ENABLERS OF AND BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL CURRICULUM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *Literature shows that many curriculum reforms in higher education institutions fail because curriculum change sponsors fail to identify and plan effectively and proactively to deal with barriers to curriculum change as well as to harness enablers. One such critical reason why curriculum change sponsors such as academic middle managers fail to adequately plan to effectively deal with challenges to curriculum change as well as to maximize on the opportunities provided by enablers to successful curriculum change has been shown in literature as lack of knowledge. The above claim is further supported in other researches which show that for the majority of curriculum users, their understanding of curriculum and curriculum change is still at neophyte stage. This study therefore, supported by literature, wishes to lay claim to the fact that there are as many enablers as there are challenges to successful curriculum change in higher education which academic middle managers (AMMs) can take note of when planning as well as implementing curriculum change. In laying the foundation for this claim, this study examines the various enablers and challenges to successful curriculum change in higher education.*

KEYWORDS: curriculum change, enablers, barriers, effective leadership, team culture

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum change is an important component of educational improvement. As a result, this process needs to be effectively managed for it to be successful and for the new curriculum to be relevant to the target groups. Effective implementation and management of curriculum change requires that curriculum leaders such as academic middle managers identify and proactively act on both the challenges and enablers of the curriculum change process. This study also shows that effective curriculum change is moderated by effective and strong leadership.

Enablers of curriculum change

Authorities in curriculum literature have identified a number of factors that enable successful implementation and management of curriculum change. The following factors are critical to the success of this process: adequacy of resources, time, school ethos, professional support, professional adequacy, professional knowledge, professional attitude and interest, participative leadership (Fullan 2005; Hargreaves & Fink 2006). These enablers are as described in Table 1.

Enabling factor	Description
Adequacy of resources	This refers to adequacy of equipment, facilities and general resources required to implement curriculum change
Time	Curriculum change is a complex process that requires adequate time for planning and delivering the requirements of the changed curriculum. As an example, teachers need enough time to develop their own understanding of the new curriculum after the changes.
School ethos	The overall institutional philosophy towards curriculum change and the new curriculum plays a significant role in the success of any curriculum change in the institution. An institutional philosophy that recognises the importance of curriculum change as seeking improvement is important for the success of curriculum change.
Professional support	Adequate support for staff both within the institution and within departments is crucial for effective curriculum change. Such support could be in the form of ongoing curriculum professional support.
Professional adequacy	Staff's ability and competency to implement curriculum change with confidence is a critical for the success of a curriculum change effort.
Professional knowledge	Knowledge and understandings that teachers possess regarding curriculum change especially with regards to the different ways of teaching to foster student learning, are an integral part of successful curriculum change.
Professional attitude and interest	Attitudes and interest of staff towards change in terms of their keenness to implement the changes are important cogs in the success of curriculum change.
Participative leadership	Both institutional and department leadership that facilitates a collaborative approach to curriculum change is critical for effective and success of the curriculum change process.

Table 1: Enablers of curriculum change (Fullan 2005; Hargreaves & Fink 2006).

Barriers to middle manager role in curriculum change

There are a number of factors that act as barriers to the successful planning and implementation of curriculum change by academic middle managers in higher education (Kgosana 2006; Mafora & Phorabatho 2013; Ndou 2008). Such factors include the following: Institutional factors, middle manager-related factors, teacher-related factors, physical resources-related factors, and financial pressures (Rogan & Grayson 2003; Hall & Hord 2006; Geijsel et al 2003):

Institutional factors

These barriers fall into the political dimension category of curriculum change and relate to power and influence, including administrative support and leadership, collaboration and the negotiation and resolution of conflicts in the institutions and departments (Morgan & Xu 2011; Collopy 2003). These factors also relate to the cultural dimension of curriculum change that relates to the values, beliefs and norms, both consensual and competing in individuals, groups, departments and institutions (Rogan & Grayson 2003; Hall & Hord 2006). Institutional factors refer conditions or situations within an organisation that influence or affect successful implementation of curriculum change. These factors include top management leadership style, institutional culture and institutional structure.

a) *Top management leadership style as barrier to curriculum change.* The top management team, their overall management style and the degree of their collaboration with middle managers, has a significant bearing on the success or failure of curriculum change (Bennett et al 2003). Top management who employee the managerial style of leadership create barriers to communication with middle managers and delay or completely stifle curriculum change in institutions.

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b) *Institutional structure.* The tension between collegiality and hierarchy as alluded to above, has been well documented in literature as a big hindrance to the success of curriculum change in higher education institutions (Bennett et al 2003). Institutional structures therefore that are tall and bureaucratic discourage greater middle manager and staff involvement in decision making on issues of curriculum change and also promotes less willingness among institutional members to collaborate around issues of curriculum change (Bennett et al 2003).

c) *Institutional culture.* An institutional culture in which departments do not operate largely autonomously negatively affects middle managers' ability and even willingness to carry out their general responsibilities (Bennett et al 2003) as well as specific responsibilities related to curriculum change.

d) *Expectations.* Literature shows that by expecting immediate curriculum changes and instant success, top management set unrealistic expectations which result in curriculum change failure (Seehorn 2012). Without making curriculum change a gradual, well resourced and supported process, the result will always be failure.

Middle manager role-related factors

These factors relate to both the political and the technical dimensions of curriculum change (Morgan & Xu 2011). The technical dimension asserts that knowledge and skills as well as their acquisition and classroom practice, are key to successful implementation of curriculum change. Middle managers not only mediate tensions between funding and curriculum change as potential barriers to effective curriculum change buts also filter competing messages from above and below that are concerned with interpreting curriculum policy into practice (Wolverton et al, 2005). Despite their curriculum change, teaching and scholarship roles, middle managers have to supervise and evaluate staff performances, handle conflicting and competing demands and goals, as well as deal with student problems in their departments (Scott Coates & Anderson 2008). Such a boiling pot of demands represents what Sackdanouvong (2013) referred to as middle managers being caught in various positions where they have to seek balance if their efforts to implement curriculum change is to succeed. The above is also echoed by Hancook & Hellawell (2001) who argued that middle managers occupy positions in which they have to find a balance between the temporary hierarchy of their administrative position and the on-going collegiality with their peers. The importance of seeking such a balance between the competing demands of teaching staff and those of top management, between education and research, and ultimately between hierarchy and collegiality are issues that are seen as defining and pre-empting the barriers to effective middle manager role in curriculum change (Kallenberg 2007).

Another barrier related to middle manager role in curriculum change is that there is often a lack of clarity about boundaries spanning their influence in organisations and departments, which is an inconsistency regarding the way they are managed, and a tendency by top management to treat them as their unquestioning mouthpieces (Briggs 2001). The above is compounded by the fact that little is known about the actual practices of middle managers (Rouleau 2005) and how their activities can be facilitated (Balogun, 2007), observations which are also confirmed by Mayer & Smith (2007) who posited that middle managers' role is often misunderstood and unsupported by top management.

The fact that higher education institutions have engaged and are continuing to engage in a paradigm shift in their management systems by moving from collegial to more managerial systems (Rasmussen 2002), is also leading to more pressure on middle managers who are now called upon to manage both the external and internal changes in their organisations' work process (de Boer & Goedegebuure 2009; Rasmussen 2002; Smith & Winter-Living 2009), creating further pressure on their ability to effectively plan and implement curriculum change in their departments.

A lack of professional training by middle managers in curriculum planning and implementation has been cited as one of the major barriers to effective curriculum change (Harris et al, 2000). Without adequate knowledge of what constitutes curriculum planning and implementation, literature shows that it would be close to impossible for middle managers to effectively lead curriculum change in their departments. (Harris et al, 2000).

The final barrier to curriculum change related to the nature of the middle management role are the tensions relating to middle managers' role of bridging the gap between top management and the academic staff (Smith & Winter-Irving 2009). This situation places the middle manager on the firing line of both sides, widening the confusion on what exactly constitutes their role in curriculum change. Literature shows that middle managers have to prioritise addressing and resolving on a daily basis, the tensions inherent in the issues of collegiality, professionality and authority if they are to successfully plan and implement curriculum change (Bennett et al, 2003).

Teacher-related factors
These factors relate to the technical dimension of curriculum change as explained above. Successful curriculum change cannot occur if staff are not properly trained to implement the new approach (Seehorn 2012). It has been shown that teachers who are poorly trained and have poor content knowledge, are also poor in understanding and implementing curriculum change (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). Literature also attests to the fact that the epistemological beliefs of staff have an important impact on the success of curriculum change (Handel & Herrington, 2003; Blignaught 2001; Alexander 2009). Teachers' epistemologies refer to their beliefs about the content, pedagogy and specific context which may impact their ability to accurately interpret and successfully enact the curriculum changes (Blignaught 2008). Without massive investment in time, money and appropriate coaches to adequately and timeously capacitate staff to implement a new curriculum, there will always be resistance to curriculum change (Seehorn 2012). Resistance to change is viewed as a natural and expected of any major curriculum change (Fullan 2001) as change always involves a sense of loss for the participants, loss of the treasured and familiar (Cragg 2011). Negative attitudes by staff are also viewed as the most frustrating and paralyzing barrier to curriculum change in higher education (Seehorn 2012).

Physical resources-related factors which include lack of support materials for learners.
 Literature shows that curriculum change can succeed if it is resourced with good quality student materials (Ball & Cohen 1999). The presence of appropriate text books has been found to have a positive impact on the success of curriculum change and by extension, on student learning (Collopy 2003; Walberg 1991).

Status quo comfort

According to Seehorn (2012), staff, senior management, parents and students may resist curriculum change because they are comfortable with the way things are, especially when the institution is performing well. Given such a situation, without factual, effectively and adequately communicate to all these people the benefits of curriculum change, it will be very difficult to get their support for the proposed change. According to Fullan (2001), by adequately communicating the change to all stakeholders, middle managers enable them to see that the benefits of the change, for themselves and the students, outweigh the personal cost likely to expend, and such stakeholders are likely to make the sacrifice required (Fullan 2003).

High workloads

Research has shown that middle managers in higher education face workload pressures during the conduct of their roles (Fitzgerald 2009; Wise & Bennett 2003). Such high workloads have been seen to result in middle managers having less time to lead and manage curriculum change (Ingvarson et al, 2005). Literature further attests to the fact that much of the high workloads is as a result of tasks considered managerial rather than those tasks related to improving teaching and learning (Fitzgerald 2009; Hipkins & Hodgen 2004). By being in the middle, Cragg (2011) argues that middle managers as additional workload, spend most of their time mediating tensions between two competing interests, i.e. top management and lower level employees instead of concentrating on the curriculum responsibilities. The above is also confirmed by Bennett et al (2007) who argued that while on one hand top management demand that middle managers take a whole-school approach to managing educational policies and strategies, on the other hand, the operational core also demands that middle managers represent their needs at the top management. This situation leaves middle managers with little time to concentrate on curriculum issues such as curriculum change.

Team culture

A strong team or department culture in a department has been found more often than not, to be toxic as it can inhibit team learning and also undermine efforts to implement curriculum change (Ruding 2000). Literature however also shows that if well managed, strong department culture can come in very handy to assist particularly newly promoted novice middle managers to effectively manage curriculum change (Cragg 2011).

Financial pressures

In many private higher education institutions, there are always powerful budgetary pressures that affect the ability of middle managers to effectively curriculum change (Lachiver & Tardif 2002). These pressures are normally reflected when: i) certain courses may be felt to be too expensive to be fully introduced in which case some areas of the curriculum may be deliberately left out thus ultimately affecting the overall quality of the curriculum change, and ii) classes may be made too large to reduce the number of staff employed thus affecting the type of methodologies to be encorporated into the curriculum change process.

Student abilities

While in the ideal world curricula are dictated by the desire to create graduates of the highest caliber, reality on the ground dictates otherwise because of the nature of student abilities

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(Lachiver & Tardif 2002). Literature shows that the exigencies of filling quotas for both local and international students also have an impact on the type and/or quality of curriculum change. As a result of the two issues above, middle managers take the path of least resistance and end up planning curriculum change not for the excellent students but for the mediocre ones that muddle their way through degree programmes (Lachiver & Tardif 2002).

Effective leadership
Leadership style can be both a hindrance and an enabler to effective curriculum change. Literature shows that leadership is a nebulous and difficult concept to define and its meaning has been a subject of much heightened debate for a long time because it is neither precise nor unified yet it is a very important factor in the success of curriculum change (McCaffery 2004; Bryman 2007; Hallinger & Heck 2003). There is still no consensus about a universal definition of leadership leading to a multiplicity of definitions that attempt to clarify the concept (Bryman 2007). As a result of the multiplicity of leadership definitions, leadership approaches have been seen to range on a continuum, from administration to management to leadership, with the last leadership approaches representing more visionary, creative, inspirational and energizing approaches than the first ones (Gilbert 2011; Bush 2008). Among some of the definitions given by authorities based on their different conceptions and perceptions of leadership include that leadership is a process designed to influence a group of individuals to work together to achieve a common goal (Northouse 2007), while Hohepa & Lloyd (2009) also define leadership as an influence process that drives individuals to think or act differently according to a task or situation. Curriculum change leadership is therefore defined as a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person or group over other people for the purpose of achieving organisational and curriculum goals (Yukl 2002; Brown et al, 2000). Two aspects of AMM role namely that of school improvement and the improvement of teaching and learning have been viewed as having being catalytic in necessitating the reconceptualisation of the AMM's role as a leadership role rather than a management role in curriculum change (Thrash 2012; Bush & Middlewood 2005). Fitzgerald & Gunter (2006) also support this reconceptualisation of the leadership role of AMMs by suggesting a paradigm shift from managerialism and management practices to leadership matters on pedagogy and pedagogic practices.

The challenge therefore faced in this proposed paradigm shift is for the AMMs as curriculum leaders, to be able to establish a balance between leadership and management roles in order to provide both vision and direction while also ensuring effective and efficient implementation and monitoring of pre-determined curriculum policies and procedures (Humphreys 2010). While acknowledging this balancing act predicament, AMMs are also faced with the challenge of coming up with a vision, of shaping curriculum change goals, motivations and actions of others to reach existing and new curriculum change goals (Yukl 2002). In the light of the above, middle managers' curriculum leadership role is therefore viewed as symbolizing the creation of followers not subordinates for curriculum change, a situation which calls for middle managers to possess a variety of skills and abilities which include but not limited to the ability to lead a heterogeneous department, possession of critical thinking skills, and ability to lead by example (Haslam 2004; Corey & Corey 2006; Rosser et al, 2003; Nunn 2008; Briggs 2007). In addition to the skills mentioned above, Sypawka (2008) also argues that middle managers as curriculum

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leaders need to also possess the following skills namely: being cultural representatives of the department, good communicators, skilled managers, forward-looking planners, and above all, being able to demonstrate the ability to manager change (Del Favero 2005; 2006a; Hyun 2006).

The leadership style therefore employed by middle managers in the carrying out of their role in curriculum change has a significant bearing on the success of both the institution and the department with regards to curriculum change (Del Favero 2006b; Gmelch 2004). The need for effective curriculum leadership by middle managers is also viewed as important now than ever before because middle managers today are faced with the double challenge of adapting to constantly changing demands for education while at the same time ensuring that the internal dynamics of their departments are maintained (Packard 2008; Sypawka 2008). A number of leadership models which are going to be discussed in relation to how they attempt at explain the actions and rationale of leader behaviour in organisations and departments (Thrash 2012; Humphreys & Einstern 2004).

Typology of models for leading curriculum change

There are ten major leadership models which help define how academic middle managers in different settings in the different higher education institutions successfully engage in curriculum change (Bush & Glover 2002; Daniel 2009). The ten models represent a typology of leadership models which include the managerial leadership model, participative leadership model, transformational leadership model, transactional leadership model, post-modern leadership model, moral leadership model, instructional leadership model, organised anarchy leadership model, political leadership model, and the contingent leadership model (Bush & Glover 2002; Daniel 2009). These models are described below.

The managerial leadership model

This model assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviour and that if these functions are carried out competently, the work of others in the organisation and also department will be facilitated and enhanced (Leithwood, et al, 2006). To be able to effectively carry out the above functions, managers as leaders need to develop and implement a cyclical process involving seven managerial responsibilities namely goal setting, needs identification, priority setting, planning, budgeting, implementing, and evaluation as shown in Figure 1.
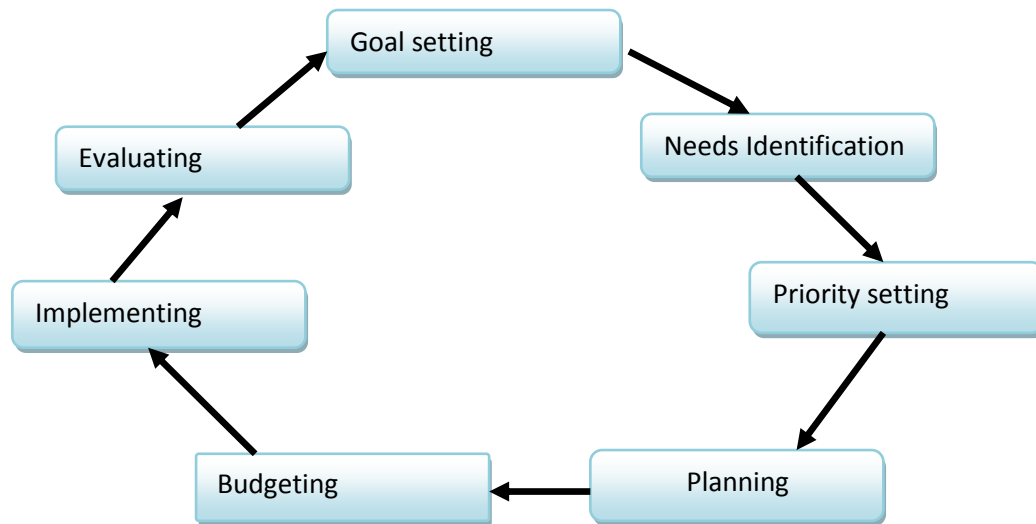
Figure 1: Managerial leadership model (Caldwell in Bush 2007)

The above model does not include the concept of vision that is central to most leadership models as it focuses on managing existing activities successfully rather than visioning a better future for the institution or department (Bush 2007). As a result it is a model not seen as effective in the planning and implementation of curriculum change in higher education institutions as curriculum change is an ongoing timeless process. However, it is a model that is suitable for a centralised system of management as it prioritises the efficient implementation of external imperatives, i.e., those imperatives prescribed to the middle manager by higher authorities within a bureaucratic hierarchy in the institution. Baldridge (1980) cited in Daniel (2009) described this model as the bureaucratic system/model in which decision making is viewed as a rational process where good and/or efficient decisions are made. This rationality is viewed from the context that in a bureaucracy, there exist clear and consistent sets of goals and objectives that need to be achieved within a certain time frame (Daniel 2009).

The above model is further characterised by clear and formal channels of communication and reporting systems, written rules and regulations and a knowledge base. One good example of the application of the managerial leadership model is the scientific management model as proposed by Daniel (2009). This model is associated with authoritarian, hierarchical and inaccessible leadership styles and that the middle manager's authority is perceived as God-given, judicial and final (Bush 2007). While its opponents describe it as archaic and antidemocratic, it is also credited for its effectiveness in ensuring efficiency in operations (Bush 2007).

Transformative leadership model
The transformative leadership model assumes that the central focus of leadership should be commitment and capacities of departmental members. Its major dimensions on the role of the middle manager include building the departmental vision, establishing departmental goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support, modeling best practices and important departmental values, creating a productive departmental culture, and developing

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structures to foster participation by members in departmental decisions (Thrash 2012). The model primarily focuses on the processes by which middle managers as leaders seek to influence departmental outcomes rather than on the nature or direction of those outcomes (Bush 2007; Thrash 2012). One major criticism of the model is that the middle manager as leader has potential to become despotic because of his/her strong, heroic and charismatic traits (Allix 2000).

Participative leadership model
It is a model that assumes that the decision-making processes of the group should be the central focus of the group (Leithwood, et al, 2006). Its three major assumptions in the context of the role of middle managers during curriculum change are that i) participation by all members increases effectiveness in the department, ii) participation by all members is justified by democratic principles, and iii) in the context of site-based management, leadership is potentially available to any legitimate stakeholder. This model is also referred to as the collegial model that focuses on the creation of a community of members that share interests in both the decision-making processes in the department or organisation (Daniel 2009). Members in this team interact and influence each other through a network of continuous personal exchanges based on social interaction, value consensus and reciprocity (Daniel 2009). Members exchange ideas with their leader at both formal and informal levels while at the same time respecting each other's professional autonomy and authority. This leadership model is highly credited for its power to bond staff together and to ease the pressures on middle managers because leadership functions and roles are shared (Thrash 2012).

Transactional leadership model
It is a model that focuses on the relationship between the leader and the subordinates. It is leadership in which relationships between the leader and the subordinates are based on an exchange for some valued resource (Miller & Miller 2001). In the context of middle managers during curriculum change, the interaction with team members will be on a need basis, i.e., will be episodic, short-lived and limited to the exchange transaction (Miller & Miller 2001).

Political leadership model
Going hand-in-hand with the transactional leadership model if the political leadership model which works on the premise that higher education institutions are microcosms of the political systems and as a result are also political arenas. This being so, the model argues that as policy decisions such as the implementation of curriculum change are made, relations among members are based on bargaining and compromise during competition for power and resources (Daniel 2009). This model is characterised by a lack of shared leadership and abundance of conflict as every member participates in decision-making according to how much power and influence they wield (Daniel 2009).

The post-modern leadership model
It is a model that assumes that organisations or their units have no ontological reality but are simply the creatures of the people within them who may hold very different views, which views should be respected (Starratt 2010). It is a model that does not believe in absolute authority but believes on celebrating the multiplicity of subjective truths as defined by experience (Starratt 2010). In the context of middle managers as leaders, the model asserts that middle managers

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respect and give attention to the diverse and individual perspectives of all departmental staff and also seeks to avoid hierarchy because of its fluid nature. According to Starratt (2010), it is a model that advocates more consultative, participatory and inclusive leadership approach on the part of middle managers during projects that include curriculum change.

The moral leadership model
It works on the assumption that the critical focus of leadership should be on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders such as middle managers themselves. It believes that middle manager authority and influence are derived from defensible conceptions of what is right or good (Leithwood et al, 2006). It further argues that successful departments have leaders take administering of their departments as a moral duty or responsibility.

Instructional leadership model
The instructional model focuses on the direction of influence rather than the nature and source of influence of middle managers, hence differs from all the other models above. Its emphasis is on managing teaching and learning as the core activities of managers (Leithwood et al, 1999). Middle managers' influence is therefore targeted at students learning through teachers hence the need for middle managers to ensure they lead effective implementation of curriculum change.

The organised anarchy leadership model
This model focuses on elements that are loosely coupled. Members of the group from the middle manager to the team members are mostly experienced and prestigious scholars who believe in scholarly work. The middle manager will be leading a team whose motivation in curriculum change is to do a very good job for the purpose of either promotion, tenure, salary increment or just individual prestige (Daniel 2009). Such people have no time for team work as they believe in doing their work individually and complete it well. Managing such people who may be having seriously competing interests may prove to be a very difficult job for the middle manager.

Contingent leadership model
It is a model that recognises the diverse nature of the school context and the advantages of middle managers adapting their leadership styles to the particular situation rather than adopting a one-size-fit-all stance (Leithwood et al, 1999). It posits that what is important in leadership is how middle managers as leaders respond to the unique departmental and organisational circumstances or problems.

CONCLUSION

The above literature shows that curriculum change is a complex process that requires a multi-faceted approach for it to be successful**.** The complexity of curriculum change emanates from the fact that there are a myriad of challenges that affect its successful implementation and management. The study also showed that leadership is an important component of the curriculum change equation as it can either be an inhibitor or an enabler of curriculum change depending on the leadership style deployed. As a result therefore, this research concludes that a delicate balance between these challenges and the enablers of curriculum change is crucial for the success

of the change process. Also it is concluded that a more collaborative leadership approach is also an important enabler of successful curriculum change.

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