Toward a Neo-Deweyan Theory of Curriculum Analysis and Development

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Abstract

We adapted an existing comprehensive theory of curriculum analysis for application across complex, multicultural educational environments in P–12 schools. Our theoretical framework is neo-Deweyan in that it draws heavily from John Dewey's curriculum philosophy and because it goes beyond him to draw extensively from other curriculum theorists. The study resulted in the creation of a new heuristic instrument to aid in curriculum analysis and construction. The instrument is intentionally comprehensive and flexible so that it may be used in a wide variety of P–12 programs. Given the flexibility of the theoretical framework and instrument, they may be used in ways that lead to honoring, clarifying, enlarging, rethinking, refining, and rejecting aspects of practices and ideals of P–12 schools. We did not seek to minimize the normative claim that curriculum workers ought to think more holistically, reflectively, and ethically about curricular concerns in P–12 schools.

Introduction

On the surface, the school curriculum may seem to be a rather innocuous topic, a matter that is simply concerned with teachers' manuals, school textbooks, software programs, science laboratories, and educational technologies. Beneath

this rather benign exterior, however, there are multiple reasons for debating the purposes, aims, contents, processes, outcomes, and assessments that are associated with the term *curriculum* (Bobbitt, 1918; Dewey, 1902; Ornstein, Pajak, & Ornstein, 2011; Schubert, 1986; Slattery, 1995; Tyler, 1949). These debates may emanate from realms as diverse as political agendas, social preferences, religious beliefs, economic priorities, ideological dogmas, aesthetic values, national identities, educational ideals, and global ambitions and are manifested in controversies regarding value, knowledge, and reality claims. In an important sense, then, the school curriculum is rightly considered a hotly contested domain, one that is—or ought to be—discussed and debated by loosely affiliated segments of society, the profession, and other curriculum syndicates.

The most influential curriculum forces often make allies that promote their priorities through professional, accreditation, and legislative bodies. These social and political forces—whether state, regional, or national—frequently develop approval and accountability measures that require extensive curricular development, alignment, and assessment to ensure that the standards and policies promulgated by pertinent entities are understood, pursued, and met. Legislative bodies and government agencies generally facilitate and negotiate the processes and outcomes of curricular conflicts and, in time, it may appear that the school curriculum is settled, if not largely and permanently at least partially and confidently. As Barrow (1984) notes, much that is settled is without sustained input by the education profession, especially by the teachers who are classroom practitioners. When the curriculum is fairly settled, an outcome may be that:

> key ideas and themes which surfaced at particular moments in the history of curriculum have been put to one side, and a false consensus on curriculum, barely agreed and certainly not negotiated, has replaced what was once a vigorous debate about central educational questions and in particular questions that related to the curriculum. (Scott, 2008, p. 5)

Accordingly, curriculum analysis and development in schools is frequently a set of activities that are undertaken as a result of accountability and assessment measures initiated by state, regional, and national accreditation, professional associations, and state agencies. In such an environment, curriculum analysis and design may be undertaken by subsets of faculty who revise and align the subject matter that they teach, such as when language and literacy teachers or history and literature teachers collaborate to revise their curricula. While these are important responses regarding the examination and development of curricula, there are limitations to these processes if the school curriculum is not appraised as a whole and if critical underlying assumptions and disagreements are unquestionable. For instance, curriculum analysis and development may end up being done

in a piecemeal fashion by subsets of faculty who are expected if not required to respond largely or exclusively to external and, often, parochial ideals. Moreover, the design of the curriculum may be done largely in a non-theoretical manner. That is to say, the task of curriculum analysis and development that occurs may be a response to external mandates and external entities' priorities and may not involve adequate proactive attention to the visions, ideals, and missions of schools, districts, communities, or the nation. On occasion, the problem of curriculum analysis and development is compounded by the fact that when curricular ideals, visions, and missions are considered, they may be attempted from a rather narrow ideological viewpoint or perspective that intentionally or unintentionally excludes even a consideration of the multiple other curricular orientations and voices that exist (Glickman, 2001).

In view of these challenges, the authors[1] believe that there is a need for curriculum analysis and development to be approached from a more comprehensive and holistic point of view and from a reflective perspective that encourages discussion and debate of issues that are often ignored or suppressed. If educational discussion and debate are dismissed as unnecessary burdens of educators and obstacles to efficient professional operations rather than approached as democratic and professional responsibilities of educators, we think that there are few reasons to believe that a consistent school or district will either promote or demonstrate educative dialogue by students and teachers in classrooms. Stated differently, how can we expect schools and districts that ignore or avoid important staff curricular issues and discussions to nurture robust classroom discussions of significance to students and society?

Educators intend this study as a step toward stimulating educative dialogue, and thereby, similar discussions by students. The adapted theoretical framework and created heuristic instrument are designed to aid curriculum workers as they analyze and develop curricula in various kinds of schools and districts. In particular, the authors see the importance of the study as three-fold. First, the authors created a heuristic instrument to aid in curriculum reflection and reconstruction at the classroom, school, and district levels. The instrument is conceptualized so that it utilizes an existing theoretical framework of curriculum analysis and development (Simpson, 2006) and so that it is useful to P–12 educators. The heuristic instrument is intended as a stimulus to reflect on classroom, program, school, and district curricula, to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of curricula, and, thereby, to develop curricula that are based on ongoing consideration of the broad ideals of professionals. Second, the theoretical framework was selected and the instrument was created so that both would be comprehensive and flexible and, therefore, widely useable and easily adapted by P–12 schools. Ideally, even those educators who have conflicting curriculum philosophies can use the theory and the instrument to their own and to their students' advantage. Disagreeing on curriculum questions and answers, contrary

to the thinking of some, is not a vice but an expected virtue of democratic deliberations. Third, the theory and instrument make it possible to go beyond merely meeting accountability requirements of agencies and associations by honoring, clarifying, enlarging, rethinking, and refining the practices and ideals of P–12 schools and their constituents.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective that is taken in this study is neo-Deweyan. The term *neo-Deweyan* is employed to affirm that we start with the curriculum theorizing of John Dewey, and yet we are not exclusively predisposed toward his frame of reference. Thus, we draw extensively from Dewey and other theoreticians in order to ensure that the theory of analysis is comprehensive, contemporary, flexible, and dynamic. In addition to Dewey's educational writings, we draw on the thinking of both past and present curriculum theorists, including but not limited to Jane Adams, W. E. B. Dubois, Franklin Bobbitt, Ralph Tyler, James Popham, Paulo Freire, Jerome Bruner, William Doll, Jr., Maxine Greene, Nel Noddings, Angela Valenzuela, Wayne Au, Parker Palmer, Joseph Kincheloe, Michael Apple, Benjamin Bloom, Jeannie Qakes, Thomas Sergiovanni, Peter McLaren, Geneva Gay, Andy Hargreaves, and Elliot Eisner. Indeed, we have drawn from a plethora of theorists and other educators who were original, imaginative, critical, and visionary curriculum thinkers as we selected a theory and constructed our heuristic instrument (Flinders & Thornton, 2009; Ornstein, Pajak, & Ornstein, 2011). Therefore, the neo-Deweyan theoretical framework was constructed out of Dewey's and others' ideas so that curricular complexity is complemented by flexibility and utility. As might be expected, the theoretical framework is profoundly shaped by democratic values. Similarly, the philosophical assumptions that shaped the construction of The Heuristic Instrument for the Analysis of Curriculum Emphases (HIACE) and the selection of its items are founded on a democratic platform.

Methodology

We employed methods of historical research as we sought to understand and use the thinking of curriculum theorists to explicate a neo-Deweyan theory and to build our heuristic instrument. Beginning with the Deweyan hermeneutical theory of curriculum analysis and development constructed by Simpson (2006), the research team examined other writings to expand the framework. While secondary sources enabled us to corroborate, challenge, and extend our thinking, our initial sources were the original writings of the theoreticians we examined. The research team shared responsibilities of research, interpretation, theorizing, constructing, and writing. The processes of research, theory adaptation, and heuristic instrument creation were dynamic throughout the study. While

the curricular issues in the collection of readings by Flinders and Thornton (2009) and Ornstein, Pajak, and Ornstein (2011) were the initial stimuli for our research, examining sources from the nineteenth century to the present were part of our inquiry, too.

Theory of Analysis

The hermeneutical theory we employ to analyze curriculum in P–12 schools is drawn from Simpson's (2006) analysis of Dewey's multifaceted curriculum philosophy. Four overlapping curricular dimensions of Dewey's thinking are identified: (1) epistemological, (2) pedagogical, (3) anthropological, and (4) ecological. Using these terms in an informal rather than a strictly academic manner, Simpson argues that Dewey discusses what may be considered "the conventional, methodological, human, and environmental aspects of curriculum" (Simpson, forthcoming). Broadly speaking, these four curricular dimensions include all of the intentional and unintentional lessons that are taught or learned when students are under the supervision of school personnel.

Before looking at these four curricular dimensions, it is important to make several preliminary observations. First, it is apparent that we are using the term *curriculum* in both traditional and non-traditional ways. The traditional way is seen in the conventional or epistemological curriculum. The non-traditional view of curriculum that is embedded in Dewey's writings is seen in the pedagogical, anthropological, and ecological curricula. Second, given the traditional and non-traditional usages of the term, curriculum analysis and development need to be reconceptualized and adjusted so that it is inclusive or includes both realms. That is to say, many educators and schools need to broaden their views of curriculum so that they analyze the lessons that they are teaching via their pedagogies, staffs, and environments. Third, it is worthwhile to observe that curriculum workers—analysts, designers, developers, and evaluators—cannot avoid making major value judgments (Boylam & Donahue, 2003; Gaztambide-Fernadez & James, 2004). While there are curricular rationales that can be utilized in many different and diverse settings, it seems appropriate for local educators to justify their decisions in terms of a variety of criteria at the personal, programmatic, school, and district levels. Thus, those who use this theoretical framework and accompanying instrument need to justify their curriculum analysis, design, development, and evaluation at least to themselves and, probably, to others. Simply stating that an accountability entity has a specific requirement is insufficient for reflective professionals. Fourth, while the four curricular dimensions can be distinguished, they cannot be separated entirely from one another. Thus, it is possible to locate certain curricular concerns within more than one dimension. Similarly, some items in the heuristic instrument can easily be placed within more than one dimension.

Epistemological Curriculum

The curricular dimension that needs the least clarification because it comes immediately to the minds of many, if not most people, when they hear the words "school curriculum" is the conventional or epistemological curriculum: language, literature, mathematics, biology, history, chemistry, government, art, physics, music, government, civics, and physical and health education. If we also have a democratic responsibility to prepare adolescents for opportunities outside of collegiate studies, we may wish to add studies in vocational education, electronics, construction, and other trades to the conventional curriculum. The importance of the term *epistemological* is that it implies that this kind of curriculum deals with issues regarding how we *know* and how we *justify* knowledge claims, including such ordinary claims that every student should be required to take 4 years of mathematics and science in high school. In significant ways, this curriculum seeks to distinguish between unsupported opinions and beliefs and warranted ideas and conclusions. Similarly, this facet of the curriculum may seek to distinguish between degrees of warrant based on the strength and extent of evidence and argument. For Dewey (1929), there was an interest in distinguishing between secure and certain knowledge since he thought the former is possible but that the latter is not possible given the dynamic nature of inquiry, the present state of understanding, and the nature of knowledge construction in an evolving world and universe.

Pedagogical Curriculum

For many of us, it is strange—even unintelligible—to think of pedagogy as curriculum. We may think of pedagogy as the means of teaching and curriculum as the content that is delivered. The former refers to teaching methodology while the latter is a reference to subject matter. However, Dewey (1933) does not make this strict separation. To him, life, including school learning, is—or should be—more integrated. For him, there is overlap between means and ends, and methods and content. For example, when we *teach* democratic theory in a government class, we may *use the method of drama* to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the constitutional right to freedom of speech. *In the process* of dramatic rehearsals and presentations (i.e., the pedagogical phase), students may both learn content (i.e., freedom of speech is not an absolute right) and experience emotions (i.e., anger and joy) as they depict what it means for people to be deprived of their rights and to fight for them (Dewey, 1916, 1922). Or, alternatively, a teacher may be preparing students to discuss issues regarding religious rights when she pauses to remind her students of the importance of respecting Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and others as groups in class work to identify commonalities among and differences between different faiths. Learning how to

discuss issues and to respect others in the process of dialogue may be classified as pedagogical curricula.

When thinking about the pedagogical curriculum, an important point to remember is that when lessons are taught and learned by specific means—methods, techniques, strategies—that these methods embody or carry certain lessons, too. Or, as Dewey (1938) says, many collateral lessons are learned in addition to the intended lessons. For instance, demonstrating respect for so-considered class outcasts as we teach may be a much more powerful lesson than saying that we ought to respect everyone regardless of whether the person is liked or likable. Being fair with students while talking with them about their mistreatment of others conveys important lessons that may be as powerful as the specific content of their punishment. Likewise, including less-talented students in recreational sports can teach lessons that are essential for all to learn at particular developmental stages.

Anthropological Curriculum

Perhaps stranger than the sound of a pedagogical curriculum is the idea of an anthropological curriculum. What did Dewey (1933) say that leads to the idea of a human curriculum? Think for a moment about a hypothetical principal. She is well-educated, bright, kind, articulate, affectionate, and professional. She understands students, staff, volunteers, parents, and the community. She defuses controversies before they erupt, engages students in invigorating studies, strengthens parent–school bonds, and finds extra resources for teacher and student activities. But one weekend she dies in a tragic skiing accident. Her family, friends, and the entire school community are traumatized. But, all too quickly, life and school go on. A new principal is selected and has assumed her responsibilities in a couple of months.

While life and school continue, they are not the same. At first, the new principal is unknown to everyone, except for the district superintendent who knows her as the daughter of his favorite educational leadership professor. Recalling how much he owed his former professor and realizing that the last-minute applicant for the principal's position had just experienced a distressing divorce, he failed to ask follow-up questions when references said that she is "super talented although her people skills need to be polished," that "she more than makes up for her limitations with hard work," and that "she may ruffle a few feathers now and then but who doesn't?" Six weeks into the new principal's assignment, the superintendent learns that she is already widely viewed as intelligent but overbearing, articulate but curt, cordial but distant, and dutiful but dismissive. What does he do now to address the complaints of students, teachers, and parents? How does he help the new principal become the human curriculum that is desired and, probably, desirable?

Pause to think about the number of lessons that may have been taught by the superintendent to the district and the community. Consider the lessons that are being taught by the new principal. Reflect on the ideas that are taught by those who are clamoring to get rid of the new principal. What diverse curricula do differently thinking and acting teachers and parents represent? In these situations, we have very public human curricula that detract from the curriculum that had been taught and encouraged by the prior principal. How the superintendent approaches the issues surrounding his decision will reflect who he is as a person and a professional—who he is as a curriculum. Importantly, he becomes personal, professional, and public curricula for everyone aware of the situation.

Fortunately, Dewey (1916, 1933) also has in mind the positive ramifications of the human or anthropological curriculum. He was particularly concerned that teachers utilize—and students understand—the rich backgrounds that are represented in a classroom and school. The nationalities of students are means of internationalizing the curriculum. The diverse languages of students are linguistic tools to intra- and international understanding. The diversity of music and art represented in student backgrounds opens multiple windows of communication and appreciation. The professional and career backgrounds of the parents of children can broaden and deepen students' views of the needs of society. The thinking of students—their knowledge and their means of evaluating matters—can enrich the entire curriculum of the school.

In addition to seeing the student, principal, and superintendent as curricula, Dewey was keenly concerned that the teacher as curriculum be understood. Consequently, he urged that teachers have a depth of understanding in at least one field of inquiry or creativity; understand students and their communities; recognize the value of inquiry based learning and problem solving; integrate the life of the student and society into the educational activities of school; exhibit a passion for teaching and learning; and think reflectively and imaginatively about her or his responsibilities as a professional educator (Simpson & Jackson, 1997). With these qualities and knowledge bases, Dewey believed that the teacher as curriculum would be powerful and complement beautifully other lessons taught by the other features of the anthropological curriculum that the teacher would be instrumental in utilizing the epistemological and pedagogical curricula. Moreover, the rich knowledge and powerful thinking of the teacher would be seen in her or his building the ecological curriculum and the "collateral" learning or curriculum (Dewey, 1938).

Ecological Curriculum

The ecological dimension of the curriculum includes all of the previously discussed dimensions, the epistemological, pedagogical, and anthropological. Moreover, it also includes the physical and technological aspects of schooling as all of these factors as relate to and interact with one another. Likewise, it

incorporates those characteristics of the school and classroom that are variously described as values, culture, ethos, ambiance, and moral architecture (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). Collectively, the ecological curriculum comprises the conscious and unconscious lessons that are taught and learned via the complexities experienced in the mundane and monumental moments of living, teaching, and learning in classrooms, athletic facilities, corridors, laboratories, and restrooms. Additionally, the environmental curriculum includes what happens on school grounds and sponsored excursions. Therefore, the potency of this curriculum is much greater than an epistemological, a pedagogical, or an anthropological curriculum by themselves or all three collectively. The environments and cultures that are built in schools and classrooms add almost intangible qualities to the curriculum. But these qualities make major differences in the encompassing environment that is either educative or miseducative throughout the day (Dewey, 1938). Hence, there is a critical need for the teacher to give attention to her classroom community and learning environment and for the school staff and leaders to work together on a school culture.

The significance of this dimension of the curriculum may not be immediately obvious. Thus, consider for a moment three different schools and their possible ecological curricula. Reflect on the three schools and how you would answer the following questions. What are the possible strengths of each ecological curriculum? What are the existing or potential weaknesses of each curriculum? What questions do the curricula raise for teachers as they analyze the complete curricula of their schools? What insights do these fictional schools offer for analyzing your own school?

The first school has the expected epistemological curriculum, a healthy pedagogical curriculum, a multicultural and multiethnic anthropological curriculum, and an ecological curriculum that includes these three curricula plus a set of democratic values that are the heart of the school and classroom cultures. The overall culture is characterized by mutual respect, fairness, open-mindedness, tolerance, equity, freedom, responsibility, and inquiry. Added to these qualities are such values as expressing concern for others, honoring individuality, working for everyone's good, maximizing one's potential, and community building. The school website has information about planned and anticipated activities and accomplishments, including information about present and future possibilities to learn more about becoming physicians, electricians, nurses, accountants, teachers, welders, carpenters, engineers, artists, veterinarians, farmers, musicians, therapists, ranchers, and dentists. School facilities and technological resources are in good, if not excellent, condition.

The second school has a curriculum that appears close to the offerings of the first school but offers fewer so-called academic and career options. The curricular focus is largely on courses and experiences that lead students into occupations that are connected to transportation, hair styling, criminal justice, health care, shipping, custodial services, auto mechanics, domestic employment,

hospitality industry, child care, and detention occupations. The website contains information about school personnel, academic ratings, attendance regulations, bus routes, community volunteers, graduation requirements, student employment opportunities, student organizations, and programs for pregnant students. The student code of conduct delineates the details of acceptable and unacceptable dress and behavior on school grounds and in facilities. School facilities are dated and overcrowded but sanitary. Technological resources are limited and kept in secure storage rooms and monitored laboratories. The rate of school staff and volunteer turnover is twice the district average although a long-time principal provides leadership stability and continuity.

The website of the third school suggests that it is similar to the first school in many respects. The details include its conventional academic curriculum, its codes of student and staff conduct, student awards, the average percentage of graduates who have attended 4-year universities in the last decade—and sports schedules, alumni accomplishments, and library hours. The epistemological and pedagogical curricula are tuned into measurable student outcomes, e.g., whether the school receives the highest possible state ranking, how many seniors receive full-scholarship offers to prestigious private and public universities, how many National Merit scholarships are awarded annually, and what percentage of students completed six or more advanced placement courses. The publicized set of school values includes academic excellence, self respect, individual achievement, personal values, social awareness, and school spirit. Career counselors help students and families create plans for annual tours of universities, advise them on how to secure admission to one of their top three institutional preferences, and obtain financial aid. School facilities were built 3 years ago, and the most recent technological resources are regularly purchased and maintained.

Comprehensive Heuristic Instrument: Analysis of Curriculum Emphases

The Heuristic Instrument for the Analysis of Curriculum Emphases (HIACE) that we constructed was developed over a 4-month period with revisions taking place on a weekly basis. After the initial 4-month construction period, it was revised episodically until it reached its present form. The 24 existing items were selected from dozens of draft items after a careful analysis of items for their coverage, clarity, and usefulness.[2] In keeping with our neo-Deweyan theory, the instrument's items were developed for each of the four dimensions of the curriculum so that all, or some portion or portions, can be used in different settings. As noted earlier, the HIACE was designed to stimulate the reflection and discussion of classroom, programmatic, school, and/or district based personnel. We anticipate that educational personnel may use the instrument to examine their

curricula, determine its current general status, and revise or develop it, when appropriate, in accordance with their contexts and priorities. In this way, the professional judgment and priorities of users are honored and encouraged as the instrument is utilized.

Users of the HIACE have four options for each item: Yes, No, Not Applicable, and Comments. These answers are understood as follows:

Yes: The teacher, programmatic staff, school, or district does a satisfactory job of addressing this interest as far as analysts can determine.

No: The teacher, programmatic staff, school, or district does not do a satisfactory job of addressing the interest as far as analysts can determine.

Not Applicable: The item is judged to be not applicable or relevant to the current interests of a particular teacher, programmatic staff, school, or district.

Comment: After appropriate interactions and/or reflections, the relevant recorder may specify the ideas that need to be considered further and identify strengths that need to be acknowledged.

Epistemological Curriculum Questions

In view of our prior description of the epistemological curriculum, we constructed the following items for the HIACE. The items that follow are delineated so that the theorizing of the research team is clarified. Comments are also offered regarding questions that users may find valuable. The epistemological items are as follows:

- Does the curriculum allow for flexibility so that demographic, cultural, and individual needs and interests can be addressed?
- Does the curriculum provide multiple ways of evaluation and different kinds of assessment data?
- Does the curriculum include an appropriate emphasis on non-measurable educational goals?
- Does the curriculum encourage students to think reflectively for themselves?
- Does the curriculum help students to understand the difference between mere opinion and knowledge-based claims?
- Does the curriculum promote student understanding of civic responsibilities?

The first question—Does the curriculum allow for flexibility so that demographic, cultural, and individual needs and interests can be addressed?—illustrates a concern that many curriculum theorists share (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994;

Lauria & Miron, 2005). In particular, it reflects an interest in ensuring that a school's curricular emphases are sufficiently flexible so that time is allowed for teachers and schools to address the heritage, the diversity, and the academic interests of students. In short, are students' backgrounds and academic interests sufficiently addressed? This item not only takes into consideration the cultural and linguistic diversity of students but also their diverse academic interests, e.g., studies in elective coursework as well as in prescribed fields.

The second question—Does the curriculum provide multiple ways of evaluation and different kinds of assessment data?—ties together educational aims, content emphases, outcomes, and assessment measures. It is designed to encourage schools to consider assessment indicators that go beyond the customarily required standardized achievement test scores. In particular, it is intended to encourage educators to create or adopt imaginative measures that show the richness of curricular offerings and scope of student learning rather than being satisfied with prescribed quantitative measures. Among other alternative learning indicators, teachers and schools may use individual student and/or group performances that are privately and/or publicly evaluated—such as folios, publications, demonstrations, creations, paintings, drama, scripts, and concerts. Notably, this kind of assessment gives schools and teachers the opportunity to demonstrate that much important learning goes beyond the easily measured curriculum and that the accomplishments of teachers, schools, and districts is neglected by a narrow approach to evaluation (Gallagher, 2007; Sleeter, 2005).

The third query—Does the curriculum include an appropriate emphasis on non-measurable educational goals?—is hinted at in the research team's description of question two but drawn explicitly from the writing of Popham (1972, 2010a, 2010b). Although he is noted for contributing to the development of measurability standards in the field of curriculum, Popham also encouraged pursuing educational goals that are important even if they are not immediately measurable (e.g., appreciation of art and music). Where high-stakes testing has frequently influenced teachers, schools, and districts to ignore these curricula, personnel may wish to revisit these slighted offerings (Valenzuela, 2005) or the null curriculum in some schools and districts (Eisner, 1985, 2002). Popham's opening the door to having teaching and curriculum goals and objectives that are valuable but not measurable is a gate that many more districts, schools, and teachers need to enter.

The next two questions—Does the curriculum encourage students to think reflectively for themselves? Does the curriculum help students to understand the difference between mere opinion and knowledge based claims?—are included for those who prize learning that goes beyond information acquisition to reflective, critical, or higher-order thinking (Bloom, 1956; Elder & Paul, 2009; Pogrow, 2009). While some may think the items are unsuitable for particular age groups and content, the authors support a rethinking of such conclusions. As long

as children are asking questions, they have the capacity for reflective thinking (Dewey, 1933; Elder, 2006).

The final question—Does the curriculum promote student understanding of civic responsibilities?—may appear to be aimed solely at social studies programs, civics and history teachers, but its intended audience is broader and inclusive. Ultimately, then, it is a prompt for all educators to consider the importance of democratic values (e.g., freedom, justice, respect, inquiry, and reflection) and to reflect on what they do individually and collectively to share and strengthen democratic ideals in classrooms, schools, and districts. Like Dewey (1916) and many others (Apple, 1979; Aptheker, 2001; Duke, 2008; Hare, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1995), the authors think that a society that professes democratic values but ignores them in schools is unlikely to be characterized by what it confesses.

Pedagogical Curriculum Questions

The following six items were selected for inclusion in the HIACE from the numerous items that were constructed:

- Does the pedagogy value the student's point of view?
- Does practice encourage teaching in imaginative and creative ways?
- Does the staff use culturally responsive teaching?
- Does student inquiry have a significant place in learning?
- Does practice draw on research related to effective methods of teaching?
- Does the pedagogy reinforce written and articulated values?

The question—Does the pedagogy value the student's point of view?—is partially aligned with a prior epistemological curriculum question (Does the curriculum encourage students to think reflectively for themselves?), but moves beyond it to suggest that student thinking is not only formally encouraged but also valued (Doll, 1993; Freire, 2003; Greene, 1971; Noddings, 2003b). As might be expected, this question does not suggest that teachers are obligated to value every conclusion of each student since students, like everyone else, can reach unfounded conclusions (Dewey, 1933; Elder, 2006; Hare, 1993). Consequently, the question invites educators to respond to questions such as these: Do I discourage student participation and problem solving by my body language or my other responses to their answers? Am I willing to allow an insignificant detail to go unnoticed in order to develop the voices of my students? Does my valuing student thought include guiding them to refine and clarify their ideas? More appropriately, therefore, we may want to reword the question as follows: Does my pedagogy indicate that I value the student's efforts to form a point of view or a considered answer to an issue or problem?

Does the curriculum allow for teaching in imaginative and creative ways? is a question that seeks to highlight the duty of teachers to discuss their need for the freedom to teach their subjects artistically and guide their students imaginatively (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Herbert, 2010; Rubin, 1985; Pogrow, 2009; Pajak, Stotko, & Masci, 2009; Simpson, Jackson, & Aycock, 2005; Sternbert & Lubart, 1995). This question may be especially valuable in settings where accountability systems and leaders pressure teachers and schools to teach in a narrow and mundane manner to a standardized test. Of course, teacher creativity and imagination are not sufficient means in themselves. Both qualities need to be elements of a broader effectiveness in nurturing learning by students.

The third inquiry—Does the staff use culturally responsive teaching?—is designed to prompt deep discussions by teachers, schools, and districts (Chan, 2006; Gay, 2000; Sheets, 2005; Valenzuela, 2005). More specifically, do I, as a teacher, use the knowledge of my students—whether historical, religious, national, aesthetic, epistemological, ethnic, political, familial—to enhance their learning and my teaching? Am I sufficiently aware of the potential links of cultural knowledge, personal learning styles, and student engagement? Am I a student of my students so that I keep learning more about them and can better teach them? Do I incorporate student realities into my pedagogical plans (Gay, 2000; Sheets, 2005)?

Staff members who raise the fourth question may seek to understand more about several aspects of teaching and learning: Does student inquiry have a significant place in learning? Some teachers may wish to connect their discussion to whether the school is using its technology to develop independent and interdependent learners. Other educators might be interested in knowing whether professional development activities have been successful in steering more conventional staff members away from traditional teaching methods and toward exploratory learning methods. Still others may be interested in knowing if school pedagogy has shifted toward encouraging students to inquire together as groups rather than always do work assignments as individuals. Whatever the foci, educators may be keenly interested in knowing more about whether students are becoming more adept at searching out and evaluating information, data, and ideas for themselves (Bruner, 1966; Dewey, 1933; Pogrow, 2009).

The fifth question—Does practice draw on research related to effective methods of teaching?—invites individuals, groups, and school staff to openly discuss whether, first, they are aware of current research related to their teaching and, second, if they reconsider their teaching habits when they are inconsistent with the best available studies regarding, say, the teaching of mathematics, earth science, literature, world languages, reading, and so forth (Bloom, 1984; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Pajak, Stotko, & Masci, 2007; Pogrow, 2009; Schwab, 1969; Walberg, 1990; Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). This question is a valuable tool in seeking to determine whether, and to what degree,

professional development of staff is aligned with their responsibilities. Likewise, it may help stimulate staff to inquire whether their practices are largely rooted in habits, traditions, new research, or a reflective combination. Of course, raising this question does not mean that teachers are obligated to mindlessly respond to any research findings. Alternatively, it encourages teachers and educational leaders to question pedagogical reform that is based on impressionistic and faddist claims.

The final question—Does the pedagogy reinforce written and articulated values?—asks educators to determine whether their professed—written and articulated—value statements are enacted in the ways teaching is undertaken. For example, a school may have a mission statement that claims that it respects the dignity and identity of students as it promotes an education of the whole child, yet it simultaneously allows coaches to belittle the athletic abilities of players or volunteer mathematics tutors to denigrate the intellectual capacities of developmentally delayed students. Or, perhaps, the school simply overlooks the teacher who screams at misbehaving students. The question of the consistency of values professed and practiced gets at the heart of ethical issues as they relate to pedagogical practices (Au, 2007; Freire, 2003; Pinar, 1978).

Anthropological Curriculum Questions

Of the numerous anthropological curriculum items we constructed, the following six items were selected for inclusion in the HIACE. The items are as follows:

- Does each student's prior learning emerge as an important part of the learning of other students and teachers?
- Does the entire staff recognize that they constitute a critical element of the curriculum that students encounter?
- Does the professional staff understand that their ongoing learning and development is crucial to their remaining dynamic formal and informal curricula?
- Does "the real world curriculum" of community and career volunteers regularly complement the formal curriculum?
- Does the human curriculum help foster a sense of community and a regard for the common good?
- Does the embodied curriculum nurture democratic values in everyday and ordinary experiences?

The first of the human curriculum questions—Does each student's prior learning emerge as an important part of the learning of other students and teachers?—suggests that a teacher or school recognizes that the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and understandings of students are worthy of attention for more than one reason: culturally responsive teaching. As Dewey (1916) notes, what a student

knows constitutes a body of understanding that can enrich the learning experiences of classmates, but it is up to teachers to understand students and when to draw on their bodies of information and how this information can be interestingly and educationally shared. Teachers may discuss a plethora of questions as they consider their own experiences in eliciting the histories of their students (Freire, 2003; Greene, 1971; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 1999; Noddings, 2003a). When practitioners share their reflective experiences, we actualize an important form of professional development.

Another question—Does the entire staff recognize that they constitute a critical element of the curriculum that students encounter?—seeks to get all school personnel to recognize the potential influence they can have on students, regardless of whether they are teachers or not. The custodian who makes comments about environmental footprints, the cafeteria worker who discusses healthy foods, the counselor who shows compassion, the coach who illustrates the importance of mathematics, the volunteer who tutors chemistry students, the music educator who plays in a mariachi band, the principal who expresses an interest in soccer, and others may leave permanent, beneficial educational footsteps that many teachers may never put down (Cuban, 2008; Dewey, 1897; Duke, 2008). Likewise, teachers make impressions—intended and unintended—that no one else in society leaves (Van Manen, 1986, 1991).

Does the professional staff understand that their ongoing learning and development is crucial to their remaining dynamic formal and informal curricula, and is a critical professional staff question and, perhaps, the most important one from a Deweyan (1933) orientation? Obviously, this stimulus for thought is consistent with the professional responsibility to be a lifelong learner. But it implies more. It suggests that teachers are intellectual and professional leaders of classroom and school environments and that their love of learning is absolutely necessary to the learning of students. Intellectually fresh and emotionally engaged teachers are, perhaps, the greatest gifts of society. Thus, teachers may want to ask: How do we answer this question? Am I the only one who feels burned out and useless (Palmer, 2007)?

Does "the real world curriculum" of community and career volunteers regularly complement the formal curriculum? is a question that is somewhat implicit in the first epistemological curriculum question: Does the curriculum allow for flexibility so that demographic, cultural, and individual needs and interests can be addressed? A major part of any culture is the diversity of the careers, jobs, and professionals that are available. Schools that draw on these riches and realities introduce both realities and motivational factors that career-ignoring schools and teachers disregard to the detriment of many if not all students (Dewey, 1897). Hence, schools that use volunteers who are, for example, bricklayers and accountants, electricians and engineers, carpenters and nurses, welders and physicians, automakers and professors, farmers and attorneys, and

many others reflect an interest in the vocational interests and realities of students and society and an appreciation for the diverse contributors to the well being of society (Bobbitt, 1918; Chan, 2006). Implicitly, the practice of drawing on the strengths of the so-called working classes and the so-called professional classes also conveys democratic lessons: We are interested in and appreciate the contributions of everyone.

In situations where culture and school combine to emphasize individual feats and winners and slight group learning and success, the fifth question may help teachers and schools nurture an interest in others and their interests: Does the human curriculum help foster a sense of community and a regard for the common good? Therefore, educators may ask themselves how they exhibit and build an appreciation for and action on behalf of community concerns and society as a whole. This is not to suggest that enlightened self-interest is an unworthy pursuit.

But it is to say that being interested in others can be a form of enlightened self-interest. Likewise, it is to imply that academic individualism—being interested in learning primarily or exclusively for personal benefit—may nurture tendencies that last long after commencement, university, and medical and law school, as well as long after initial post-high school jobs, military service, and apprenticeships (Adams, 1908; Bruner, 1966; Chan, 2006; Valenzuela, 2005). Moreover, community projects, service learning, altruistic endeavors, and related activities are rooted in research that suggests happiness is at least partially connected to developing lifestyles that consider the wellbeing of others (Kaye, 2004; Noddings, 2003b).

The last question—Does the embodied curriculum nurture democratic values in everyday and ordinary experiences?—is designed to nudge us to think about whether we individually and collectively manifest democratic values on a regular basis (Noddings, 2003a; Palmer, 2007; AAUW, 1992). Do we respect one another in the midst of controversy? Are we interested in the well being of even those who reject what we most highly prize? Do we accept those who are radically different from us? How do we practice the ideal of helping students to find their voices so that they can genuinely enjoy freedom of thought and speech? How frequently do we almost unconsciously support the freedoms of assembly, press, religion, speech, so forth? What are the embodied lessons that our students habitually see?

Ecological Curriculum Questions

The ecological dimensions of the curriculum are, of course, partially contained in the epistemological, pedagogical, and anthropological questions asked heretofore. But the lessons that are taught by the blending together of these realms should not be overlooked. Similarly, the additional lessons that are taught and

caught from the physical and technological environment are important. Finally, the blending of these various domains with the social and psychological ethos of the classroom and school need examination by educators (Deal & Peterson, 1998; Freiberg, 1999). Questions that are in the HIACE are as follows:

- Does the classroom and school curriculum promote a safe learning and living environment?
- Does the school ethos promote equitable opportunities for all students?
- Does the curriculum promote an ethic of care?
- Does the learning environment welcome freedom of thought?
- Does the atmosphere exude an enthusiasm for learning?
- Does the staff recognize the importance of their contributing to the moral architecture of the classroom and school?

We may be tempted to interpret the question. Does the classroom and school curriculum promote a safe learning and living environment? in a restricted way. That is, we may think immediately and exclusively of physical safety. Of course, physical safety ought to be a given in any school. Yet, physical safety alone is insufficient for claiming that a school has a healthy educational environment or culture. Other safety concerns include freedom from bullying, whether students, staff, or volunteers do it. Likewise, a social safety matter that is habitually a cause of concern for many adolescents—unless they conclude it is better to conform than stand out—is the freedom to be different from their peers, regardless of whether the differences regard clothing preferences, religious beliefs, language choice, sexual orientation, drug utilization, or sexual experimentation (Juzwiak, 2009). Obviously, to the degree that a coercive school environment is allowed to grow and control these and related matters, to that degree we are facilitating oppressive, domineering, and controlling tendencies to overpower democratic ones. What we allow to flourish in the ecological curriculum can seldom be counteracted by an excellent epistemological curriculum. Thus, this question encourages us to examine the broader ramifications of school safety, to identify items that need attention, and to build a school's ecology as needed (Sergiovanni, 2004).

The second question, Does the school ethos promote equitable opportunities for all students?, is designed to prompt us to reflect on the realities of our schools and districts, not just on formal statements or even policy, although codified value statements are often important indicators of a school's ethos (Hansen, 2007; Noddings, 2003b; Oakes, 1990; Portes, 2005). Of course, this question is not designed to fuel reflection on whether all students are treated the same. Instead, the question is intended to ask us to consider whether we spend an equitable amount of time, energy, space, and funds on those students who have interests, ambitions, talents, and purposes that are outside the dominant

or primary populations that are served (Forshay, 2000). Is adequate attention given to the interests of students who are intensely interested in agriculture, music, forestry, teaching, social work, theater, and the military? Are school and community resources inordinately directed toward aspiring physicians, dentists, veterinarians, attorneys, and engineers? Do the arts, the humanities, and second-tier health-related subjects suffer at the expense of mathematics and the natural sciences? Are programmatic imbalances the result of accountability entities, powerful community partners, influential parents, or all of the above (Duke, 2008)? Perhaps most important, do we oppose inequities as they are identified or adopt a fatalistic approach toward addressing them? What would we do differently if we planned schools for all children and every social class?

The third question—Does the curriculum promote an ethic of care?—is designed to help us consider whether we promote caring as educators and as a school (Boylan & Donahue, 2003; Hare, 1993; Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999; Noddings, 2003a). Do we care for our students, respect their rich diversity, and the full range of their talents? By asking if the ecological curriculum promotes an ethic of care, we are asking for educators to look beyond whether or not they care about an individual student, which is important, but to reflect on whether the multiple aspects of caring are infused into all aspects of the teaching day. Are we caring for society by helping to develop the skills and knowledge that will enable students to make a positive contribution to society? Are we promoting caring for others by fostering students who are capable of not only caring about their friends and families but also members of their communities and the world? Are we promoting caring about the self by recognizing each student's personal strengths and honoring those strengths in the classroom? Do our students understand that the student and adult members of the school care for them, as people, not just test takers? Are we, teachers and other education personnel, seen as real people who care about a variety of non-academic issues—like music, art, classic automobiles, our families, our environment—to students (Pogrow, 2009)? Do we connect our lessons to greater existential questions such as: What is the meaning of life?; and How should I live? Are we aware of the messages, intended and unintended, that we send everyday to our students and school members about what we do and do not care for?

Question four—Does the learning environment welcome freedom of thought?—in certain respects is an expansion of question one: Does the classroom and school curriculum promote a safe learning and living environment? But the query is much more narrowly focused: Is it safe to differ with classmates and teachers regarding historical, literary, scientific, political, and aesthetic viewpoints (Dewey, 1933; Freire, 2003; Hare, 1979; Kincheloe, 2003)? Can students express doubts about beliefs that are deemed settled or certain by segments of the larger external community? Clearly, this question requires us to

think not only of the ecological curriculum but also the epistemological, pedagogical, and anthropological curriculums. Think for a moment about a school where all truth claims are not always seen in terms of black and white, where the principal understands and honors the different backgrounds of the teaching staff, and the teaching staff, in turn, honors and understands the different backgrounds of the student community. In this same school, students are expected to learn through research and critical evaluation. The volunteers, teachers, administrators of the school are heterogeneous in race, ethic, political, and religious backgrounds and differences are seen as valuable contributions to human understanding. Now think about a school where all truth claims are clearly defined in terms of correct and incorrect, right and wrong. Where the principal is aware of, but does not necessarily recognize, the various backgrounds of the teaching staff, and where the teaching staff feels similarly toward the student community. A major emphasis is on students memorizing dates, names, places, military events, and economic and historical facts. The volunteers, teachers, administrators of the school are mostly homogeneous in ethnicity, gender, and religious orientation. How might freedom of thought be seen in these schools? How might the average lesson be taught? Would students and teachers be comfortable expressing an idea that differed from the school and social norms? How might faculty meetings be structured? What kinds of people might be encouraged to volunteer at such schools? Schools and teachers who care deeply about democratic, constitutional, and educational freedoms may wish to explore the implications of their answers to this question in considerable detail so that they may help promote schools and societies that are characterized by the qualities that are said to be guaranteed by national and state political and legal structures (Ornstein & Ornstein, 2009).

Answers to the next question—Does the atmosphere exude an enthusiasm for learning?—may reveal important clues regarding board priorities, school leadership, staff excitement, student engagement, and community involvement (Potter, 2005; Sullo & Sullo, 2009). Why is this the case? When a school environment is largely devoid of a passion for learning and lacking a reflective engagement of administrators, teachers and students, we can hardly expect that the epistemological, pedagogical, and anthropological dimensions of the curriculum are emotionally alive and filled with class stimulation and personal fulfillment. When we go to work simply to fulfill our professional obligations, and students go to school merely to meet attendance requirements and parental expectations, we probably do not need to ask whether the conventional, methodological, and human curricula are characterized by the burgeoning of understanding, imagination, and creativity. But we most likely do need to ask what has destroyed the passions of leadership, staff, and students. A good place to look for potential answers to this question is in the ecological curriculum. What structures, regulations, relationships, behaviors, objectives, and policies are

confounding the multiple loves of school staff and leadership? What plans are needed in order to ignite the passions of everyone who is a part of the ecological curriculum (Simpson, Jackson, & Aycock, 2005)?

Finally, does the staff recognize the importance of their contributing to the moral architecture of the classroom and school (Jackson, 1968; Wagner & Simpson, 2009)? Another way of framing this question if we follow Dewey's (1916, 1927) thinking is to ask: Do staff realize that the effort to enact a democratically oriented curriculum or to create a democratically oriented school is a moral undertaking? Therefore, staff need to think specifically about their attitudes and actions and how these affect their classrooms and school. One stimulus to thinking about a classroom or school culture is to discuss a well developed code of ethics for educators (Strike & Soltis, 2009). By examining professional expectations, staff can come to a better understanding of themselves and the ecological curriculum they constitute and make decisions about changes that they consider important. Obviously, the sixth question, as well as the fifth one, focuses on the overall ethos and atmosphere of the school and each teacher's classroom as positive and inviting or as places that are characterized by drudgery. Another way of looking at these questions is to ask how we as educators can foster classrooms and schools that are charged with an energy and excitement? Even when staff differ on some basic educational and ethical assumptions and practices, it is possible that discussing these questions and our answers to them can generate learning for us and our students (Adams, 1908; Dewey, 1897; Duke, 2008; Pogrow, 2009; Schlechty, 2008).

Conclusions

During our research into the historical and theoretical background of curriculum, we examined numerous arguments for particular kinds of curricula, goals, objectives, and outcomes. Similarly, we encountered dynamic issues that stimulated our thinking about past curricular claims, present needs, and future directions. The reflective streams of thought that we entered were helpful in identifying critical curriculum questions and potential, if only partial, answers. Overall, we found that curriculum theorists have helped to create a rich curriculum history that stimulated us to think more critically, examine assumptions more carefully, listen to other views more attentively, and inquire more deeply about the key questions of curriculum, including but not limited to its purposes, aims, content, processes, outcomes, and assessments. Also, we found that curriculum polemics is not a recently developed art, but one that is found throughout the past into the present to varying degrees. Likewise, we learned that historical contexts, cultural settings, local circumstances, and ideological commitments greatly influenced curriculum thinkers and our interpretations of them and their works. But also we noticed critical minds and,

often, spirits that enabled many theoreticians to rethink, revise, refine, and, on occasion, reject their own ideas. Given this history and the illumination it provides, we attempted to be as fair-minded as we could in selecting from their ideas to emphasize. In the end, we choose in the light of our collective commitment to our understandings of democratic schooling and the current needs that we see. Of course, we invite readers to critique our presentation of selected ideas in this study and the heuristic instrument we created. In the end, our hope is to stimulate critique by P–12 educators about curricular matters and, thereby, to think more reflectively about the epistemological, pedagogical, anthropological, and ecological dimensions of the curriculum they encounter, construct, and embody.

Notes

[1] As should be expected, the authors do not always agree on all of the details that we discuss. So, we welcome readers disagreeing with our ideas. The authors do agree that curriculum is a professional issue as well as a societal issue. Hence, we believe that neither society nor educators should be excluded from discussions when curricular issues arise.

[2] The research team welcomes feedback on the HIACE and suggestions regarding revising existing and adding new items to the instrument. We are keenly interested in making subsequent versions of the HIACE instrument.

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Appendix A

Heuristic Instrument for Analyzing Curriculum Emphases (HIACE)

Epistemological Checklist
Pedagogical Checklist
Anthropological Checklist
Ecological Checklist

Heuristic Instrument for Analyzing Curriculum Emphases: Epistemological Checklist

#	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1.1	Does the curriculum allow for flexibility so that demographic, cultural, and individual needs and interests can be addressed?				
1.2	Does the curriculum provide multiple ways of evaluation and different kinds of assessment data?				
1.3	Does the curriculum include an appropriate emphasis on non-measurable educational goals?				
1.4	Does the curriculum encourage students to think reflectively for themselves?				
1.5	Does the curriculum help students to understand the difference between mere opinion and knowledge-based claims?				
1.6	Does the curriculum promote student understanding of civic responsibilities?				

Heuristic Instrument for Analyzing Curriculum Emphases: Pedagogical Checklist

#	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
2.1	Does the pedagogy value the student's point of view?				
2.2	Does practice encourage teaching in imaginative and creative ways?				
2.3	Does the staff use culturally responsive teaching?				
2.4	Does student inquiry have a significant place in learning?				
2.5	Does practice draw on research related to effective methods of teaching?				
2.6	Does the pedagogy reinforce written and articulated values?				

Heuristic Instrument for Analyzing Curriculum Emphases: Anthropological Checklist

#	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
3.1	Does each student's prior learning emerge as an important part of the learning of other students and teachers?				
3.2	Does the entire staff recognize that they constitute a critical element of the curriculum that students encounter?				
3.3	Does the professional staff understand that their ongoing learning and development is crucial to their remaining dynamic formal and informal curricula?				
3.4	Does "the real world curriculum" of community and career volunteers regularly complement the formal curriculum?				
3.5	Does the human curriculum help foster a sense of community and a regard for the common good?				
3.6	Does the embedded curriculum nurture democratic values in everyday and ordinary experiences?				

Heuristic Instrument for Analyzing Curriculum Emphases: Ecological Checklist

#	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
4.1	Does the classroom and school curriculum promote a safe learning and living environment?				
4.2	Does the ethos promote equitable opportunities for all students?				
4.3	Does the curriculum promote an ethic of care?				
4.4	Does the learning environment welcome freedom of thought?				
4.5	Does the atmosphere exude an enthusiasm for learning?				
4.6	Does the staff recognize the importance of their contributing to the moral architecture of the classroom and school?				

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