Scripted Solutions for Mathematics? Rethinking Outsourced Curriculum Planning and Teacher Workload Challenges

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Curriculum change is a constant feature of the Australian educational landscape. As teachers adapt to each new curriculum, they engage in a process of interpretation to determine the most effective ways to engage their students and teach the outlined concepts and skills (Ross, 2024). While it is an opportunity to refresh programs to meet the needs of current students, this is not without significant investment from teachers. Many reports are emerging with descriptions of the current state of work intensification in teaching (e.g., Creagh et al., 2023), indicating that interventions must address the root causes of workload to tackle teachers' time poverty effectively. While governments propose solutions to ease teacher burdens, curriculum work is being framed as an administrative task (Stacey et al., 2024), leading to calls for outsourcing curriculum planning. Research shows that outsourced curriculum materials can reduce teacher satisfaction (Poulton & Mockler, 2024), and many teachers value lesson planning as a key part of their role (Stacey et al., 2024). This paper examines five teachers' experiences teaching mathematics with scripted curriculum materials to explore whether they truly saved time.

In this exploratory multiple case study, semi-structured interviews and journals captured teachers' processes of curriculum interpretation for mathematics planning and teaching in a school using scripted curriculum materials. Despite the intent of the scripted curriculum materials to ease teacher workload, the teachers in this study still engaged in substantial additional planning to meet their students' needs, challenging the assumptions that scripted programs can eliminate the necessity of teacher-led curriculum design. These findings underscore that curriculum planning remains a valued and essential aspect of teaching, which has implications for proposed teacher workload solutions that suggest teacher curriculum planning can be outsourced or "fast-tracked".

References

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