

# Curriculum Materials as a Learning Device in Inservice Training

Marianne Roes

*University of Twente, Enschede, the Netherlands*

## Introduction

From the implementation literature we know that materials development and inservice training are potentially very effective in supporting implementation efforts (Fullan, 1985). This paper reports about a study in which curriculum materials are used as a learning device in inservice training programs aimed at curriculum implementation. Curriculum materials are defined as exemplary packages of student and teacher materials that are ready for classroom use and clearly represent - in operational terms - the curriculum innovation.

## Design of the study

The entire study consists of three phases: an exploratory, development and evaluation phase.

In the *exploratory* phase we have derived functions of curriculum materials in inservice training from knowledge about effective inservice training practices, especially the model of Joyce and Showers (1988). This model consists of theory, demonstration or modeling, practice, feedback and coaching. Curriculum materials can be used to fill in some of these components. Curriculum materials can have a demonstration function. By studying and analyzing the materials teachers can gain an understanding of the underlying ideas. This function can be enhanced by adding video-recordings of teachers actually working with the materials. Curriculum materials can also have a practice function. Teachers participating in the inservice training can gain some experience with the new teaching approach by carrying out the exemplary lessons in their classrooms. They can get feedback from and exchange experiences with the trainer and other participants working with the same materials.

In the *development* phase of the study these functions of curriculum materials are being operationalized in an inservice training program for mother tongue teachers and in an inservice training program for science teachers (both lower secondary education).

In the *evaluation* phase the effects of these inservice training programs on curriculum implementation will be studied.

This paper reports about the development and formative evaluation of the inservice training program for mother tongue teachers. The curriculum innovation concerns the teaching of communication skills (e.g. having formal conversations, discussions, listening skills, etcetera). To facilitate communication skills acquisition by pupils we have developed a model for structuring lessons. This model consists of four stages: orientation, preparation, execution and reflection. It is applied in a series of five lessons in which pupils learn to

prepare and execute different kinds of formal dialogues. On the basis of a formative evaluation of these lessons, revisions have been made to enhance the practicality and effectiveness of the teacher and student materials.

These curriculum materials were the starting point for the development of an inservice training program on communication skills. This inservice training program consists of four, two-and-a-half hour sessions. During these sessions teachers analyze the exemplary curriculum materials and video-materials of teachers working with these materials. They also get background information on the new teaching approach. In between the sessions teachers carry out the lessons in their own classroom and keep a log of their experiences; they are stimulated to prepare, carry out and reflect on the lessons together with a colleague. Every session starts with reflection on the lessons that have been carried out.

This inservice training program has been tested in the period October 1993 - January 1994. Seventeen participants from three different schools have attended the course. Data on the practicality and effectiveness of the program have been gathered by means of observations of the inservice training sessions and questionnaires (before and after the program). Additional data focused on more long term effects will be gathered in June by means of lesson observations and interviews with a subset of the participants.

### **Results**

The first results show that in general, the participants regard carrying out the exemplary lessons in their own classroom as part of the inservice training program, as useful. These experiences support the creation of an image of the new approach. The participants feel slightly positive about their ability to prepare and carry out lessons on the topic of formal dialogues. As far as lessons on related topics are concerned (e.g. monologue, group discussions), participants feel neither insufficiently nor sufficiently equipped. Every participant plans to use (some of) the ideas and/or materials in the future.

At the ECUNET conference, the entire results of the formative evaluation of this inservice training program will be presented.

M.G. Roes  
University of Twente  
Faculty of Educational Science and Technology  
P.O. Box 217  
7500 AE Enschede  
The Netherlands  
Phone: +31 - 53 - 893557  
Fax: +31 - 53 - 329136