

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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Few would dispute that curriculum development and teacher education go hand in hand. Indeed, a key factor on which the success of curriculum innovations depends is the in-servicing of teachers in the use of new approaches and/or materials. Similarly, teacher training institutions need to incorporate curriculum changes into their "curricula".

The reality, however, is often far from this ideal and while I believe there are good reasons why the teacher education component is often sorely lacking from the process of curriculum development, I will also make a few suggestions of ways of remedying this lack.

Firstly, let us take specific examples to prove the lack of linkages.

In country X, the Curriculum Development section and Teacher Training College are in the same compound. Despite this physical proximity, College lecturers professed no knowledge of curriculum innovations in the language area, while the CDU bemoaned the non-attendance of lecturers at in-service workshops (during a visit by this writer to Country X).

In country Y, many teachers indicate not having attended any in-service workshop on materials which were introduced 15 years ago. In addition, no copies of teachers' books were available in their schools. The teacher's book provides at least some basic in-servicing on ways of implementing the materials.

These two examples, it is argued here, reflect the general situation and prove that a basic problem exists; namely, the essential link between curriculum reform and pre- and in-service education of teachers is missing, or is neglected.

I believe, however, that there are a number of very good reasons for this problem. Among these are:

- *Time* - college teachers and Curriculum Development personnel have very large workloads. They lack time to interact, exchange ideas and materials. In addition, aid-funded, donor-driven curriculum development projects are generally extremely demanding in terms of time allowed to write draft materials - pre- and in-service education are sacrificed so that the demanding writing schedules can be met.
- *Compartmentalisation* - Even in the smallest of small states, a somewhat narrow view of "curriculum" is encouraged by establishing separate teacher training, curriculum development and examination entities. This compartmentalisation in itself tends to discourage interaction between what are really components of one (curriculum) process.
- *Personal/Personality/Cultural Factors* - While Pacific societies are generally described as co-operative and communal rather than individualistic, the curriculum and teacher education models we have adopted (rather than adapted) may mitigate against such sharing.

The picture is by no means all grim. In Country Z, for example, teachers' college lecturers are also at the forefront of exciting innovations in primary language curricula. Their students are the "advance guard", demonstrating the use of new materials and methods even while undergoing their initial training. I am sure there are similar success stories in other Pacific

countries.

Finally, I wish to suggest possible solutions, or ways of ensuring that more teacher education accompanies curriculum change.

Among suggested solutions are:

- College lecturers need to be on curriculum development subject panels; not necessarily as writers, if time does not allow this, but to comment/react to new content. As a result, they could give presentations at in-service courses, rather than attend as mere observers.
- Curriculum developers need to be invited to present curriculum innovations to trainee teachers (in those countries with teacher training institutions).
- Trainee teachers can use trial materials during their "school experience", even presenting demonstration lessons, as in country Z.
- The adoption of curriculum development and teacher education models from outside the region needs, at the very least, to be questioned. As Helu Thaman has frequently expressed (see Helu Thaman 1991 and 1992, for example), the cultural sources of Pacific island people can surely shed some light on possible ways of improving formal education at all levels in the region.

Many people hours have been spent on curriculum development, not only in our region, but on a world-wide scale. We hear all too often of new curriculum content not being used at all, or of "old" (proven) materials being totally replaced by new materials which teachers find difficult to implement. All too often, the new approach and/or materials are introduced before solid evidence of their effectiveness is obtained. "Action has outpaced reflection", as Jansen (1993) says.

It is my strong hope, therefore, that the pace of the writing and introduction of new materials will slow down, and that there will be an increase in the crucial pre- and in-service teacher training component.

After all, is not the teacher the most important variable in the whole learning-teaching process? After the children themselves, that is!

Bibliography

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