lack of clarity was deemed problematic for successful curriculum implementation.	Uncertainty/confusion about how to teach the new content, caused by unclear expectations and guidelines, could negatively affect student learning outcomes. The inconsistency in teaching methods and approaches, due to various interpretations of the vague guidelines, may lead to uneven educational experiences amongst students.
	<b>Complexity</b> -Teachers across all school types found the new syllabus challenging, mainly due to the SBA component. This challenge reflected the practical and pedagogical difficulties faced while implementing the new curriculum.	Bongco and David(2020) conducted research and the findings revealed that teachers face a number of difficulties that describe their lived experience . The teachers felt confused, frustrated and powerless when attempting to implement new curriculum policy. Rahman (2019) teachers found English teaching using the CLT approach difficult.	The emotional burden and stress levels induced by the implementation process could negatively affect teachers' well-being and job satisfaction levels.

# Discussion

Research Question	Findings	Previous Research	Implications
How did English teachers describe their experience of implementing the revised CSEC English A?	<b>Need</b> -A considerable number of teachers grappled to perceive the necessity of the School-Based Assessment component within the amended curriculum, resulting in emotions of confusion, frustration, and cognitive discord.	<b>Mununkum and Setordzi ( 2023)</b> , using Fullan's characteristics of educational change, their study found that most of the teachers appreciated the need for change. Mortrud (2017) found that high predictor of perceived success of implementation is need.	The perception of the School-Based Assessment as unnecessary or an impediment may affect how teachers approach its implementation. If teachers are doubtful about the relevance and function of the SBA, their motivation and commitment to properly teach this component might be compromised.
	<b>Examination Syndicate's role</b> -a dominant sentiment of abandonment was noted this stemmed from a perceived disconnect between the expectations set by educational authorities and the realities of the teaching environment.	<b>Mathura (2019)</b> his study recommended that CXC should engage teachers in the curriculum process more closely, enhance its communication methods. Taole (2015) found that support and resources remain central to the curriculum implementation process	The lack of effective communication between educational authorities and teachers can lead to misalignment in curriculum implementation. This disconnect might exacerbate feelings of frustration and marginalization among teachers.
	<b>Teacher</b> - the revisions in the syllabus added to the existing workloads of the teachers, leading to increased stress, anxiety and apprehensions related to their professional roles.	Notably, in the study conducted by Mununkum and Setordzi( 2023), the curriculum change caused apprehensions among educators	The burden of an additional workload due to the syllabus revision could contribute to stress and anxiety. This suggests a consideration for allocation of time and tasks during curriculum revision to manage workload efficiently and prevent teachers from feeling overwhelmed.

# Recommendations

- ▶ **Intervention Strategies Research:** Given the challenges identified, more research can be conducted on intervention strategies, especially those related to time management, workload reduction, and stress management for teachers.
- ▶ **Support Systems:** Research could explore the development and effectiveness of supportive structures, such as mentoring programs for teachers dealing with curriculum changes.
- ▶ **Learning Impact:** There is a need for research directly examining the impact of these challenges on students' learning outcomes and experiences.
- ▶ **Increased Support:** Establish formal support systems for teachers to share ideas and best practices. This could include regular meetings, mentorship programs, or a dedicated online platform.

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**ANY QUESTIONS?**

