

**Analyzing Curriculum Unit Implementation:  
A Product Evaluation of Charlotte Teachers Institute**

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**BACKGROUND:** According to a recent report by the Learning Policy Institute, effective teacher professional development focuses on content linked to curriculum, teacher collaboration, and is of sustained duration (Learning Policy Institute report, 2017). Previous research has indicated teachers as key components to successful curriculum implementation (Tamir, 2004). This study is a product evaluation of the implementation of curriculum units at Charlotte Teachers Institute (CTI), a professional development program that provides teachers with new content and guides them in developing original curricula. Product evaluation provides a framework to assess CTI's goal related to curriculum implementation with the intention of making informed judgements of the program's value.

**METHODS:** A multiple case study design was used to understand three Fellows' experiences with curriculum unit implementation and a grounded theory methodology was employed to analyze the data from the individual case studies. The teachers chosen had implemented CTI curricula in the spring of 2017 and expressed an interest in being interviewed. The participant network consisted of public school teachers from different grade levels and subject areas. Individual, semi-structured interviews with Fellows were the foundation of the data-set. Secondary data included questions from the CTI Fellows' Questionnaires, CTI Curriculum Unit Usage Survey, and the written Curriculum Units from the teachers' CTI seminars. These additional data sources served to triangulate the analysis by providing a richer data-set.

**RESULTS:** Using grounded theory methodology and a multiple case study design, four themes on teaching and student learning emerged through the data analysis process: (1) professional learning activities experienced in seminar coming back into the classroom; (2) the flexibility of creating school-based curricula; (3) the integration of various subjects in the curriculum to make learning more relevant; and (4) the promotion of collaboration among teachers. Fellows expressed that by producing innovative curricula, they witnessed their students strengthening their vocabulary, participating in more animated discussions and improving their math solving abilities. In addition, Fellows were able to gain more knowledge through collaboration with other teachers and university and college professors.

**CONCLUSIONS:** An effective professional development program should embrace the 21 key characteristics to be successful, which include enhancing teachers' content and sustained duration (Guskey, 2003). The research conducted for CTI revealed that the program reached its goal of expanding teachers' content knowledge because Fellows gained new skills from seminars to create original curricula. From the interviews, a Fellow suggested a focus not only on new, but veteran Fellows to have ongoing opportunities to grow as educators. By providing veteran Fellows with new curriculum resources, CTI will continue to improve the quality of teaching.