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Mathematics achievement in the transition from intermediate school to high school.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

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Abstract

This study investigates the nature and level of communication between the primary and intermediate schools and the high schools in relation to student achievement. It also investigates how information relating to mathematics achievement is passed between the schools and makes some suggestions to improve the current situation.

Four high schools, three intermediate schools and three full primary schools were identified for the study and a survey was conducted of two teachers in each of these schools identify what happens in these schools in relation to the transition of students from Form 2 to Form 3.

It was found that there were significant differences in the ways that schools on either side of the transition viewed and implemented the National Curriculum in Mathematics. The primary and intermediate schools were much more enthusiastic about the National Curriculum than the high schools. As a consequence it was found that the primary and intermediate schools have made considerable progress toward reporting student progress against the objectives of the curriculum and were able to determine levels of achievement in each strand.

It was found that primary and intermediate schools are moving away from the “Primary Progress Record, Senior School” (known as the blue record card) as the main means of handing information about student achievement on to the high schools. Many schools are developing their own “profile” or progress sheets as a way of better tracking student progress and therefore are more able to accurately indicate where the student is when they enter high school.

The high schools have generally not been using this information as a basis for their third form programmes. They report that there is a large variation in the quality and quantity of the information which comes from their provider schools and in many cases would
prefer a single document which gave a general idea of student ability. The high schools were therefore placing students in classes on general ability, gained by enrolling staff, or on entrance tests which they developed.

The high schools were much less enthusiastic about measuring against the objectives of the curriculum and were able to present a number of reasons for their reluctance. There is therefore a need to develop a model for communicating student achievement across the transition into high school.

It was found that many of the high school teachers did not value the information provided by the primary and intermediate schools because they had no part in determining what information should be collected and how it could be used. Revising the data collection process, involving the teachers who could potentially use the information, would be one way of overcoming this.

Results of this study show that there is a need for teachers to be more aware of the practises of schools on the other side of the transition.
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