

ABSTRACT

**The Role of Teachers in English Curriculum
Development in the Secondary School**

Godfrey Anthony Steele

Knowledge of the role of teachers in curriculum development is an uncertain issue attracting renewed interest in the context of narrowing the curriculum theory-practice gap. This study explored functions, self-perceptions, content decision making and curricular assumptions which characterize teachers' role in English curriculum development. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies informed the use of a questionnaire (n=79), classroom observation, interviews and teacher/student ratings of English teaching with a sub sample (n= 12), drawn from secondary schools in North Trinidad.

Findings indicated that while teachers functioned mainly in a consultative role, their actual participation in curriculum development was less pronounced. Teachers' academic qualifications had stronger associations than training and experience with teachers' roles in

curriculum development. Teachers' perceptions of their role in curriculum development were based on mixed attitudes reflecting reservations about the extent of teacher responsibility and teacher interest which asserted the value of teacher input and collegial support over inadequate time and other constraints.

In less predictable situations there was an even probability that teachers would make both spontaneous and planned decisions. The underlying curricular assumptions of teachers were informed by their response to dilemmas; their reasoning guided by bounded rationality and understanding of what the pedagogical moment requires; and by a core of consistent beliefs about English teaching.

It is concluded that teachers have a wider range of responsibility and stronger degree of influence in curriculum development than is widely recognized. A teacher's perspective can alter the traditional ways of conceptualizing curriculum development and create opportunities for curriculum theory/practice integration. The recommended follow-up collaborative research recognizes teacher role in curriculum development, offers more insight into the process and can contribute positively to curriculum development efforts in English.