HOW CAN CURRICULUM CONTRIBUTE TO THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

Perspectives from the Netherlands and Beyond

Jan van den Akker

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Sander Dekker

‘We hebben helderheid nodig’
AMBITON for Education

Quality improvement through curriculum restructuring that contributes to:

• Clear common sense of direction about what is most relevant for pupils to learn (for now and the future)

• Curriculum coherence (vertical/horizontal) and practical feasibility

• More directions and a better grip for schools & teachers how to utilize their own space for choices in teaching

• 'Better' learning results
World wide agenda: Quality

• UNESCO's new focus: from access (EfA) to quality
• Quality is fuzzy concept
• Curriculum thinking helps in clarifying and addressing quality issues, but ...
• Curriculum is multi-dimensional concept:
  – Levels
  – Representations
  – Components
  – Actors
Curriculum: Plan for Learning (in many languages)
Levels of Curriculum (Development)

- **SUPRA**: international, comparative  
  *(EU core competencies; European Framework of Reference for Languages)*

- **MACRO**: national (system) frameworks  
  *(e.g. syllabi, core objectives, attainment targets, standards)*

- **MESO**: school  
  *(school-specific curriculum)*

- **MICRO**: classroom, group, teacher  
  *(textbook, course, instructional materials)*

- **NANO**: learner, individual  
  *(personal curriculum)*
Curriculum Representations

- **INTENDED**
  - ideal
  - formal / written

- **IMPLEMENTED**
  - perceived
  - operational / in action

- **ATTAINED**
  - experienced
  - learned
Consistency among curriculum components: *SPIDER's WEB*

- **Aims and objectives**: Towards which goals are they learning?
- **Content**: What are they learning?
- **Learning activities**: How are they learning?
- **Teacher role**: How is the teacher facilitating their learning?
- **Materials and resources**: With what are they learning?
- **Grouping**: With whom are they learning?
- **Location**: Where are they learning?
- **Time**: When are they learning?
- **Assessment**: How is their learning assessed?
Rationale/Mission/Vision

• What competencies (knowledge + skills + attitudes) are of most worth (for future of learners)?
• Mixture of 3xS
  – Subject
  – Society
  – Student
• Or: relative emphases on learning for
  – Further studies and work ("qualification")
  – Participation in society ("socialization")
  – Personal development
• Relevance discourse at every level!
Deliberations...
Wishes for vision on future-oriented curriculum

• New balance between three perspectives
• Feasibility (within timeframes and task of schools)
• Coherence (vertical and horizontal)
• Space for diversity (for choices of schools, teachers, learners and parents)
• No detailed, prescribed 'national curriculum' with heavy accountability
More Criteria for Quality of Curriculum

• **Relevance** of aims and content (in view of preparing for further studies and work; preparation for society; personal development)

  • Consistency
  • Practicality
  • Effectiveness
  • Scalability and Sustainability
Lawrence Stenhouse:

"There can be no curriculum change without teacher change"
Michael Fullan:

"Curriculum change is essentially about what teachers think and do"
No curriculum change without teacher development

- Teacher are key for student learning
- Teacher development is most effective when:
  - connected to lessons
  - embedded in own practice
  - teacher learn and develop together
  - and have sufficient time and space
- Potential of active, investigative roles for teachers through:
  - Teacher Design Teams
  - Professional Learning Communities
  - Lesson Studies
  - Action Research
- At school level: need for shared vision & responsibility for learning of pupils and teachers
- Schools as learning organisations, within a supportive environment and active school leaders
Successful change benefits from a combined approach

Steering from the top (e.g. national educational policies, directions)

Support and pressure from aside (e.g. networks, teacher education)

Support and pressure from aside

Building-up from the bottom (teacher and school involvement)
Recommendations

1. Curriculum clarity through coherent national frameworks, but with strong local curricular awareness, agency and expertise of schools & teachers

2. Frameworks based upon broadly discussed and justified overall vision on the what & why of learning (now happening in NL through Platform Education 2032)

3. Need for choices and flexibility for schools, teachers and students
4. Assessment should follow curriculum: more valid (assess what is really important), more flexible, more formative.

5. Major investments (time, facilities) in curricular professional development: in pre- and inservice; individuals and teams; school leaders and teachers; and for other education development actors.
We all need curricular thinking and conversation to create synergy!
The Challenge...
But this would be too much!
What would you like in/for Latvia?
THANK YOU, and have a nice day!

j.vandenakker@slo.nl