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THE LINKING OF CURRICULUM MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT WITH IN-SERVICE TRAINING FROM AN IMPLEMENTATION PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

In the Netherlands secondary schools are facing important curriculum changes. Currently, students at the age of 12 have to make a choice between different types of secondary education that differ with respect to level, focus (general or vocational) and subjects taught. The current curricula, which have been in use since 1968, are to be replaced by a curriculum consisting of 15 subjects for all students in the age of 12-15. Minimum goals are set for these 15 subjects. The structure of the secondary school system stays intact.

The National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) has been charged with developing examples of the new curriculum at national, school and classroom level. To stimulate the use of those examples, SLO is planning to cooperate with institutions for in-service teacher training. A basic assumption for this cooperation is that curriculum materials, especially at classroom level, can have an important role in in-service training.

The research project "Curriculum development and in-service training" (LENA) is aimed at the following question:

- What characteristics of curriculum materials at classroom level contribute to more and effective use of those materials in in-service training?

Theoretical background

In recent years a lot of knowlegde about factors that affect implementation has become available. Fullan (1985) has summarized this knowledge and mentions as crucial factors:

- the development of clear and validated materials;
- focused, ongoing in-service training;
- interaction and collegiality at the school level;
- active leadership and administrative support.

The combination of materials development and in-service training is potentially very effective in efforts to improve educational practice. An obvious link between curriculum development and in-service training is the use of exemplary curriculum materials as a source and tool for in-service activities. The various functions of those materials in in-service training can be derived from knowlegde about

effective in-service training practices, for instance from the model of Joyce and Showers (1988). This model consists of the components theory, demonstration, practice, feedback and coaching. Van den Akker (1992) gives the following elaboration:

- theory
  The materials can present background information about the rationale of the curriculum innovation.
- demonstration
  The protocols in the materials can serve as tools for demonstration of both the ideal performance and the potential problems in the teaching practice.
- practice
  The materials can help teachers in practising new skills by providing specific guidance for classroom activities in exemplary lessons.
- feedback
  Teachers can receive feedback on their teaching activities by peer-teachers, using the same materials and exchanging their experiences, or by external observers who have expertise on the innovation in question.
- coaching
  The materials can also be used in follow-up activities when teachers try to implement the new skills in their own instructional setting.

In this research project the function and characteristics of curriculum materials in in-service training will be further explored. Besides a scenario will be developed for the transfer of exemplary curriculum materials to the institutions for in-service training.

Method

First, an inventory will be made of: a) the exemplary curriculum materials SLO has developed/is developing with respect to the innovation and b) the in-service activities that are planned with regard to the curriculum change. This inventory will be made by means of document analyses and interviews. The results of the inventory will be used for the selection of at least two pilot projects in which a scenario will be developed for the transfer of curriculum materials to the institutes for inservice-training.

Results

At ECER, the results of the inventory will be presented together with the research design for the next stage of the project.

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