

Educator Acceptance of Curriculum and Assessment Reforms Through Professional Learning and Organizational Support: Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum and assessment reforms seek to improve educational quality, equity, and relevance, yet gaps persist between policy intentions and classroom enactment. This systematic review synthesizes 30 Scopus-indexed empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 to examine educator acceptance of reforms, emphasizing the mediating roles of professional learning and organizational support. Educator acceptance is conceptualized as a dynamic, multidimensional process shaped by beliefs, affective responses, perceived feasibility, and professional identity. Findings are organized into four themes: individual determinants, professional learning, organizational support and policy coherence, and temporal dynamics of enactment. Sustained enactment is most strongly supported by continuous, practice-embedded professional learning and coherent organizational conditions, whereas misaligned accountability systems, inadequate training, and increasing workload demands frequently produce superficial or compliance-oriented implementation.

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Introduction

Curriculum and assessment reforms are widely promoted as key strategies for improving educational quality, equity, and relevance in rapidly changing social and economic contexts. Education systems around the world increasingly adopt curriculum redesign, competency-based assessment, formative assessment policies, and learner-centred pedagogies to modernize teaching and learning. Despite these ambitions, a substantial body of empirical research shows that such reforms often fall short at the level of classroom practice, resulting in a persistent gap between policy intent and instructional reality. This gap cannot be explained by technical flaws in policy design alone; rather, it reflects the complex human, cultural, and organizational dynamics that shape how reforms are interpreted, accepted, and enacted by educators in their daily work.

A growing body of literature identifies educator acceptance, including teachers' attitudes, readiness, concerns, and resistance, as a decisive factor in determining whether curriculum and assessment reforms are meaningfully implemented. Research consistently demonstrates that even well-designed reforms may fail when teachers perceive them as unclear, impractical, misaligned with existing practices, or incompatible with their professional values. For example,

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previous study show that school culture and leadership practices strongly influence teachers' receptivity to reform initiatives, shaping whether policies are viewed as opportunities for improvement or as externally imposed burdens [1]. Another study highlights that formative assessment reforms depend heavily on adequate resources and supportive school environments [2]. Without these conditions, teachers often limit their engagement to surface-level compliance. These findings reinforce the view that reform implementation is fundamentally a human-systems challenge.

Empirical studies further indicate that teachers frequently struggle to align reform expectations with classroom realities. Teachers attempt to reconcile new pedagogical mandates with entrenched routines, limited time, and contextual constraints, leading to partial or inconsistent enactment [3]. This suggests that acceptance is not merely agreement with reform goals, but also a judgment about feasibility and professional capability. Emotional and cultural dimensions also play a central role. The feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and professional vulnerability can undermine reform uptake, particularly when teachers lack opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and practices [4]. Acceptance therefore emerges as a cognitive, affective, and practical process shaped by how educators experience change.

Research on teacher beliefs and concerns strengthens this perspective. Ambiguous policy communication and increased practical demands often intensify teachers' concerns and weaken their willingness to embrace reform [5,6]. When guidance is insufficient, teachers may adopt defensive strategies ranging from minimal compliance to active resistance. Collectively, these studies conceptualize educator acceptance as a dynamic construct that integrates emotional responses, belief systems, and assessments of practicality, all of which influence how reforms are enacted in classrooms.

Beyond individual dispositions, educator acceptance has important system-level implications. Teachers are more likely to engage deeply with reforms when they perceive them as supporting, rather than undermining, their professional autonomy and instructional purpose. Professional development initiatives that build teachers' confidence and pedagogical skills play a crucial role in fostering acceptance and improving implementation outcomes [7]. In contrast, limited collective sensemaking around reform goals can generate confusion, making it difficult for teachers to adapt new curricula or assessment practices effectively [8].

Curriculum and assessment reforms also reshape teachers' professional roles and identities, often intensifying workload, and emotional demands. Reforms frequently require teachers to adopt unfamiliar pedagogical approaches while continuing to meet existing accountability requirements, contributing to stress and burnout [9]. Such pressures can weaken acceptance, particularly when reforms are layered onto existing responsibilities without adequate structural support. Collaborative professional environments and sustained collegial interaction are therefore critical, as they enable teachers to jointly interpret reforms and develop shared practices [8]. In this sense, professional learning, and organizational support function not only as implementation tools, but as conditions for acceptance.

Contextual factors at the school and system levels further shape how reforms are received. Supportive school cultures characterized by collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility tend to enhance acceptance by normalizing experimentation and reducing perceived risk [2,10]. Conversely, cultures resistant to change, often reinforced by high-stakes accountability, are associated with fragile acceptance and reluctance among educators. Leadership plays a particularly influential role. When school leaders articulate a coherent vision that aligns reform goals with local priorities, teachers are more likely to engage constructively with change initiatives [11]. Ambiguous or contradictory leadership messages, by contrast, can amplify uncertainty and resistance.

The policy-to-practice gap also varies across education levels and reform types, underscoring the importance of context-sensitive analysis. In primary education, curriculum reforms often increase teachers' workload, which can overshadow the intended benefits of formative assessment practices [12]. Secondary teachers frequently resist assessment reforms due to deeply embedded instructional traditions and subject-specific beliefs [13]. In higher education, competency-based and outcomes-oriented reforms reveal persistent disconnections between policy aspirations and instructional realities, often linked to limited

faculty training and insufficient resources [12,14]. These patterns illustrate that educator acceptance is not uniform, but shaped by institutional histories, professional norms, and structural conditions.

Taken together, the literature suggests that pathways from curriculum and assessment reform to classroom practice are complex and non-linear. Educator acceptance emerges as a multi-level and evolving mechanism influenced by individual beliefs and emotions, professional learning opportunities, organizational support, and policy coherence. Yet existing research often examines these dimensions in isolation. This systematic literature review addresses this gap by synthesizing empirical evidence on educator acceptance of curriculum and assessment reforms through the lenses of professional learning and organizational support. By integrating these strands, the review offers an overarching framework to explain how policy intent is translated, successfully or unsuccessfully, into classroom reality, and provides practical insights for policymakers, school leaders, and professional development designers seeking reforms that educators can genuinely accept, enact, and sustain.

Method

This systematic literature review was designed and conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure methodological transparency, rigor, and reproducibility. Explicit inclusion criteria were applied, limiting the review to peer-reviewed journal articles and review papers published in English between 2020 and 2025, with a substantive focus on educator acceptance, attitudes, readiness, resistance, or enactment related to curriculum and/or assessment reforms in formal education contexts. Scopus was used as the sole database due to its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed educational research. Predefined Boolean search strings namely ("curriculum policy" OR "education policy" OR "curriculum reform policy") AND ("implementation" OR "enactment" OR "policy acceptance") AND ("professional development" OR "in-service training") targeting curriculum and assessment reform, policy implementation or acceptance, and professional learning were applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords. The search yielded 187 records, with no duplicates identified. After title and abstract screening, 71 records published prior to 2020 were excluded, resulting in 116 records retrieved. Full-text eligibility assessment was conducted on 80 articles after document type and language filtering, leading to the exclusion of 50 studies outside the review scope. Ultimately, 30 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. The entire selection process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram presented in Figure 1 [15].

Following PRISMA guidelines, a structured and iterative data extraction protocol was applied to all included studies. Extracted data included publication details, country and educational level, reform focus, study design and methodology, sample characteristics, conceptualizations of educator acceptance, professional learning mechanisms, organizational support conditions, and key findings related to acceptance and enactment. Data analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach, combining inductive and deductive coding informed by the review's conceptual framework and prior theory on educator acceptance, professional learning, and policy enactment. Through iterative comparison across studies, codes were clustered into higher-order analytical categories, resulting in four overarching themes: individual-level determinants of acceptance, professional learning mechanisms, organizational support and policy coherence, and temporal dynamics and sustainability of enactment. This approach enabled systematic cross-study comparison across diverse contexts and methodologies.

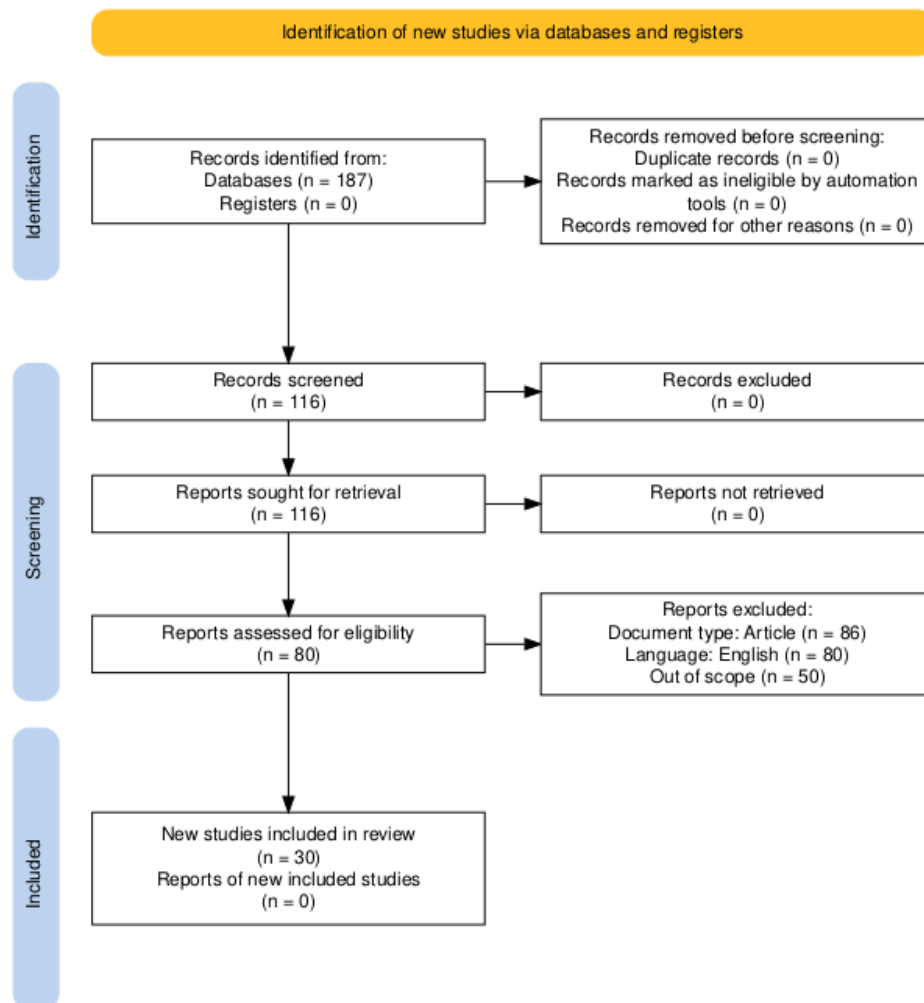


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework

Results and Discussion

Individual-level determinants of educator acceptance

The reviewed studies consistently identify educator acceptance as a critical yet fragile factor in translating curriculum and assessment reform policies into classroom practice. Across diverse national and institutional contexts, acceptance emerges as a multidimensional construct encompassing beliefs, attitudes, emotional responses, perceived feasibility, and professional identity. Evidence from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research demonstrates that positive orientations toward reform goals do not automatically result in consistent enactment. Instead, acceptance is frequently mediated by teachers' judgments about practicality, professional capacity, workload, and alignment with existing roles and organizational conditions, underscoring the contextual and dynamic nature of reform engagement.

Large-scale quantitative studies illustrate how individual beliefs and readiness shape overall acceptance patterns while simultaneously revealing persistent gaps between endorsement and practice. Similarly, Mengiste [16], surveying 258 secondary school social studies teachers in Ethiopia, finds that although teachers broadly endorsed constructivist and active-learning principles, their classroom practices only partially reflected these beliefs. This acceptance, practice gap suggests that favorable beliefs alone are insufficient when professional capacity, time, and contextual supports are constrained.

Longitudinal evidence further highlights the evolving nature of acceptance over time. Post and van der Molen [17] provide one of the few longitudinal contributions in this area,

demonstrating that an attitude-focused professional development program produced sustained improvements in both teachers' attitudes and inquiry-based teaching practices. Importantly, these effects remained evident one year after the intervention. This finding supports claims that professional learning initiatives explicitly targeting beliefs and confidence can stabilize acceptance and reduce the likelihood of short-lived or compliance-driven responses.

Qualitative studies offer deeper insight into how acceptance is actively negotiated in practice. The examination of four EFL teachers in Vietnam, describe patterns of selective acceptance, whereby teachers adopted certain mandated curriculum methods while resisting others [18]. Acceptance was shaped by professional agency, prior experience, and perceptions of local feasibility, aligning with adaptive enactment perspectives. Similarly, teacher identity and agency play a central role in mediating acceptance of English curriculum reforms in China, framing acceptance as contingent on how teachers reconcile reform expectations with their professional self-concepts [19].

Emotional and affective dimensions are particularly visible in inclusive education and assessment reforms. A survey about 283 preschool teachers in Taiwan, reports strong endorsement of inclusive education principles alongside weaker enactment of inclusive practices [20]. This pattern suggests that emotional commitment may coexist with uncertainty and practical constraint, resulting in partial implementation. Comparable dynamics appear in higher education. Drawing on mixed-methods data from 183 university faculty members in Spain, find that acceptance of competence-based assessment reforms depended heavily on perceptions of fairness, objectivity, and reliability [21]. Even when faculty understood the pedagogical rationale, concerns about workload and feasibility tempered their willingness to fully enact reform expectations.

Smaller-scale qualitative studies further reveal how policy pressure and institutional expectations shape acceptance as procedural compliance. Study on four Malaysian secondary school teachers, show that teachers aligned lesson planning with classroom-based assessment policies, yet enactment remained constrained by exam-oriented cultures and administrative demands [22]. Similarly, study on four Grade 11 science teachers in South Africa, document compliance-oriented enactment, with teachers implementing only minimal practical work to satisfy policy requirements [23]. These findings echo broader arguments that accountability-driven reforms may generate surface-level acceptance without deep pedagogical commitment.

Negative acceptance trajectories are also evident where reforms are perceived as misaligned with school realities. Based on qualitative data from educators across ten South African high schools, reports widespread skepticism toward transformation-oriented education policies [24]. Teachers' negative attitudes were closely linked to perceived gaps between policy aspirations and resource-constrained contexts, underscoring the importance of contextual feasibility. In professional and higher education settings, analysis of interviews with twenty-five stakeholders across five medical centers in Iran, identify individual-level facilitators such as faculty motivation alongside significant barriers, including insufficient training, cultural resistance, and misaligned assessments [25]. These findings demonstrate that acceptance is embedded in institutional and cultural environments, even though it is experienced at the individual level.

Acceptance-related challenges are also visible in teacher education. Higher education lecturers responsible for inclusive education curricula often struggle with preparedness and time constraints, weakening both acceptance and enactment [26]. Taken together, the evidence confirms that educator acceptance is shaped by the interaction of beliefs, emotions, perceived feasibility, and professional identity. Quantitative studies reveal widespread endorsement of reform principles across large samples, yet qualitative findings repeatedly expose gaps between acceptance and enactment, reinforcing the view that acceptance is a dynamic mechanism requiring sustained professional learning and coherent organizational support.

Table 1. Individual-level determinants of educator acceptance of curriculum and assessment reforms

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
Mengiste [16]	Constructivist curriculum expectations	Ethiopia; 258 secondary teachers	Survey (PLS-SEM)	Favorable constructivist beliefs contrasted with weaker classroom enactment, indicating acceptance–practice gap.
Post & van der Molen [17]	Inquiry-based teaching as reform practice	Primary teachers; treatment vs delayed group	Longitudinal school development program; questionnaires & interviews; 1-year follow-up	Attitude-focused training improved attitudes and inquiry teaching behavior; effects persisted after one year.
Thi et al. [18]	Curriculum mandates (Getting-to-Know-English)	Vietnam; 4 EFL teachers	Qualitative case study; interviews, observations, documents	Teachers selectively accepted mandated methods; acceptance shaped by agency, identity, and contextual feasibility.
Liyanage & Walker [19]	English curriculum reform policies	China; participants not specified	Conceptual case analysis	Acceptance contingent on negotiation of professional identity and policy expectations.
Wu [20]	Inclusive education reform	Taiwan; 283 preschool teachers	Questionnaire study	Strong inclusive beliefs, weaker enactment due to constraints.
Escorihuela et al. [21]	Competence-based assessment policy	Spain; 183 university faculty	Mixed methods: survey & focus groups	Acceptance depended on perceived fairness, objectivity, and feasibility of assessment.
Mat Yusoff, S., et al. [22]	Classroom-Based Assessment policy	Malaysia; 4 secondary teachers	Qualitative interviews, observations, documents	Planning aligned with policy, but enactment constrained by exam culture and workload.
Kibirige & Maponya [23]	Practical work requirements (CAPS)	South Africa; 4 Grade 11 teachers	Case study	Compliance-oriented acceptance; minimal enactment to meet policy demands.
Ndou [24]	Transformation education policies	South Africa; educators in 10 high schools	Qualitative interviews & focus groups	Negative attitudes linked to misalignment between policy intent and school realities.
Yusefi et al. [25]	Evidence-Based Medical Education reform	Iran; 25 stakeholders across 5 centers	Qualitative content analysis	Acceptance shaped by motivation and competence; hindered by insufficient training and misaligned assessments.
Korkie et al. [26]	Inclusive education in higher education	Higher education lecturers	Contextual qualitative analysis	Acceptance constrained by

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
				preparedness and time pressures.

Professional learning mechanisms shaping acceptance and enactment

Across the reviewed studies, professional learning consistently emerges as a central mechanism through which educator acceptance of curriculum and assessment reforms is constructed, stabilized, and translated into classroom enactment. Rather than functioning merely as technical support, professional learning shapes how educators interpret reform intent, judge feasibility, and develop confidence to enact new practices. Evidence across educational levels and national contexts shows that sustained, practice-embedded, and collaborative professional learning is more strongly associated with durable acceptance than short-term or compliance-oriented training.

When professional learning is designed as an ongoing and participatory process, it reshapes educators' attitudes and engagement with reform. Study on primary teachers in two Indonesian schools, demonstrate that a community-based academic supervision model transformed supervision from a bureaucratic requirement into a collaborative learning opportunity [27]. Through cycles of joint planning, reflective observation, and collective reflection, teachers strengthened pedagogical competence and willingness to engage with instructional change. These findings align with theoretical arguments that acceptance is fostered when professional learning supports sensemaking and professional agency rather than surveillance.

Longitudinal evidence further highlights the role of professional learning in sustaining acceptance over time. Report on a two-year whole-school professionalization program involving six primary schools, showing sustained improvements in teachers' attitudes toward inquiry-based teaching and corresponding classroom practices, with effects persisting one year after the program ended [17]. This evidence indicates that professional learning targeting beliefs, routines, and confidence can generate enduring reform-consistent enactment rather than short-lived compliance.

In contrast, inadequate professional learning is repeatedly linked to constrained acceptance, particularly in assessment-focused reforms. Malaysian secondary teachers aligned lesson planning with classroom-based assessment policies, yet enactment remained procedural due to insufficient assessment-literacy training, heavy administrative workloads, and exam-oriented school cultures [22]. Similarly, a survey data from 4,585 preschool teachers in Taiwan, reports strong endorsement of inclusive education alongside weaker enactment of inclusive practices, attributing this gap to limited access to specialized professional development and inconsistent administrative support [20]. These findings indicate that acceptance without skill-specific learning remains fragile.

Qualitative research in resource-constrained contexts further illustrates how professional learning mediates reform feasibility. There is disconnection between constructivist curriculum rhetoric and teacher-centred practices among Ethiopian upper-primary teachers, linked to limited hands-on training, large class sizes, and insufficient instructional materials [28]. In this case, acceptance existed at a discursive level but could not be enacted without sustained, practice-oriented professional development aligned with classroom realities.

Comparable dynamics appear in higher and professional education. Analysis of interviews with 25 participants across five Iranian medical centers, identify faculty development as a key facilitator of acceptance and adoption of Evidence-Based Medical Education, while insufficient training and misaligned assessment systems constrained engagement [25]. Similarly, teacher educators in a South African university valued inclusive education but struggled with enactment due to limited time, resources, and professional learning opportunities, demonstrating that acceptance challenges extend across the professional continuum [26].

Policy-level evaluations reinforce the consequences of minimal professional learning provision. Across low-resource contexts, evidence suggests that short-term and fragmented training models are insufficient to support deep internalization of curriculum expectations or pedagogical routines, resulting in weak acceptance and limited enactment at scale. Subject-specific professional learning, however, illustrates the potential of targeted capacity building. Professional development focused on learner-centred role-play pedagogy enhanced English teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and instructional flexibility, strengthening acceptance by linking reform expectations to workable classroom strategies [29].

Taken together, the evidence confirms that professional learning mechanisms strongly condition educator acceptance and enactment of curriculum and assessment reforms. Acceptance deepens when professional learning is sustained, collaborative, and closely aligned with classroom realities, while fragmented provision undermines internalization and practice. These findings substantiate theoretical claims that acceptance is constructed through learning processes that reduce uncertainty, build competence, and legitimize reform as achievable in everyday educational practice.

Table 2. Professional learning and capacity-building mechanisms shaping educator acceptance and enactment of curriculum/assessment reforms

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
Post & van der Molen [17]	Long-term whole-school professionalization and the durability of attitude-focused professional development (PD).	Netherlands; primary schools (6 schools)	Program evaluation of a two-year longitudinal intervention	Improved attitudes and inquiry-based teaching behavior sustained one-year post-program.
Wu [20]	The role of skill-specific PD (e.g., UDL) in bridging the gap between teacher beliefs and inclusive education practice.	Taiwan; preschool (4,585 teachers)	Belief–practice gap lens	Positive beliefs were present, but enactment remained weak due to limited training and support.
Mat Yusoff et al. [22]	The alignment between assessment literacy policy and actual classroom practice amidst workload constraints.	Malaysia; secondary schools (4 teachers)	Policy–practice alignment lens	Planning aligned with policy, but enactment was constrained by high workload and exam culture.
Yusefi et al. [25]	Faculty development programs for Evidence-Based Medical Education (EBME) and incentive alignment.	Iran; medical education (25 participants)	Implementation-factors lens	Competence and motivation enabled acceptance; however, training gaps hindered systemic uptake.
Korkie et al. [26]	Capacity building and in-service training needs for teacher educators within higher education policy frameworks.	South Africa; higher education	Policy implementation lens	Acceptance of reforms was significantly constrained by limited time and insufficient training.
Barokah et al. [27]	Community-based academic supervision	Indonesia; primary	Practice-development / R&D	Improved pedagogical

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
	as a collaborative learning mechanism to strengthen pedagogical acceptance.	schools (2 schools)	cycle (collaborative planning, observation, reflection)	competence and more participatory attitudes toward supervision.
Tegegne et al. [28]	The implementation of constructivist pedagogy through hands-on training in resource-constrained contexts.	Ethiopia; upper primary (9 teachers)	Constructivist implementation lens	Acceptance of pedagogical ideals was high, yet teacher-centered practices persisted.
Namanyane & Shaoan [29]	The impact of PD programs on Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and learner-centered enactment.	China; English language curriculum	Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework	Enhanced PCK through PD led to improved learner-centered enactment and reform acceptance.

Organizational support and policy coherence

The evidence synthesized in this theme demonstrates that educator acceptance of curriculum and assessment reforms is profoundly shaped by organizational support structures and policy coherence, which condition whether individual willingness and professional learning efforts can be translated into sustained classroom enactment. Across diverse contexts, leadership practices, availability of resources, workload arrangements, and alignment between curriculum, assessment, and accountability systems emerge as decisive factors that either stabilize or erode acceptance over time.

Quantitative evidence underscores the centrality of leadership in reducing reform-related concerns and fostering acceptance. Drawing on survey data from 319 teachers and school leaders across public basic schools in Ghana and analyzed using structural equation modeling, show that learning-centred leadership significantly reduced teachers' concerns about standards-based curriculum implementation [30]. This relationship was partly mediated by teacher innovative behaviour, indicating that leadership enhances acceptance not only directly, but also indirectly by legitimizing experimentation and pedagogical risk-taking. These findings substantiate theoretical claims that acceptance is socially constructed within organizational climates that value learning and professional agency.

Qualitative school-level studies further illuminate how leadership and organizational sensemaking shape acceptance during reform preparation and rollout. Study on four secondary schools in Wales through interviews with 13 staff members reveal that educator acceptance of the Curriculum for Wales depended on schools' capacity to reconcile reform goals with entrenched accountability pressures [31]. Where leadership reframed performance expectations to align with the reform's holistic emphasis on well-being, educators demonstrated cautious but constructive engagement. Conversely, unresolved tensions between traditional attainment metrics and reform aspirations generated uncertainty and fragile acceptance.

Leadership practices at the instructional level also play a critical role in translating policy intent into coherent school routines. Primary school principals who actively structured collaborative planning, reflection, and monitoring for learning enabled teachers to develop shared understandings of reform expectations [32]. Although qualitative in nature, the study provides compelling evidence that acceptance is strengthened when leadership moves beyond symbolic endorsement to hands-on orchestration of reform-consistent practices.

Assessment-policy coherence emerges as a recurring determinant of acceptance, particularly where reforms challenge established evaluative cultures. Based on in-depth

qualitative data from four Malaysian secondary teachers, illustrate how persistent exam-oriented cultures and administrative workload undermine acceptance of classroom-based assessment reforms [22]. Although teachers aligned planning with policy objectives, misalignment between formative assessment ideals and high-stakes examination systems constrained enactment, reinforcing compliance-oriented behaviours rather than deep pedagogical change. This pattern echoes broader arguments that acceptance weakens when accountability signals contradict reform intentions.

System-level coherence is equally critical in higher and professional education. Analysis of interviews with 25 stakeholders across five medical centers in Iran, identify the absence of national guidelines, misaligned assessment systems, and rigid curricular structures as major barriers to acceptance of Evidence-Based Medical Education reforms [25]. Even when individual educators were motivated and professionally competent, weak organizational and policy alignment limited their capacity to enact reform practices consistently, demonstrating how systemic incoherence can override individual acceptance.

Upstream organizational conditions in teacher education also shape downstream reform acceptance. Lecturers responsible for inclusive education faced constraints related to time, workload, and fragmented program structures [26]. These organizational limitations undermined acceptance and enactment of inclusive practices, with implications for how future teachers are prepared to implement reform agendas. The study underscores that acceptance must be cultivated across the entire professional pipeline, not only within schools.

Equity-oriented studies further demonstrate how uneven organizational support shapes differentiated acceptance across contexts. Evaluation of early childhood education reforms in rural Bangladesh, highlights how limited training infrastructure and weak implementation support constrained educators' readiness and acceptance [33]. Similarly, study on six Foundation Phase teachers in rural inclusive schools in South Africa, show that insufficient district-level guidance inhibited teachers' ability to adapt curricula for diverse learners [34]. In both cases, fragile acceptance reflected structural inequalities in support capacity rather than ideological resistance.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that organizational support and policy coherence are not peripheral contextual factors, but core determinants of educator acceptance. Quantitative evidence and rich qualitative insights consistently show that leadership, aligned assessment systems, clear guidance, and equitable resource distribution are essential for sustaining acceptance and reform-consistent enactment. When such conditions are absent, acceptance is reduced to superficial compliance, regardless of educators' individual motivation or professional learning experiences.

Table 3. *Organizational support, leadership, and policy-coherence conditions shaping educator acceptance and enactment*

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
Mat Yusoff et al. [22]	Workload management and the conflict between exam-centric culture and formative assessment policy.	Malaysia; secondary schools (4 teachers)	Small-sample qualitative analysis	Planning remained aligned with policy, but actual enactment was significantly constrained.
Yusefi et al. [25]	Institutional incentives and leadership support amidst misaligned national assessment guidelines.	Iran; 5 medical centers (25 stakeholders)	Qualitative study in an LMIC (Low-and-Middle-Income) context	Partial acceptance resulting in superficial compliance due to systemic barriers.
Korkie et al. [26]	Resource allocation and in-service training within	Higher education; lecturers	Upstream policy-focused qualitative analysis	Weak acceptance and enactment of inclusion-related

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
Manu et al. [30]	fragmented program structures. Learning-centered leadership and the alignment of practices with standards-based curriculum.	Ghana; basic schools (319 teachers and leaders)	Quantitative cross-sectional design (Urban–rural variation)	pedagogical reforms. Reduced teacher concerns; acceptance was mediated by innovative behavior.
Embling et al. [31]	Leadership sensemaking and tensions between accountability pressures and holistic reform goals.	Wales; secondary schools (13 staff in 4 schools)	Small-N qualitative case studies	Conditional acceptance characterized by cautious engagement with reforms.
Ralebese et al. [32]	Instructional leadership and the translation of policy intent into structured routines and monitoring.	Primary schools; principals	Qualitative case study	Improved readiness and enactment through structured reflection and oversight.
Dasgupta [33]	Training infrastructure and the lack of coherence between policy mandates and implementation capacity.	Bangladesh; rural Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Equity-focused descriptive/qualitative study	Limited teacher acceptance and readiness due to weak institutional support.
Ledwaba & Sefotho [34]	District-based support mechanisms and gaps between policy mandates and practical guidance.	South Africa; 3 rural inclusive schools (6 teachers)	Qualitative study focusing on rural resource constraints	Inconsistent enactment of inclusive education policies across rural contexts.

Temporal dynamics, enactment pathways, and sustainability

The studies synthesized in this theme demonstrate that educator acceptance of curriculum and assessment reforms is dynamic and temporal, evolving across phases of preparation, rollout, and longer-term stabilization. Acceptance is not fixed at the moment of policy introduction; rather, it fluctuates in response to professional learning opportunities, organizational coherence, leadership continuity, and assessment alignment. Across diverse contexts, the evidence consistently shows that reforms struggle to sustain when acceptance is treated as a one-off outcome rather than as a process requiring continuous reinforcement and support.

Longitudinal and follow-up studies provide the strongest evidence for how acceptance trajectories develop over time. Drawing on a two-year whole-school professional development program with a one-year post-intervention follow-up, demonstrate that educator acceptance can be strengthened and stabilized when professional learning explicitly targets attitudes and instructional routines [17]. Teachers not only reported improved acceptance of inquiry-based teaching but also sustained enactment one year after formal support ended. This finding indicates that acceptance deepened through prolonged engagement rather than dissipating after initial implementation, supporting theoretical claims that acceptance is constructed through repeated cycles of sensemaking and practice.

In contrast, studies focusing on early implementation phases reveal how fragile acceptance can be when coherence is not established before rollout. Based on study of reform

preparation in four secondary schools in Wales, show that educator acceptance during the pre-rollout phase depended on perceived alignment between reform goals and accountability expectations [31]. Where such alignment was unclear, acceptance remained cautious and conditional, suggesting that early ambiguity can constrain subsequent enactment. These findings underscore the importance of reform sequencing, particularly the need to clarify assessment and accountability narratives prior to large-scale implementation.

Several studies illustrate how acceptance evolves or erodes during the so-called long tail of reform implementation. Acceptance can deteriorate when reforms transition from professional learning initiatives into administrative routines [35]. In such cases, teachers may continue to comply with formal requirements while disengaging from the pedagogical intent of the reform. This pattern aligns with broader critiques of compliance-oriented enactment and demonstrates that sustainability depends on maintaining reform as a learning-oriented process rather than a bureaucratic obligation.

Historical and system-level analyses further reveal that acceptance trajectories are shaped by institutional maturation over extended periods. Based on tracing inclusive education implementation in Vietnam across multiple decades, show that early resistance and implementation challenges gradually shifted as policy infrastructures, training systems, and professional norms developed [36]. Acceptance emerged as a cumulative outcome of system capacity-building rather than immediate buy-in. Such long-term perspectives reinforce arguments that sustainable acceptance requires investment in institutional learning and support structures.

Evidence from teacher education and early enactment phases also highlights selective and adaptive acceptance pathways. Mentors in teacher education function as critical intermediaries in national policy implementation, with acceptance depending on their opportunities for policy learning and institutional support [37]. Where mentors were supported, acceptance translated into coherent enactment; where support was weak, enactment was fragmented. Similarly, base on study of four EFL teachers in Vietnam, document selective acceptance during early rollout, where teachers adopted some mandated practices while resisting others based on feasibility and professional judgment [18]. These adaptive pathways illustrate that acceptance often manifests as negotiated enactment rather than wholesale adoption.

Assessment-related reforms reveal particularly persistent sustainability challenges. Acceptance stagnated when planning alignment was not matched by changes in workload and exam-oriented accountability systems [22]. Teachers continued to rely on legacy assessment practices, indicating that without systemic realignment, acceptance remains superficial and enactment unsustainable. Comparable compliance-driven trajectories are evident in case study of four South African science teachers, where practical work requirements were met minimally to satisfy policy demands rather than to transform pedagogy [23].

Equity-focused studies further demonstrate how sustainability is conditioned by contextual capacity. Study of six Foundation Phase teachers across three rural inclusive schools, show that acceptance of inclusive education mandates weakened over time due to limited district-level support and practical guidance [34]. Similarly, Early childhood education reforms in rural Bangladesh struggled to gain sustained acceptance because teachers received minimal preparation and support during early implementation [33]. In both cases, constrained acceptance reflected structural inequities rather than educators' ideological opposition.

Collectively, the findings indicate that acceptance follows multiple enactment pathways, ranging from durable professional commitment to selective adaptation and compliance-driven persistence. Quantitative and qualitative evidence converge on the conclusion that sustainability depends on reform sequencing, continuous professional learning, and coherent organizational and assessment structures. Educator acceptance is therefore best understood as a longitudinal mechanism that must be reinforced across implementation phases to prevent drift and ensure that curriculum and assessment reforms become embedded in everyday practice.

Table 4. *Temporal dynamics, enactment pathways, and sustainability of educator acceptance and reform enactment*

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
Post & van der Molen [17]	The maintenance of inquiry-based enactment through early and sustained professional development (PD).	Primary education context	Longitudinal study (2 years and 1-year follow-up)	Acceptance strengthened over time, leading to durable and sustained pedagogical enactment.
Thi et al. [18]	Early enactment phases and the impact of practice-specific training on selective adaptation.	4 teachers	Qualitative case study	Teachers demonstrated selective acceptance, leading to uneven and inconsistent implementation.
Mat Yusoff et al. [22]	The impact of assessment requirements and workload on the sustainability of reform roll-outs.	4 secondary teachers (Malaysia)	Qualitative study	Acceptance remained stagnant, resulting in weak sustainability and poor enactment of the reform.
Kibirige & Maponya [23]	Enactment under pressure and the tension between compliance-oriented acceptance and pedagogical change.	4 teachers	Case study	Acceptance was primarily compliance-oriented, resulting in minimal actual pedagogical transformation.
Embling et al. [31]	Pre-rollout preparation and the alignment of accountability systems to prevent partial uptake.	4 secondary schools (Wales)	Qualitative case studies	Initial acceptance was conditional and cautious, presenting a high risk of fragmented implementation.
Dasgupta [33]	Early implementation readiness and the establishment of minimum training standards in rural settings.	Rural Early Childhood Education (Bangladesh)	Policy evaluation	Low levels of readiness and acceptance resulted in fragile and unstable reform quality.
Ledwaba & Sefotho [34]	Ongoing implementation and the influence of district-level support on teacher adaptation.	6 teachers; 3 schools (South Africa)	Qualitative study	Acceptance remained conditional, leading to inconsistent adaptation of the mandated changes.
Revina et al. [35]	Post-reform sustainability and the necessity of institutionalizing learning loops to avoid reform fatigue.	Case-based educational reform context	Long-term case-based analysis	Acceptance eroded under the pressure of administrative compliance, resulting in significant reform fatigue.
Hai et al. [36]	Long-term implementation and the normalization of acceptance through systemic capacity building.	National education system	Decadal historical and system analysis	Gradual normalization of acceptance led to the successful institutionalization of inclusive practices.
Orland-Barak [37]	The role of mentor capacity in embedding national policies and	National policy level	Empirical national policy study	Mentor-mediated acceptance facilitated coherent enactment

Authors	Focus	Context & participants	Methodology	Results
	mediating teacher acceptance.			when structural support was provided.

Discussion

Before presenting the interpretive synthesis, it is important to note that Tables 1 to 4 include only empirically synthesized studies that form the core evidence base of this review. Additional references cited in this Discussion are used explicitly for theoretical contextualization, methodological critique, and policy interpretation, rather than as primary empirical evidence. This review demonstrates that educator acceptance of curriculum and assessment reforms is best understood as an outcome of interacting professional learning and organizational support systems, rather than as an isolated attitudinal disposition. Evidence synthesized across Tables 1 to 4 consistently shows that when professional learning is sustained, practice-embedded, and aligned with reform demands, acceptance is more likely to develop into durable enactment [17,20,27]. Large-scale and small-N studies alike indicate that teachers often express positive beliefs toward reform goals, yet enactment quality depends on whether professional learning builds concrete pedagogical and assessment-related capacity [16,21]. This pattern aligns with findings that professional training positively shapes teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, enhancing readiness for reform, particularly when supported by collaboration between educators and policymakers [38].

However, acceptance does not consistently yield high-quality classroom practice. Across various settings, structural constraints such as heavy workloads, limited resources, and misaligned accountability systems frequently disrupt the acceptance-to-enactment pathway. [22,25,30]. As shown in Table 4, these constraints often lead to selective adaptation or compliance-oriented enactment rather than pedagogical transformation [18,23]. Similarly, pedagogical unpreparedness and logistical limitations can cause educators to revert to familiar practices, even when reform goals are valued [39]. Emotional and psychological readiness further moderates this process, reinforcing the need for time, agency, and supportive environments to sustain acceptance [40].

The synthesis also highlights significant methodological gaps in the existing literature. Despite the clear temporal dynamics identified before, most studies rely on cross-sectional designs, limiting insight into how acceptance evolves and stabilizes over time [41,42]. Overreliance on self-report measures further constrains understanding of the relationship between stated acceptance and enacted practice [43]. These limitations restrict theory-building around acceptance as a longitudinal mechanism.

Finally, the findings carry important implications for policy design. Fragmented reforms, where curriculum, assessment, and professional development are misaligned, consistently undermine educator confidence and engagement [22,44]. Evidence across Tables 2 to 4 suggests that sequencing matters: professional development should precede and accompany curriculum and assessment change to enhance preparedness and acceptance [45]. Overall, sustainable reform depends on coherent policy packages that integrate professional learning, organizational support, and accountability alignment, positioning acceptance as a process to be cultivated rather than assumed.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review set out to explain how curriculum and assessment reforms move from policy intent to classroom reality by examining educator acceptance through the lenses of professional learning and organizational support. Synthesizing evidence from recent empirical studies, the review demonstrates that educator acceptance is not a static attitude but a dynamic, multi-level process shaped by beliefs, emotions, professional capacity, and institutional conditions.

First, the review shows that individual educators often endorse the goals of curriculum and assessment reforms, yet this acceptance remains fragile when perceived feasibility,

confidence, and emotional readiness are not adequately supported. Acceptance is therefore best understood as a negotiated process that integrates cognitive, affective, and practical judgments rather than as simple agreement with reform objectives.

Second, professional learning emerges as a decisive mechanism for transforming acceptance into meaningful enactment. Sustained, collaborative, and practice-embedded professional learning strengthens educators' confidence, pedagogical content knowledge, and assessment literacy, enabling them to reconcile reform expectations with classroom realities. In contrast, short-term or fragmented training is insufficient to support durable acceptance and often results in superficial compliance.

Third, organizational support and policy coherence critically condition whether acceptance can be sustained over time. Leadership practices that foster shared sensemaking, aligned assessment and accountability systems, adequate resources, and manageable workloads are essential for stabilizing reform-consistent practice. When these conditions are absent, acceptance frequently deteriorates into selective adaptation or compliance-driven enactment, regardless of educators' initial motivation.

Fourth, the review highlights the importance of temporal dynamics. Acceptance evolves across reform phases and requires continuous reinforcement through professional learning and organizational alignment. Longitudinal evidence remains limited, but available studies suggest that reforms are most likely to be sustained when acceptance is cultivated before, during, and after implementation.

Overall, this review contributes a coherent, multi-level explanation of educator acceptance that bridges psychological, professional, and organizational perspectives. For policymakers and educational leaders, the findings underscore the need to design reform initiatives as integrated policy packages in which curriculum, assessment, professional development, and support structures are aligned and sequenced coherently. For researchers, the review points to the need for more longitudinal, multi-method studies that capture acceptance trajectories and link them more directly to classroom practice and student learning outcomes. By foregrounding educator acceptance as a central mechanism of reform, this review offers a pathway toward more sustainable and context-sensitive curriculum and assessment change.

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Ethical Clearance

Studies that do not involve human participants, data, or personal information must nevertheless adhere to applicable ethical standards and guidelines

AI Declaration

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools (Chat GPT 5.2 and Grammarly) were used solely to assist with language editing and clarity during manuscript preparation. AI was not used for data analysis, interpretation of results, or the generation of scholarly content. All analyses, interpretations, and conclusions are the responsibility of the authors.

Declaration statement

Authors confirm that the manuscript represents original work that has not been previously published nor is currently under consideration elsewhere, and the authors declare no personal, financial, or professional conflicts of interest. The dataset used in this study was retrieved from Scopus-indexed open-access journals and is publicly accessible through their respective published sources. Finally, author contributions were distributed such that the first author led the conceptualization, methodology development, and original draft writing; the second author contributed through critical review, validation, and editing.

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