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# CLASSROOMS AS SOCIALIZATION AGENTS: THE THREE R'S AND BEYOND

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The conceptualization of curriculum as more than a document, specifically, as an active negotiation and construction of knowledge, was explored in two different studies as a first step toward understanding curriculum in practice. In particular, the studies explored the "social process curriculum" which was embedded in the enacted curriculum in the classrooms.

Findings showed that the enacted curriculum was comprised of many elements, i.e., a pragmatic, unofficial, masked, social, and hidden curriculum. Each of these types of enacted curriculum were interwoven within the enacted curriculum, and were socializing agents which conveyed norms, behaviors, values and meanings to students.

There has been on-going rhetoric about what curriculum fare is offered, or should be offered, to students by schools. One of the major national reports of the 1980's which addresses this issue, *A NATION AT RISK* (1983), has been scrutinized. For instance, the report has been reproached for its implicit message: School are places of production; the higher the productivity in all areas of schooling, i.e., increased working hours, more of the three R's, etc., the better chance America has to improve its schools and thus become *the* economic world power. Students and teachers are to be active proprietors in this production process (Shapiro, 1985). Other reports, such as *HIGH SCHOOL* (1983) and *A PLACE CALLED SCHOOL* (1984), refer to schools in America as problematic; i.e., a high illiteracy rate, discipline problems, both teacher working and student learning conditions, etc. In short, there is an urgent message for the need to improve schools. Fundamentally, this demands change of some sort.

In partial response to the question "What should we do on Monday morning," the reports call to convalesce the curriculum document. But how useful is it to merely improve the curriculum document without taking into account the ways that it becomes translated in the classroom setting? Therefore, occurrences in classrooms, or the ways that the document becomes "played out" in the instructional context, must be examined in order to significantly improve schools

## *Curriculum Explored*

The conceptualization of curriculum as more than a document, specifically, as an active negotiation and construction of knowledge, was explored in two different studies as a first step toward understanding curriculum in practice. Although the studies were conducted in different settings, there were notable commonalities. Weisz's ethnographic study (1988) of two elementary school classrooms, during which teachers were observed for three months, four

hours daily, addressed the issue of curricula transmitted to students. In Kanpol's ethnographic study (1987) of a group of eighth grade teachers who were observed individually for three weeks each, five hours daily, the issue of curriculum usage was also paramount.

These studies indicate that the concept of curriculum needs further scrutiny if we are to improve schools. This may seem like old hat. But one reason for the lack of understanding of the concept of curriculum is because educational researchers have not studied how curriculum documents are portrayed and implemented in the instructional context. Therefore, what "counts" as the enacted (Weisz, 1988) and or pragmatic (Kanpol, 1988) curriculum needs further examination. How these definitions relate to the instructional process and the content taught are also of concern. Furthermore, embedded in our definition of curriculum is what we term a "social process curriculum." This article explicates what "counts" and is incorporated within this social process curriculum

#### *The Social Process Curriculum*

The social process curriculum can be viewed as the "processes and their outcomes which develop through the participants' production of life, in particular, in educational settings" (Lemish, 1987). Within these processes, this "social process curriculum" includes a variety of separate behaviors in classrooms, implicit teacher messages to students, instructional activities, etc. Most important for establishing the rationale for this social process curriculum are the various definitions given to the concept of "curriculum." Therefore, a look at prior definitions of curriculum is needed.

#### *Conceptions of Curriculum*

Curriculum is often referred to as various documents which contain objectives,

outlines and strategies for teaching course content (Beauchamp, 1981; Johnson, 1981). Such documents are composed as lists of subjects, or the program of studies, and are generally constructed as manuals, or guides, which teachers are given. This curriculum may also be defined as the overt curriculum, or the specific, academic material which teachers intend to convey to students (Jackson, 1968; Eisner, 1979).

Recently, however, curriculum theorists have raised questions about whether the document is "the" curriculum, and hence, what is meant by improving curriculum. Furthermore, what counts as viable, worthwhile content is also being questioned. There appear to be at least two directions in which curriculum theory is grounded. One direction views the curriculum as the official policy document, which can be improved through further negotiation over content and evaluation, while the other direction presents an alternative to the curriculum as document definition. These latter theorists, such as ourselves, deal with the curriculum in what we have described as "pragmatic" or "enacted" terms (Jackson, 1968; Eisner, 1979; McCutcheon, 1982). This necessarily conceives the curriculum as an on-going negotiation and construction of knowledge.

#### *The Enacted Curriculum as Multi-Dimensional: The Pragmatic, Unofficial, Masked, Hidden and Social Process Curriculum*

Of the general conceptions of curriculum enactment presented in the literature, McCutcheon's (1982) deserves attention. She states that the curriculum is "what students have an opportunity to learn in school, through both the hidden and overt curriculum, and what they do not have an opportunity to learn because certain matters were not included in the curriculum" (p. 9). This definition was adopted for the

purposes of our studies.

The *pragmatic* curriculum is related to the enacted curriculum. For instance, even though teachers are presented with an official curriculum, what gets taught may only end up as a function of how much time there is to teach particular content, teacher bias towards content, discipline problems, over-burdened teacher duties to perform during instructional times (Kanpol, 1987) or even the particular methods a teacher uses to convey content to students (group work, frontal teaching approaches, etc.).

This pragmatic curriculum can be tied to the *unofficial curriculum* (Weisz, 1988) or teacher constructed curriculum-academic activities which are conveyed by teachers but are not part of a formal policy document, and may be intended (planned) or unintended (spontaneous). For instance, spontaneous discussion about vandalism or an orange tasting activity, (Weisz, 1988), discussion about candy sales or about a sports intermural competition (Kanpol, 1987), to name only a few activities, fall into the category of the unofficial curriculum.

The *masked curriculum* (Weisz, 1988) is academic content taught that is intended by the teacher, but often is ways other than the traditional lesson. This is another type of curriculum under the rubric of curriculum enactment. Often, procedural/management activities and informal activities masquerade as the vehicles or carrying academic content. For example, collecting lunch money during lunch count is a type of masked curriculum because even though the activity appears to be that of collecting money, students are also participating in a Math lesson (Weisz, 1988). Similarly, talking about a candy sale was a vehicle used by the language teacher to teach students numbers in German (Kanpol, 1987).

The concept of the *'hidden curriculum'* refers to implicit, tacit, unstated or otherwise put, ideological assumptions. These

assumptions assume basic moral, philosophical and political "world views" and are contained in school practices and policies, even in official documents. The views contain the values and norms that schools teach in subtle ways without necessarily intending to do so (Eisner, 1979; Anyon, 1981). They are hidden as there is a lack of awareness or a deception that involves either teacher or student. In Weisz's study (1988), the hidden curriculum was transmitted through such activities as the Pledge of Allegiance (patriotism), Superstars (merits of the work ethic) lining up and the obeying of rulers (conformity). In Kanpol's study (1987), the hidden curriculum consisted of completing tasks on time (rewards and delayed gratification), selling candy for a candy sale (investment of profit), the talk of teacher's cars (material objects and their value), and the labeling of students (stereotype, equality, etc.).

The *'social curriculum'* refers to the interactions and norms conveyed in classrooms, between either teacher and students, or between students, thus providing a message to students (Erickson, 1982; Green and Harker, 1982). Such a social curriculum has been identified in the instruction field and in work on ethnography in classrooms (Erickson, 1982, as cited in Green, 1983). This work suggests that social interactions and structures are part of task, and thus part of curriculum. For example, a teacher greeting students daily and using students' news conveyed a certain message or norm to students. Additionally, the social curriculum may include the various peer culture interactions in the classroom context.

No less important is the manner in which teachers respond to each other in the hallway, teachers' room and at team meetings, etc. For instance, how teachers talk and relate stories about particular students may influence how these students are

treated, and as a result impact on what kinds of instructional material will be offered to them as part of the curriculum.

We believe that the pragmatic, unofficial, masked, hidden, and social process curricula are *interwoven* in the enacted curriculum. In other words, what gets enacted in class may be a result of the above curricular components in the teacher's day. While a review of the literature showed that there really is no one single definition of enacted curriculum, our conclusions will also suggest that curriculum is not a unitary entity. It acts as a social process; its various parts are connected.

#### *The Social Process Curriculum as Impacting on Learning Opportunities*

The existence of our prior conceptual analysis begs several questions. First, what are the implications of the existence of these areas of the enacted curriculum for student learning and growth? Second, what factors contribute to the existence of these types of enacted curriculum in the classrooms? Third, what levels of teacher awareness of these different curricula exist? Fourth, how do the above questions and answers relate to the social process curriculum?

In both our studies, exploration of the policy documents and teacher plans (or no plans, as was sometimes the case) suggests that the overt curriculum constrains both the teachers' opportunities to teach and the students' opportunities to learn. For instance, Weisz' study (1988) intimates that teachers teach basic skills. Here, the overt curriculum suggested that speaking of the alphabet as a major objective. What, however, about the complex skills of reading and writing not taught or emphasized in the curriculum document? In Kanpol's study (1987), eighth grade students in a Language Arts class were given third grade reading material to read simply because they were

incapable of understanding the eighth grade reading levels. Changing the overt curriculum to include more complex skills, especially for less talented students, is critical if we are to fulfill the age old humanistic and progressive promises of our forefathers.

One thing is certain. The curriculum presented in its various forms in this paper is part of a social process which students are taught. Thus, if it be the hidden curriculum that was passed to students (aware or unaware by teachers--such as the teaching of risk-taking, problem-solving, competition, success at all costs, the alleviation or promotion of prejudices or stereotypes, etc.) or the social curriculum, (where the emphasis is to convey information to students through various activities), in the main, students are acquiring information. In general, students process this information through the *pragmatic, unofficial, and masked curriculum, hidden and social curriculum*, defined in this paper as the *enacted curriculum*. Put differently, it is the curriculum used and identified in its various forms in this paper that plays a major role in socializing students.

#### Conclusions

The identification of the assorted types of curriculum in the classroom has major implications for the field of curriculum. The findings of both our studies suggest that curriculum is an entity comprised of differing elements which need to be considered when examining it. These constituents necessarily form the process by which students and teachers are taught to conform to, or as the case may be, even resist certain values, functions, and norms, etc. When studying these different elements, what must be kept in mind are these simple but important points. The curriculum used in any of the elaborated forms in this paper is part of a process of what we define as cur-

riculum. In the long run, then, the "curriculum" is the vehicle which socializes students as well as teachers. This is precisely why we have defined the curriculum as the social process curriculum.

The question of which type of curriculum is important or valuable to students may be raised, but perhaps this is a naive question. The different types of curriculum identified in this paper cannot be isolated from one another. What we have called a social process curriculum is a part of a system of curriculum and needs to be understood in greater depth if the overt curriculum is to be altered, modified, or converted in any way. Clearly, there is work to be done.

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### Chicago Watch

Chicago parents voted this October to elect representatives to the 540 new school councils which will now govern the public school system. Parents hold six of each council's ten seats. The other four are held, two each, by teachers and community representatives. The elected councils have authority over curriculum, hiring and firing of principals and staff, and spending.

In most cities, these decisions rest with school boards under the guidance of the superintendent. The governing councils will enable the community to hold individual schools accountable, as they have the requisite authority to make changes to improve the schools. This bold reform is just one of many on the agenda of reformers in Chicago, whose education system was called, in November 1989, the "worst in the nation" by former William Bennett when he was Education Secretary. With sweeping reforms underway in Chicago, new candidates for the "worst in the nation" title include Los Angeles and Detroit, which have done little to reform their falling public school systems, despite community demands.