Abstract

Beginning Literacy as a model for literacy education in the first two years of primary schools has been an option for Icelandic schools for eight years now. The BL model is twofold: First of all it entails an approach to literacy teaching and learning and secondly it involves a professional development programme for teachers and schools to implement the teaching and learning approach. This paper is mainly intended to be a critical investigation of the structure and effectiveness of the BL professional development programme. This will be built, firstly, on a comparison with the current school improvement and professional development literature and, secondly, on preliminary findings from interviews with teachers, development leaders and external consultants taken in case studies of six BL schools. The paper starts with a brief account of the Icelandic educational context and of BL as an approach to literacy education, followed by a short summary of the BL study. From there we will present our critical analysis of the BL professional development programme.

Keywords: Beginning Literacy, literacy education, professional development, school improvement, educational change, professional learning communities.