

## **Profiles of Productive Schools: Comparative Research About Lasting Curriculum Renewal in Primary Schools**

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This contribution draws upon a comparative research study about sustained improvement in primary schools. Emphasis is given to the level of 9 to 10 year old children. The findings will be published in a book (Hameyer, van den Akker, Anderson, & Ekholm) in spring 1995.

The authors will give insight into some case study documents about the inquiry curriculum as implemented in 15 schools in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the US. This cross-country comparison is called IMPACT - *Implementing Activity-Based Learning in Elementary Science Teaching*. The main purpose of IMPACT is to explore lasting changes in schools which are considered productive as to specific selection criteria which will be explained in more detail. The focus is laid on processes by which activity-based curriculum components and principles are anchored both in classroom teaching and in life of the particular school.

IMPACT mainly used multi-site case study methods. The comparison is based upon classroom observation, repeated interviews of students, principals, teachers and other staff, analysis of instructional materials, photographic documentation of the learning environment, and other.

The authors describe exemplary practices which emphasize activity-based learning and the particular inquiry curriculum in place. Empirical information is added about the degree to which students organize their learning activities on an increasingly autonomous level. Another research question refers to how headmasters encourage the processes of instructional improvement and curriculum renewal. The authors also show the extent to which the environment such as parents, authorities, or educational policy-makers stimulate or impede the process until the new has been institutionalized.

Based on exemplary IMPACT findings, the authors will identify characteristics of primary schools which succeeded in sustaining instructional and organizational improvement over more than 1 or 2 years. The contribution goes beyond classical implementation in so far as conditions for *long-term* improvement on the school level will be identified and explained.

The processes from "debut" through final institutionalization will be in the centre of this contribution.

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