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Making Sense of Curriculum Change: Teachers’ Perspectives
Implementing a Communicative English Language Curriculum at the Tertiary
Level in the Dominican Republic

Submitted by

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Federica Castro
Abstract

This piece of research describes an exploratory case study designed to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of a group of thirteen English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers towards the implementation of a new Communicative English Language Curriculum at a university in the Dominican Republic (D.R.). This exploration focused on teachers' experiences of the proposed change, the kinds of meanings they construe as they teach and learn, and the personal ways in which they interpret the worlds in which they live (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Three constructs were particularly relevant for the present study, namely: teachers’ understandings of curricular change, teachers’ attitudes towards curricular change, and the training and professional development opportunities required to support teachers throughout the implementation phase in a curricular change.

Data were gathered through focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews. Analyses of the data were done in such a way as to capture the common themes across individuals, as well as comments that were unique to individual participants (Lasky, 2005). Additionally, constant comparison of the data and member validation were used to confirm or adjust my own interpretations. The results indicate that to explore teachers’ perceptions of a change process is both important and necessary, especially because the exploration of a particular need for a change is an influential factor in the success of any educational change (Iemjinda, 2007). They also indicate the importance of acknowledging that curriculum change is a multi-faceted and highly complex process (Carl, 2009) that, as such, takes time and that teachers understand this process and adopt it at different paces, as well as that some might never succeed in adopting the demands required by the change. Although these results provide no definite solutions to implementation problems, they do help clarify some of the critical issues and the many constraints that possibly limit curriculum development, which must be addressed in resolving those problems (Guskey, 1988; Kelly, 2009).

Recommendations for curricular change implementation are offered and areas for future research are suggested.
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