

NEEDED: A SOCIOPOLITICAL MODEL OF CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.

Kenneth F. Smith

James Cook University of North Queensland

During the last decade or so there has been a considerable broadening in the types of curriculum theorizing being undertaken. Pinar (1978) identified three types of curriculum theorists evident at that time. The three types were traditionalists, conceptual-empiricists, and reconceptualists. The distinctions between these three types were made on the focus of their enquiries. The focus of traditionalists was 'service to practitioners'; of conceptual-empiricists was to use empirical social-science studies to develop 'theories'; of reconceptualists was to develop 'theories' from a value-laden perspective with a politically emancipatory intent.

While this classification is based on varying purposes and processes of curriculum theorizing, Goodlad (1979, p.17) uses a classification system based on the content of the enquiry. He identifies three broad areas: substantive, technical-professional, and political-social. The focus of the substantive area is the goals, subject matter, materials and the like of curriculum; of the technical-professional is processes of group or individual engineering, logistics, and evaluation through which curricula are improved, installed, or replaced; of the political-social is all of those human processes through which some interests come to prevail over others. He goes on to state that while these three may be separated for the purposes of study, comprehensive inquiry into praxis necessarily encompasses all three.

The purpose of this paper is to separate out one of them for the purposes of study. The one to be studied is the political-social. Goodlad himself (1979, p.356) admits that while the existence of this area of curriculum enquiry is self-evident, there has been little documentation of these processes and virtually no efforts to classify them.

One paper could not identify all of the political-social processes of curriculum that have been documented and classify them. The scope of this paper has therefore been narrowed. It will provide illustrations of the content of present curriculum theory and thereby establish a need for a political-social model for curriculum enquiry. It will then identify the elements that will need to be taken into account in such a model. Finally, it will use those elements to devise a system for classifying existing documented information as a first step to the development of such a model.

The Range of Present Curriculum Theory.

An examination of the range of present curriculum will show that, while it deals with a number of substantive and technical-professional issues, it only alludes to the political-social processes of curriculum development and implementation. Ignoring this vital part of the curriculum process has led to a lack of understanding of the whole process with a consequent misrepresentation of causes of curriculum problems.

For instance, the slow rate of change of the curriculum has been well documented in curriculum literature. Probably the most classic statement produced in this literature is that the improvements attempted through curriculum projects of the late 1950s and the 1960s have been "blunted on the classroom door" (Silberman 1971, p.159). Other terms have also been introduced to describe the lack of "proper"

implementation of curriculum innovation. The most cutting of these would be "slippage" (Goodlad 1979, p.60) which purports to describe the process of watering down the quality of the ideational curriculum, as evidenced by the package emanating from a curriculum, in the operational curriculum.¹

Another example is lack of congruence between prescriptive curriculum theory and the studies of how teachers plan. Prescriptive curriculum theory has told teachers what they should include in their curriculum plan. Tyler's work (1949) is seen as a watershed in this type of theory. He identified four key questions which must be answered in a curriculum plan:

- . What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
- . What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- . How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
- . How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

Other writers (e.g. Taba 1962, Wheeler 1967, Johnson 1967, Skilbeck 1974) have restated the questions, chosen to emphasize different elements, or changed the linear process to a cyclical one while maintaining the prescriptive nature of their models.

Closely related to these models is the literature of some curriculum evaluators who place great emphasis on the need for teachers to prescribe their teaching with detailed (and often behavioural) objectives. Popham and Baker (1970, p.19) have suggested that the problem with objectives is that:

In spite of the lip service that objectives have received over the past several hundred years, few teachers have derived many instructional dividends from expressing their goals because, ordinarily, the objectives have been stated in terms too loose to allow the teacher to proceed effectively from them.

Despite all of this pleading and cajoling there is some evidence that teachers who follow these prescriptive approaches exhibit "less honest or authentic use of pupil's ideas during the lesson" (Clark and Yinger, 1977, p.281) with a resulting decrease of warmth towards their students.

Another type of curriculum "theorizing" also criticises teachers. This criticism might be categorized as falling - standards criticism in which there is the implication that standards were higher in some past age. Pressure groups, as Smith and Knight (1981) have demonstrated, also criticize school curricula on ideological grounds.

One focus of all the evidence reproduced above is the teacher. The teacher is seen as the major contribution to the inadequacies of the curriculum and, by implication, there are a lot of people who can tell teachers what they are doing wrong and how they can fix it. As Goodlad (1979, pp.53-54) observed:

Decision makers in the formal sociopolitical structure, as well as most reformers, have in mind the individual teacher as the target. Even while condemning the school as ineffectual, it is the teacher not the institution they have in mind.

Poor teachers! It would be no wonder if they feel frustrated. Someone else gets the credit when things go right but they get the blame for all that's wrong. Again Goodlad (1979, p.31) observed:

¹ The terms "ideational" and "operational" have been used in accord with the types of curricula identified by Goodlad (1979, p.60): ideational, formal, perceived, operational, experienced.

State and local authorities sometimes go so far in specifying their choices that few degrees of freedom are left for school administrators and teachers. Some of the degrees of freedom remaining for these decision makers frequently are usurped by administrators leaving little alternative for teachers other than to teach pre-prepared lessons. For them to be held accountable for achieving progress with diverse groups of students under such circumstances is to place teachers in unenviable circumstances of considerable responsibility and little accompanying authority.

What, then, do teachers decide? Recent studies (Clark and Yinger 1977, Jackson 1968, Taylor 1973) have begun to give us some information about the decisions teachers really do make, and on what basis they make them. The demands, desires, and perceptions evidenced above are just one of the bases they use. But to what extent are they a constraint? One teacher interviewed in Jackson's study (1968, p.131) gives us a lead on the constraints teachers might feel when she said, "I suppose if I ended up with a supervisor or principal that wanted lesson plans for nine weeks, it would shake me up. I'd probably get something down on paper; whether I'd follow it through or not I don't know. That would be something else."

Evidence suggests that teachers' own professional judgments of the needs, abilities, and interests of their students; their own capabilities and interests; the availability of resources; and the students' actions and reactions are all influences on the curriculum decisions they make (see e.g. Taylor 1973).

Present theories propose what should or could be taken into account in curriculum development. They also indicate the types of forces that shape the curriculum and what influences should be taken into account. They also study and to an extent explain the slow rate of change in curriculum (e.g. MacDonald and Walker 1976). Present theory does not, in any systematic way, help to answer questions on who does or should influence curriculum according to their values. It does not indicate whose values prevail at what times, and how. In other words, we have as yet no way of answering the question posed by Della Dora (1976), "Who owns the curriculum?" The complexity of such a question can at least be clarified by "the study of all those human processes through which some interests come to prevail over others so that these ends and means rather than others emerge" (Goodlad, 1979, p.17). The problem, is to develop a model that incorporates all these human processes: a sociopolitical model.

Elements for a Sociopolitical Model of Curriculum.

In attempting to identify the elements that should be included in a sociopolitical model of curriculum, it is important to keep in mind the nature of the phenomenon about which the model is being developed. Bernstein's (1967) use of the concept of organic solidarity is an indicator that the phenomenon is one where individuals relate to each other through a complex interdependence of specialized social functions. We are therefore not looking at an intricately designed set of cogs, each predesigned to turn in a particular way, at a fixed ratio to the surrounding ones. Rather we are considering a human activity involving an array of people who are all trying to have an influence on the curriculum.

Given the variety of definitions of curriculum in the literature,² it is as well to clarify the sense in which the term is used here. Taking a lead from Sockett (1975), this is not an attempt to say what the curriculum is, because it is whatever what people define it to be. The concept of curriculum used in this paper encompasses the notion of underlying principles presented by Bernstein (1967). An examination of such principles would include those related to the elements of curriculum (purposes,

² One discussion of the variety of such definitions can be found in Stenhouse (1975 pp.1-5).

content, organization and feedback) commonly identified.

Further the concept includes the five types of curriculum identified by Goodlad (1979, p.60): ideational, formal, perceived, operational, and experienced. These types of curriculum allow for a consideration of the sociopolitical processes at all levels of the process of curriculum development and implementation.

Such a conceptualization purposefully excludes teachers' teaching plans, which Jackson (1969, p.13) includes within the concept of "preactive teaching". These plans would be evidence to be examined for their underlying principles. These underlying principles would be the perceived curriculum.

Having made clear the concept of curriculum being here considered, the types of sociopolitical forces that affect the curriculum and the domains within which they operate must be identified.

The most obvious type of sociopolitical force affecting the curriculum is that created by governments or similarly elected bodies. These bodies may pass legislation, make regulations, or influence or control the texts students use. Each of these actions is designed to influence the curriculum. Studies by Smith and Knight (1981) and Scott and Scott (1980) are an examination of the influence one government has tried to have over the materials students study. Kogan (1978) and Bessant and Spaul (1976) examined two different societies of the legislative/regulative actions of government which influence the curriculum. Harman and Wirt's (1980) case studies in each of the states of Australia illustrate the processes by which these actions take place. The existence of the legislation or regulations does not, however, ensure that the curriculum experienced by the students will conform with those dictates. Even where a legislature prescribed specific requirements, as Hill (1979) shows, teachers and principals do not necessarily know them. How, then, can they implement them?

The sociopolitical forces exercised by elected bodies are not the only ones that influence the curriculum. Various pressure groups such as employers, unions, parents, or academics at various times attempt to influence the curriculum. Schwab (1976) has identified six "forces" which, he claims, determine the overwhelming bulk of the curriculum. These are:

1. Civil interest (civitas) or the needs of the polity and the economy.
2. The common culture and its subcultures (morals and manners, prevailing beliefs and loyalties, recreations widely enjoyed etc.)
3. Client-perceived wants and needs (e.g. vocational training)
4. Knowledge resources (conventionally recognized "fields" of knowledge and organized bodies of experience and behaviour)
5. Communities of inquiry (research and scholarship)
6. "Professional" interests of teachers, administrators, etc.
(both self-interests and interests in others' welfare).

These forces, too, need to be included in a sociopolitical model of curriculum. These examples also show there is not one curriculum. Rather, it is necessary, for a sociopolitical model to incorporate consideration of the five types of curriculum identified by Goodlad (1979, p.60). The five types of curriculum are:

- (a) Ideational - Curricula which emerge from ideaistic planning processes
- (b) Formal - Curricula which gain official approval by state and local school boards and adoption, by choice or fiat, by an institution and/or teachers

- (c) Perceived - These are curricula of the mind. What has been officially approved is not necessarily what various interested parties perceive in their minds to be the curriculum.
- (d) Operational - This is the curricula that goes on in classrooms hour after hour and day after day.
- (e) Experiential - This is the curricula as experienced by students.

Two sets of elements for a sociopolitical model of curriculum have now been identified. They are: the five curricula (ideational, formal, perceived, operational, and experiential); and the six forces which determine the overwhelming bulk of the curriculum (civitas, the common culture and its subcultures, client-perceived needs and wants, knowledge sources, community of inquiry, and the professional interests of teachers and administrators).

There are some aspects of the sociopolitical process affecting curriculum that these two elements do not take account of. Sociopolitical forces can act in a number of different domains. Some of the examples above have indicated these domains, others will require further illustration. Politicians and heads of Education Departments attempt to influence the curriculum through legislation, regulation, sanctions and directives. Sometimes, through such means as the innovations grants that used to be administered by the Schools Commission, they attempted to influence the curriculum more directly. Administrators and principals attempt to assume both supervisory and advisory roles in influencing the curriculum. Teachers try to balance the external constraints, their own professional concerns, and the actions and reactions of their students. Parents may act as a pressure group similar to other special interest groups such as employers, unions, or text-book campaigners. They may also act more directly as small groups or individuals interacting with the school or individual teacher.

Goodlad (1979) has recognized that these groups and individuals attempt to influence curriculum decision-makers at varying levels of remoteness from the learners by identifying four domains in which decisions are made. The four domains are:

1. Societal - the domain in which decisions are made by the controlling agency
2. Institutional - the domain in which decisions are made by the school
3. Instructional - the domain in which decisions are made by the teacher
4. Personal - the domain in which decisions are made by the student

(Goodlad, 1979, p.21).

But Goodlad recognizes that these domains by themselves are not sufficient to locate the sociopolitical processes. "First, there are those internal to a domain such as the institutional. Second, there are those between domains such as the institutional and societal. Third, there are processes conducted between a domain such as the institutional and individuals (e.g. parents) or groups (e.g. Local Citizens for Better Schools) located outside that domain" (Goodlad, 1979, p.356).

So now, three elements to be taken into account in developing sociopolitical model of curriculum have been identified. Such a model must allow for an explanation of the sociopolitical processes as they occur in the four domains, it must incorporate the five types of curriculum, and it must recognize the six types of forces which shape the curriculum.

An Approach to the Development of the Model

The identification of these three sets of phenomena has at least allowed the complexity of developing a sociopolitical model of curriculum to be shown. But will it go further than that? It may help us to

give a lead to Kirst and Walker who, in discussing the influence of pressure groups on the curriculum, said:

It would be very useful if we were able to quantify the amount of influence of each of these groups of individuals and show input-output interactions for just one school system. Unfortunately, this is considerably beyond the state of the art

(Kirst and Walker, 1971, p.488).

We do not have that type of detailed and intricate picture of one system. A review of what we do know and the development of a model showing the interaction and interrelation of those forces may well advance the state of the art to a stage where such a study would not be beyond possibility. This section of the paper will illustrate the type of information we know and how it can be classified using the three phenomena listed above. At this stage, the discussion will be illustrative only. Lengthy research will be required to undertake this task fully.

The Smith and Knight (1981) study is one example of a study in which sociopolitical processes in curriculum have been identified. It focusses on the legislative/regulative actions of politicians in Queensland under the influence of particular pressure groups. The Harman and Wirt (1980) studies include both similar instances and examples of the process occurring at the central authority level. Rogers (1969) provides similar information within the New York City Education system.

Available information is not confined to the processes that occur at the societal level. MacDonald and Walker's (1976) writing on changing the curriculum refers to sociopolitical processes that occur in relation to the development and dissemination of curriculum projects. Some studies within the field of Educational Administration, for instance Mackay (1966), show the existence of these processes between schools and teachers. On the other hand, information such as that provided by Clark and Yinger (1977) illustrate the processes occurring within the teacher. Ethnographic studies such as those by Cusick (1973) show sociopolitical processes at work at the student level.

This listing of information of the type that is presently available is far from exhaustive. So it is not the case that there is no information from which to develop a sociopolitical model of curriculum. Admittedly, the information is not about one system at one time. But such a coherent set of data may be able to be collected if there is a model round which it can be collected.

The immediate question, therefore, is how to organize existing data so that it can be used to develop a model. It is for this purpose that the three sets of curriculum phenomena identified above can be advantageous. Information about the sociopolitical processes involved in curricula can be classified according to each of the three sets of phenomena. This could be done by first constructing a three-dimensional grid as illustrated in figure 1 below. One set of phenomena could form each axis of the grid.

Each piece of information on the sociopolitical processes of curriculum could then be placed on the grid. Once all available information is thus classified, two results could be obtained. Firstly, the type of information that is needed but is not available could be clearly identified. Secondly, the classification could be used to propose a tentative sociopolitical model of curriculum for further research.

Conclusion

Much educational literature contains information on the sociopolitical processes of curriculum. This information is not confined to curriculum theory literature. Rather it is scattered across other areas as well, areas such as educational administration, sociology of education, and politics of education.

Consequently, these processes are not well conceptualized, resulting in many curriculum development efforts "collecting dust on the shelves" (either literally or metaphorically).

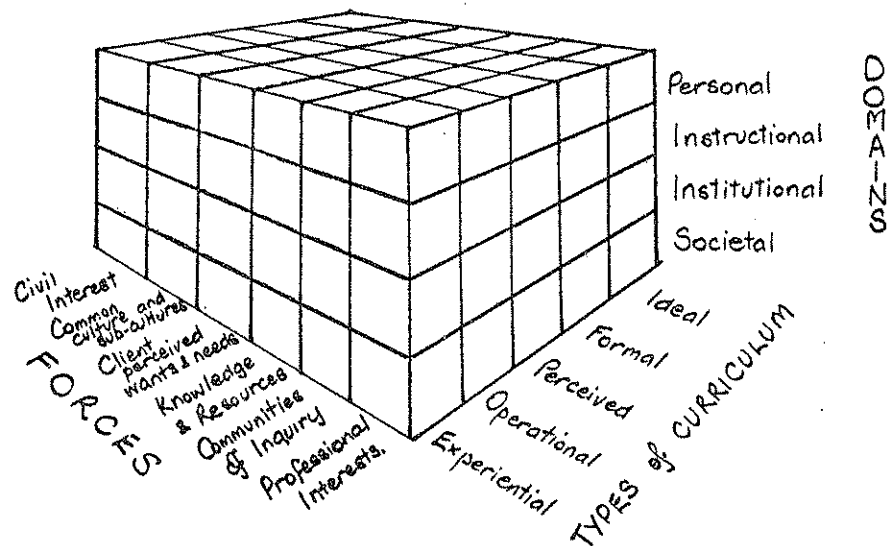


Fig 1: Framework for the Classification of Sociopolitical Processes in Curriculum.

The development of a sociopolitical model of curriculum could help to alleviate this problem. This paper has presented a means by which the elements in such a model could be developed. It identifies three elements of curriculum as a basis for classifying existing information. These elements include six sets of forces that shape the curriculum, five types of curriculum, and four curriculum domains.

The classification of existing sociopolitical information on curriculum according to these elements would allow for the identification of the interrelation and interaction between this information. A sociopolitical model of curriculum could follow.

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