

Engaging with Curriculum Changes: A Professional Development Torchlight Framework for Teachers

Research Overview (50 words)

The study explores how ten Singapore teachers navigate curriculum changes on the new inquiry approach and proposes a 'Professional Development Torchlight' (PDT) framework to enhance teachers' decision-making and agency during curriculum transitions and referencing school structures. It draws Giddens' (1984) 'Structuration Theory' and Lambert and Hopkin's (2014) 'Curriculum Making Model'.

Purpose of Study

Singapore teachers are urged by their Ministry of Education (MOE) to take up professional development (PD) courses to keep abreast with curriculum change cycles for school subjects. For example, in 2012, the Geographical Inquiry (GI) was introduced with a fieldwork component (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2017). It was implemented the year after (Curriculum Planning and Development, 2023). The curriculum transition consists of concurrent changes to the national geography syllabus in terms of content, pedagogy and assessment. However, curriculum transition literature, and the appropriate and subsequent PD practices, have been scarce. This study questions how teachers choose the type of PD and how they understand and implement the newly acquired knowledge in their daily classrooms. It wants to address how teachers' professional development can provide opportunities but at the same time create new challenges in schools during curriculum transitions.

Research Methods

Qualitative methodology was primarily utilised and aimed at developing a framework to describe how teachers make decisions about what professional development courses to take. The inductive-deductive methodology used is consistent with both developing the framework through cases studies, as well as finding evidence to support the discussion based on structuration and curriculum making. The qualitative study draws upon grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that is developed from the perspectives and

practices of the teachers in their implementation of fieldwork assessment and inquiry in a newly introduced curriculum.

Results and Discussion

The study found that teachers' decisions on PD are influenced by various factors, including their school context, personal beliefs, and the perceived relevance of the PD content. With the PDT, this study discovered that it could describe how the decisions were made and how these were supported by their respective powerful geographical knowledge (Lambert 2017). The translation of initiatives from PD activities are informed by teachers' level of interpretation and depth of their understanding during curriculum changes across place (schools) and time. Specifically, PD treatment should not be generalized but must be differentiated, to manage teacher expectations and be done in-situ to address school needs and prevailing practices. In addition, PD should be encouraged to be done in-situ or at least collectively by teachers in the same school to address their unique schools' needs and prevailing school practices. Clarifications and validations during the PD assist in strengthening their confidence and establishing team practices.

Key Words Curriculum making, Professional Development, School Structures

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