"*C'est la clé du succès*":
Thinking Through the Parental Experience of a New Support Program for Newcomer Students in Minority French-Speaking Schools in Canada

Francis Bangou[1a], Awad Ibrahim[2a], Carole Fleuret[3a]

Abstract

In 2010, the Ministry of Education of one of the most diverse provinces in Canada initiated the implementation of a support program for newcomer students to facilitate their academic, linguistic, social, and cultural adaptation in French speaking schools. This longitudinal multiple case study will document how immigrant parents support their children's learning, and create a home environment conducive to learning and cultural development. It will be shown that although parents in this study made it very clear that their primary priority was their children's success, some of them simply did not have the social, cultural or linguistic tools to help foster this desire into reality. Moreover, parents' active involvement with the implementation of the new curriculum was affected by their own understandings of the notion of culture; the status of the French language in the province where the research took place; and the preservation of their families' heritage cultures and languages.

[1] Associate Professor, Email: fbangou@uottawa.ca (Corresponding Author)
  Tel: + 613-562-5800
[2] Professor, Email: aibrahim@uottawa.ca
[3] Associate Professor, Email: cfleuret@uottawa.ca
[a] University of Ottawa, Canada

1. Introduction

Since 1970s, Canada has seen a substantial increase in its cultural mosaic, with visible minorities constituting a non-negligible number (Ascenuik, 2012). In fact, it has been estimated that by 2031 one in three Canadians will be a visible minority (Friesen, 2010). Faced with this reality, in 2010, the Ministry of Education of one of the largest and most diverse provinces in Canada initiated the implementation of a support program for newcomer students to facilitate their academic, linguistic, social, and cultural adaptation in French-speaking schools. We will refer to this support program as the *Programme de l'insertion éducationnelle* (PIÉ) (program titles are pseudonyms). It is then expected that by the end of this program newcomer students would have gained the necessary literacy, language, and cultural knowledge to be successful academically. Newcomer parents then are strongly encouraged to engage in their child's education, as it is now recognized that parents' support plays a critical role in supporting learners' academic success (Park & McHugh, 2014).

As researchers, we wanted to create a longitudinal study to track and 'think through' (Derrida, 2000) what Aoki (1993) calls "curriculum-as-planned" (i.e., policy) and "curriculum-as-lived" (i.e., implementation), in regards to parents' involvement. 'Thinking through' this program and its new curriculum first and foremost requires documentation, which is what we intend to do in this article. Indeed, as the first in a series of articles, our goal is twofold: first, to frame the PIÉ program using Aoki's (1993) distinction between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived; and second, to understand some of the tensions that exist between the planned and the lived within a francophone minority (immigrant) context. *La clé du succès* (or "the key to success") of this program is conceptualized best when the disparate stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators) work collectively and collaboratively. But, we argue, given their different understandings and affective attachments to the French language and culture, and the new curriculum there is an inherent tension between the interested parties. To better understand this tension, we pose the following research questions: How did the parents support their children's learning? How did the parents create a home environment conducive to learning and cultural development? To answer these questions, we will first discuss Aoki's (1993) distinction between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived. We will then briefly summarize the current literature on curriculum implementation and parental involvement, and provide an overview of the program in question. Next, we'll address our research and the broad themes we found with a special focus on the parents' narrative. Finally, we will offer a conclusion as to why we need to pay closer attention to the voices of immigrant parents in order to secure the academic, linguistic, and cultural success of newcomer students. This need is particularly examined in light of the general impression that immigrant parents are not as involved in their children's education—a notion that our findings distinctly debunk.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Curriculum-as-Planned versus Curriculum-as-Lived

Discussions on the nature of curriculum have long been prevalent in the field of curriculum studies. Pinar (2012) refers to this debate as an "ongoing, if complicated, conversation" (p. 183). It is complicated not only in terms of policy and objective, but also epistemically, in terms of the very definition of curriculum itself. Moreover, as Pinar (2012) notes, in an extremely diverse society like Canada, what renders this conversation complicated is the fact that:

> Curriculum ceases to be a thing, and it is more than a process. It becomes a verb, an action, a social practice, a private meaning, and a public hope. It interpellates different people differently, thus calling for multiple and diverse responses" (2012, p. 187-8).

He goes on to note that curriculums often develop into products of our labour, and change as we are changed by them. Years before Pinar was formulating his ideas, Aoki (1993) attempted to map the field of curriculum studies by proposing the existence of two distinct 'worlds': curriculum-as-

planned and curriculum-as-lived. For him, curriculum-as-planned is:

> The work of curriculum planners, often selected teachers from the field, under the direction of some official often designated as the curriculum director or curriculum supervisor. As a work of people, inevitably, it is imbued with the planners' orientations to the world, which inevitably include their own interests and assumptions about ways of knowing and about how teachers and students are to be understood. (p. 258)

Subjective and complex as it may be, however, curriculum-as-planned is generally linear, intentional, and chronological. It is rooted in policy, and mostly refers to what a teacher is expected and requested—if not ordered—to teach (Aoki, 1993). Curriculum-as-lived, on the other hand, is markedly different in that it is rooted in the experiences of those who live the curriculum every day (Aoki, 1993). Curriculum-as-lived, then, is about working through everyday challenges and welcoming the multiplicity of what life brings our way. As Aoki (1993) concludes, "There are many lived curricula, as many as there are self and students, and possibly more" (p. 258).

When exploring the implementation of a curriculum, therefore, Aoki (2005) reminds us that it is important to create a dialectic bridge between the planned and the lived worlds. After all, the planned world is an ideal world that is theoretical in nature. It enables one to imagine another ethical, political, cultural, social, and educational life; however, this planned world cannot be implemented as envisioned, because so-called 'reality' is constantly in the process of 'becoming' (Aoki, 2005). On the other hand, the lived world—the everyday implicit and explicit experiences of school life that navigate between the universal and the singular, the formal and the real— reflects life as it is implemented every day. Within the lived world, education is always plural, diversified, and even contradictory. There is not a singularity, but a plurality of responses that coexist (Kerlan, 2003).

Through this dialectical perspective, this article will explore the implementation of the PIÉ program by taking into account the narrated experiences of one group of stakeholders: the parents. It sets out to make sense of the complexities, singularities, universality, and contradictions of their lived experiences as they relate to the implementation of this new curriculum. Before doing so, however, it is worth briefly noting some of the literature that deals with curriculum implementation and parental involvement.

2.2. Curriculum Implementation

Research on curriculum implementation has a long but thin history (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992; Wang, 2006) that primarily focuses on change and innovation (Fullan, 1982; Li, 1998; Siu-yin Tong & Adamson, 2013) with a special interest in the diffusion and adoption of innovations (Wang, 2006). For example, Kirkgöz (2008) recently conducted a two-year case study in Turkey. Looking at a group of 32 second language teachers, it examined how second language teacher training and understanding of a new communication-oriented curriculum affected the implementation of such a curriculum in primary education in Turkey. The author found a strong link between training, understanding, and implementation, and thus called for continuous teacher development opportunities to contribute to the implementation of such an initiative.

Very few studies in the field of second language education have explored the lived experiences of different stakeholders associated with curriculum implementation while highlighting the elements that might have affected their experiences. An exception is Wang's 2006 study, which explored the implementation of a mandatory national college English curriculum in China by documenting the perceptions of the intended curriculum and the roles of different stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, administrators, and teachers). Results of the study showed that there was a discrepancy between policymakers' intentions, administrators' interpretation of these intentions, and teachers' implementation. Moreover, resource support, teaching methods, teaching experience, language proficiency, and professional development needs were found to be some of the significant factors that affected the implementation of the new curriculum. It is clear from this study that the implementation

of a new curriculum is contextually-bounded. However, we could not find similar studies that took place in a Canadian francophone minority context.

2.3. Parental Involvement

Parents have become major stakeholders in curriculum implementation (Smit, 2005). A plethora of research has dealt with almost all aspects of parental involvement in school. Interestingly, however, there are few studies that document parents' experiences with the implementation of a curriculum reform—even though we know that parental involvement in school life is a crucial component for student success (Farmer, 2008; Vatz Laaroussi, Kanouté, & Rachédi, 2008). As an example, Jeynes (2003) conducted a meta-analyis of 21 studies, to determine the impact of parental involvement on the academic success of minority learners. The results showed that overall parental involvement had a significant impact on the academic achievement of the minority groups under study.

We also know that parental participation varies according to sociocultural contexts and socioeconomic status (Changkakoti & Akkari, 2008). In their study, Vatz Laaroussi et al. (2008) showed that, in general, disadvantaged parents were implicated in their children's schooling, but not as frequently or intensely as middle- or upper-middle-class parents.

While the finding that disadvantaged parents were less involved in their children's schooling might reinforce opinions that some may commonly hold about immigrant parents and their lack of school involvement, it does not tell the whole story. For instance, Vatz Laaroussi et al. (2008) further found that lower socioeconomic immigrant families in particular often relied on their ethnocultural communities to better understand the culture of the school, and to find the services they needed to support their children academically. In the same vein, Lefevre and Shaw (2012), demonstrated that Latino parents benefited from both formal (i.e., school-based) and informal (i.e., home-based) involvement to support their child's learning. They further argued that parental involvement is a multidimensional construct that occurs in multiple formal and informal ways and it

should be seen as strength as opposed to something that is lacking. What's more, according to Changkakoti and Akkari (2008), factors that might affect the participation of immigrant parents in school life included time constraints, transportation, child care, cultural and linguistic differences, lack of knowledge of the educational system, and discrimination. Despite these difficulties, however, immigrant parents found strategies to support their children, which varied according to the education of the parents, the distance between school and home, and the value placed on schooling (Changkakoti & Akkari, 2008). Similar to our study, Kanouté (2002) highlighted other factors that could affect parental involvement in their children's academic success, including: parental control of progress (e.g., homework verification); interaction between school and parent; and parents' engagement in school activities (e.g., classroom surveillance, participation in school committees, etc.). These findings are in line with the research dedicated to the involvement of newcomer parents in Canadian minority French-speaking schools. For instance, Émond (2008) contends that the inclusion of immigrant parents in such schools remains a challenge mostly because of cultural and linguistic differences, and their lack of knowledge of the educational system. Therefore, immigrant parents often feel powerless in the face of the school and judged by the teachers and the school administration. Similarly, Farmer and Labrie (2008), argue that parents' engagement is negatively affected by the normative way that their participation is defined by the school. According to them, schools' expectations are not always in line with the reality of newcomer families. Moreover, parents' lack of proficiency in French can also play a significant role in their involvement.

2.4. The PIÉ Program

The PIÉ program was created to address the academic needs of newcomers who could not attend regular school programs and needed to become accustomed with the French Canadian context, either because they were educated in very different school systems or because they had a disrupted or sparse educational background.

The general goals of the program are twofold: (1) to enable immigrant learners to speak and write, interpret ideas, and interact with others in French; and (2) to ensure that these learners engage with Francophone culture, community, and institutions. More specifically, within the stated policy of PIÉ, it is recommended that school boards and schools assess the academic background of each newcomer learner through an entrance interview, in order to evaluate their level of literacy in math and French through a series of diagnostic tests. Subsequently, an individualized program can be designed based on their strengths, interests, needs, and culture.

The official curriculum also defines the roles of the various stakeholders (i.e., learners, parents, teachers, principals, and the community). For the parents—the focus of our article—the document strongly advocates, suggests, and encourages three main axes for parental involvement: (1) to get acquainted with the curriculum; (2) to support their children's learning; and (3) to create a home environment conducive to learning and cultural development. How this stated policy was lived is what we will explore in the next section.

To experientially understand how the move from the planned to the lived takes place, and for the sake of brevity, this article will focus on the last two axes (supporting their children's learning and creating a home environment conducive to learning and cultural development) as the organizing themes in our analysis of the parents' lived experiences with the new curriculum.

3. Methodology

Overall, the principal objective of this longitudinal study (September 2010 to June 2013) was to document the implementation of the curriculum for a new support program for newcomers within a French Canadian minority (immigrant) context. This article focuses on results from the first and second years of the study. A multiple case study allowed us to investigate diverse elements within complex environments, so that we could document participants' experiences associated with the implementation of the new curriculum. Each participant had their own take on their

experience, which was revealed to us through their own words.

3.1. Participants

Five school boards accepted our invitation to be part of the study. Two of these were from the eastern part of the province, and three were from the southern part. Each was located in one of two major urban areas that welcome large numbers of newcomers every year. From these school boards, four secondary and six primary schools participated in the study in the first year. In the second year, only seven of these schools (three secondary and four primary) chose to renew their participation.

Through the teachers, parents of newcomer students were invited to be part of the study. A total of 32 parents (20 females and 12 males) accepted our invitation. Participating parents were mostly from the African continent, including Somalia, Algeria, the Ivory Coast, Congo, Cameroon, and Djibouti. They identified a diversity of languages such as Arabic, Swahili, Boulou, Yemba, Bamara, Lingala, and Creole as their native languages. Many of these parents had learned to speak French when they were schoolchildren themselves, and there was a range of French language proficiency among them. Furthermore, some parents were comfortable with English, although others were not. At the time of the research, some parents had been in Canada for less than six months, while others had been there for more than ten years. Some of them had also lived in other countries prior to coming to Canada.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The data used in this article were collected during the first two years of the research from April 2011 to June 2011 and from November 2011 to January 2012. As in any other case study (Yin, 2009), we triangulated the data using diverse data collection instruments that allow consideration of the object of study from multiple angles. In particular, this study documented the experiences of parents using document analysis and focus groups, as explained below.

Document Analysis

We used official curriculum documents to uncover the curriculum-as-planned. This analysis allowed us to highlight explicit and implicit information associated with the PIÉ program's (1) goals and objectives; (2) roles of teachers, principals, and parents; (3) official and recommended resources; and (4) evaluation.

Focus Groups

In each school, we conducted one focus group with the teachers and one with the parents. We were then able to describe and 'think through' with participants their experiences and thus, as much as possible, collect authentic discourses and narratives. The focus group discussions for both groups were conducted in French and focused mainly on participants' knowledge of the planned curriculum and on their experiences associated with the implementation of the curricular innovation. They also had the opportunity to talk about their relationships with other stakeholders.

As Yin (2009) argues, multiple case studies are usually context bounded, so their trustworthiness can be assured by the use of inter- and intra-case analysis associated with a literature review. For this study, our analysis was based on the distinction between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived, as well as what the literature tells us about the strategies used by minority parents to support their children academically (e.g., helping with homework, seeking support from their ethnocultural communities, talking with their children), and the factors that may affect their involvement (e.g., cultural and linguistic barriers, lack of knowledge of the educational system, discrimination). When analyzing the data, we made sure to preserve the nuances and complexity of participants' lived experiences. Data associated with each case were analyzed and coded to uncover emerging themes for each case, and an inter-case analysis was conducted to identify common themes.

4. Results

4.1. Supporting their Children's Learning

Interaction between school and parents

Most parents were very happy with the personal communication they had with their children's schools, especially with the teachers. In fact, it was through these regular interactions with the teachers that most parents were kept updated on their children's progress with the new curriculum, as illustrated by this mother: "*As for me, I look at the school report cards. I am very much in contact with many teachers through email*".

Other parents also pointed to the communication benefits of parent-teacher meetings—an opportunity they very much appreciated. As one parent argued, "*What I particularly liked in Canada, here in [name of the city] where I live, is that they invite the parents, and we come with our kids and we meet each teacher*". One mother indicated that she made it a point to attend every teacher-parent meeting: *"We have meetings with the teachers and I always attend those meetings"*.

Talking with their children

Some parents also said that they kept informally updated on their children's progress with the new curriculum by talking to them about their day at school:

> How do I find out about the progress of my kids? I talk to them. When we talk, it's generally in the evening when they come back from school. In the evening, before going to bed, we have a few minutes when we can talk a little bit about the activities of the day.

Time constraints

While the parents clearly cared about their children's success with the new curriculum, and kept updated on their academic progress in order to contribute to their academic success through their interest, it was not always easy for them to support their children academically at home. One major challenge was the fact that some of the parents were either single or the only parent available (i.e., the other parent was 'back home'). As a result, as one parent contended, it was not always easy to find the time to address all the academic needs of their children:

> I am a single mother with two kids. I stay with them and I give. In the

morning, I am here at the school, and when I come back home, I give them about seven to eight hours, two hours… to help at home, in their classes and all of this. But, still I do my best.

In fact, finding time to do everything seemed to be a challenge for many parents: "*The days are way too short. You work, you…*". One father told us how difficult it was for him to support his child academically, because he sometimes had to commute for three hours to get to work:

Where work is, it's traffic for three and a half hours. Sometimes… it's an hour and a half to get home. When I get back home, I'm very tired. I try to speak to my kid and look at his homework. I know how to help my kid, but not all the time.

Moreover, because he finished work after school hours, this father could not always meet with teachers:

I'd like to talk to the teacher who teaches my son, but my time does not allow me. I finish work at 3:30 pm and school is over… that's the problem for me. I will try to meet Miss. A. I tried to find days off so we could talk, which is very important. I need money too, but my son needs knowledge. He can't go to the store to buy knowledge.

Still, this parent showed commitment to his son's education, as the interview took place at the end of his work day, after traffic delayed him for an additional hour. This father was torn between what he wanted to do (i.e., what ought to be) and what he could do (i.e., what is). His desire to help his child was impeded by his struggle to provide for his family.

Some parents were themselves students at the time of the study (either university students or English as a Second Language [ESL] students). This left them with little time to help their children, for they were busy studying themselves. One parent who was also an ESL student explained it thus:

Yes, with two other children, in the morning, we attend English classes. We also have homework. We can't study and

help our kids to study. It's a bit difficult, now that we also study. Yes, we could say that I study for exams, so I have a lot of things to do and I don't have the time.

Feeling judged by the school

Time management was not the only difficulty that parents faced in regards to supporting their children's learning. Despite their efforts and desire to help their children succeed, their limitations left some parents feeling that they or their children were sometimes unfairly judged by the teachers. Such a perception is not without consequences, as it creates mistrust between the school and the parents, as well as frustration and resentment in the parents. For instance, one mother was particularly frustrated with the school for giving her 15-year-old son a failing grade on his science exam because the exam took place while he was suspended:

He is angry with the administration. He is angry with the teachers. It's not going well at all. Gradually there is stubbornness. They judged his behavior and he says, "I'm a good student. I can do better than that. Judge me according to my ability; judge me according to my performance". They don't take that into consideration.

When it comes to immigrant and marginalized communities, perception is reality (Ibrahim, 2012). According to this mother, her son was misbehaving in school because he had a hard time adapting to the new Canadian school system. She felt that the school did not take that into consideration, and in a way made things worse by punishing him. Building on her son's unpleasant situation, this frustrated mother in turn started to think in terms of 'us' versus 'them' ("They don't take that into consideration") and began to reject the school system itself: "*There is a frustration at the level of the family already, at the level of the parents. How do you want me to communicate with you when I'm losing my child? I don't want your studies anymore*".

Lack of knowledge of the school's culture, language, and system

Moreover, this mother felt unprepared to handle such tension, which is why she

believed she could have benefited from a workshop dedicated to adaptation to another country's culture, language (or ways of talking), and school system:

> *He comes from a culture where not everything is allowed. If he arrives in Canada where everything is allowed, a child suddenly changes. You know that. You can anticipate that, inform your children, provide workshops to give more details, more support at this level. So, it's not just about the academics, but about everyday life.*

In this same vein, another mother added: "*As for me, I would have liked… to have known [the radical difference between the two systems] before coming here, to be, as they say, informed, very informed, yes. And ready too for the [anticipated] change in my children, for the change in myself*". These mothers remind us that, as newcomer parents, they are themselves going through a process of adaptation that may affect the different ways in which they interact with the school and support their children.

Moreover, most parents in this study were not very familiar with the Canadian school system, which made it hard for them to help their children with their homework, as this father admits: "*He brings me his homework, and me, I am unable to help hi*m".

4.2. Creating a Home Environment Conducive to Learning and Cultural Development

Culture

The dilemma between what we want to do and what we can do also seemed to manifest itself in other areas of parental support of their children's learning, namely in relation to creating a home environment conducive to learning and cultural development. The notion of culture can be confusing for some newcomer parents, especially when they start to compare Canada with their country of origin. For instance, one parent who was originally from the Caribbean found that Canada's multicultural context complicated the notion of culture, thus making it almost undefinable: "*My country, when we talk about culture, we talk about Voodoo, artists… in Canada, it's the culture of school. In my*

country, when we talk about culture, well, that's it. It's arts, the artists, the paintings…".

Essentially, for this parent, the conceptualization of culture was very much associated with his country of origin, which created some confusion. We further asked this parent to tell us how he was discovering Canadian culture:

> Parent: *So it depends on acquaintances. My wife, she likes to go to church, to the meetings and talk at Bible study. That's it.*
> Researcher: *So you follow her and stay with her?*
> Parent: *Yes, and for me that's the culture.*

However, such confusion about Canadian culture and what exactly constitutes 'Canadianness', we think, is a healthy mark of parents' active involvement in creating an environment conducive to their children's learning and cultural development for three reasons. First, it shows their genuine struggle within a real cultural context; second, it demonstrates how they want to understand what is going on around them in ways that will enable them to envision their children's success; and, finally, it demonstrates that, for them, culture is dynamic, ever changing, and contingent. In fact, one mother accepted "*everything that is Canadian*"—as long as it did not contradict her religious beliefs and cultural mores:

> *I accept... everything that is Canadian, except for the things that are bad in relation to my culture, my religion and everything. And my customs and traditions as well, they are very good. I keep them and I add the good Canadian ones.*

Squarely putting the responsibility of preserving her heritage and culture on her own shoulders while negotiating the Canadian context, another mother contended: "*That's the role of the parents—to support their children, to tell them don't forget that you come from this country. Don't forget your culture. We have a culture. We have to keep that culture*".

Language

In addition to navigating the Canadian culture, language is another crucial component in these

parents' creation of an environment that is conducive for cultural development and learning. Most parents immigrated to Canada from former French colonies and were very attached to the French language; this is partly why most of them wanted their children to go to French-language schools: "*French, it's important for me that they keep it. Their French, in fact, is why I enrolled them in a school… in Francophone schools*".

It was also important to parents that their children maintained their heritage language, in part to keep a connection with family 'back home'. One parent explained it thus:

> *If one day my children have to speak to my family in Africa, they have grandfathers and grandmothers who do not speak very well in French. So, my children, even if they cannot speak [the language] and people talk to them, they have to know what people say to them to understand. That's what I'm working on.*

Parents reported that they would sometimes speak to their children in their heritage language, and their children would respond in either French or English: "*I speak Swahili and they speak English. That's the problem. And they watch movies in English*". This is not a unique phenomenon; in fact, it is a constant concern for many parents, as they worry about how to maintain both their heritage language and French in a predominantly Anglophone environment: "*I mean, what makes my task difficult is the fact that we are in an Anglophone plac*e". Unfortunately, it seemed that some parents could not find a structure to support their children in maintaining their heritage language.

For most parents, French and English were seen as the languages of success in Canada, and for this reason, some of them felt they had to place more focus on helping their children develop their competence in French and English than in their heritage languages:

> *They have to know French very well, that's our objective. They have to keep the Swahili, but not very well, because for them it's difficult. But French for them is very important… So our language, Swahili, we put it in parentheses; French, it is very important.*

Most parents felt that their children learned English easily outside of school, and for some, enrolling their children in a French-language school was a way to support their family in maintaining the French language: "*I am Francophone. I encourage the children to speak French even if they learn English outside of school. They practice it. They are much advanced in English compared to us, their parents*".

5. Concluding Remarks: Roads (Not) Well Traveled

Overall, findings from this research echo many findings from previous research. In response to our first research question regarding how parents supported their children's learning, we can say that parents in this study were, in sum, caught in a dilemma between what 'is' and what 'ought to be'. In other words, parents were caught between their desire to support their children's academic success and their inability to do so because of factors such as other commitments (e.g., work), lack of information, and time constraints. Parents in this study were also caught between what they knew (i.e., how things were in their countries of origin) and the new realities of life in Canada. Indeed, while the parents in this study made it very clear that their primary priority was their children's success, some of these parents simply did not have the cultural or linguistic tools—and in some cases even the time—to help foster this desire into reality.

In response to our second research question regarding how parents created a home environment that was conducive to learning and cultural development, overall the data revealed that parents made strategic choices to promote their children's learning and cultural development based on several key factors. These factors included: the parents' own understandings of the notion of culture; the status of the French language in the province where the research took place; and the preservation of the families' heritage cultures and languages. Notably, the school's definition of culture was not necessarily compatible with how some parents conceptualized it; for instance, parents' understanding of culture was often closely associated with their experiences in their countries of origin, as well as in their everyday lives in Canada (e.g., as illustrated

by the connection one parent made between culture, his partner's native language, and her relationship with her church).

Given the linguistic dominance of English in the province where the study took place, the parents in this study felt that English was the language that their children would predominantly learn in their everyday life outside of school. This obliged them to take conscious steps towards helping their children to not only learn French, but also maintain their heritage languages. Indeed, all parents thought that it was important for their children to develop knowledge and competence associated with both English and French while simultaneously maintaining their heritage languages (and cultures) as much as possible. Interestingly, the prestige associated with knowing both of Canada's official languages (i.e., English and French) led some parents to focus their efforts on helping their children to develop competence in these two adopted languages—sometimes at the expense of learning their heritage languages. This trade-off is unfortunate, particularly given the fact that heritage languages are an essential bridge linking the children of new Canadians to their cultures and families 'back home'.

As Pinar (2012) argues, the debate on curriculum is a complicated conversation—especially considering that the word 'curriculum' engages people in so many different ways. Indeed, the parents in this study did not see the new PIÉ curriculum as just an entity. Rather, it became a feeling, as parents felt torn between what they wanted to do and what they actually could do to help their children achieve academic success. It also became an action, as parents made deliberate and informed choices about the language they used at home with their children. These evolutions are not surprising, as Aoki (2005) invites us to consider the multiplicities of transformations that occur during the implementation of a new curriculum, and to listen to the voices/wisdom of those who recreate the curriculum through their everyday experiences with school.

We can say that the participants' experiences with the implementation of the new curriculum were indeed grounded within their everyday implicit and explicit experiences with the lived

curriculum. Although none of the parents had read the official curriculum, they all knew they had a role to play in the academic success of their children. Through their voices, we learned that they cared deeply about the wellbeing of their children and about their children's academic success. Adapting to a new culture creates change, and the parents' diverse preparations for such transformations affected how they lived the new curriculum. The parents also suggested ways to support them through this process by, for instance, providing them with workshops about Canada's school systems.

As we 'think through' the experiences of newcomer parents in terms of the implementation of this new PIÉ program, we become aware of three things. First, although research on curriculum implementation has a fairly long history, there is a lack of literature that focuses on the experiences of parents within such processes, particularly in language minority communities. This is surprising, especially considering that expectations in regards to parents' involvement in their children's schooling are steadily increasing. We believe this study helps to fill this gap. Second, more research on the dynamic flow of stakeholders' experiences between the planned and the lived curriculum in minority language-speaking schools is needed to better understand the complexities, singularities, universality, and contradictions of their lived experiences when implementing a new curriculum. Finally, significant to note, the line between the planned and the lived is definitely not straight, but rather travels in multiple, unpredictable, and unexpected directions. Indeed, we could not have predicted the associations that parents made in regards to the curriculum, language, and culture.

Wallin (2010) invites us to move away from a priori social organizations based on an anticipated image of what 'is', and instead to be open to the 'people yet to come.' Through sharing their experiences, the parents in this study showed us that they were indeed constantly transforming through their everyday experiences with the ever-recreated curriculum. Their words invited us to let go of our pre-established images of who they were, and to embark with them on their journeys to draw

upon their own lived experiences to support their children's learning and success against their new Canadian backdrop. It is now up to us to accept or decline their invitation. But it is worth repeating … to her – the mother - that:

For she who hope,
Tell her the journey has begun!
For she who love,
Tell her love is around the corner.

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