Curriculum innovation at a school site: Issues of teacher competence and confidence

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Curriculum activity at any school site has been shown to be influenced by four factors: images of curriculum held by staff; school organisation; social dynamics between staff in the school; and personal characteristics of staff (Macpherson, Aspland, Brooker & Elliott, 1999). This paper focuses primarily on one of those four factors, the personal characteristics of staff (while recognising that it is interrelated with the others). In a recent two-year study of the implementation of a trial senior secondary (years 11 & 12) school curriculum in Home Economics (Brooker & Macpherson, 2001), the perceptions of teachers about their competence and confidence in curriculum innovation emerged as two personal characteristics which had significant impact on the implementation process. Drawing on data collected from 35 teachers in 24 schools over the two years of the trial, this paper explores teachers, perceptions of their competence and confidence and how these perceptions influenced the curriculum innovation. The implications of confidence and competence for future teacher engagement in curriculum innovation are also discussed.