Curriculum Design
Philosophies and Design Dimensions

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Philosophical Curriculum Perspectives Overview

**Traditional Curriculum Constructs**
- Idealism → Essentialism
- Broad Fields Design
- Realism → Perennialism
- Subject Centred
- Correlation Design

**Contemporary Curriculum Constructs**

**Pragmatism/Progressivism**
- Discipline Design
- Process Design
- Child Centred Design
- Experience Centred Design
- Humanistic Design

**Reconstructionalism**
- Romantic (Radical Design)
- Life Centred Design
- Reconstructionalist Design
Gottfried Leibniz was perhaps the most famous idealist with his idealism categorized by what one can know a priori and a posteriori (before and after experience). Idealists like Leibniz postulated that we can only know things through our experiences of them.

For Teachers this means that learning requires, “active participation,” (Hill, 38) of both the teacher and the learner. Idealists, like Leibniz, who himself was known as a, “universal genius” (Look) believed in holistic experiences as he himself dabbled in, “metaphysics, epistemology, logic, philosophy of religion, as well as mathematics, physics, geology, jurisprudence, and history.” (Look)

Like Idealism, Essentialism promotes individual self-discovery and growth. It focuses on the, “academics” and the “mastery of concepts and principles.” (Ornstein, 105)

Like idealism, it allows for and seeks learners to master a variety of subjects.

However, unlike idealism essentialism positions the teacher as an, “authority” (105) in their subject area.

**Curriculum Focus:**
The 3 R’s, but a mastery in a number of subject areas. (Ornstein, 105)

**Note:** This can be likened to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program.
Realism and Perennialism

Realism was characterized by Hume and Descartes as the, “search for truth in the physical universe.” (Hill, 39) Hume postulated that ideas are interconnected and that one can use inquiry and experience to search for and postulate absolute truths. Descartes, on the other hand, formulated the scientific method whereby through experience truth can be discovered or realized. Truth then for the realist is absolute, knowable and, “fixed.” (40)

Teachers then through their expertise depart truths on students who act like sponges soaking up knowledge poured upon them.

Perennialism then believes in rational education focusing on the, “mastery of facts and timeless knowledge” (Ornstein, 105)

Teachers then should be helping teach students to think in a Socratic manner whereby, “the classroom experience is a shared dialogue between the teacher and students.” (Denman)

Characteristics of the Socratic Method Include:

- Questioning and dialogue of values and beliefs
- A focus on moral education
- Useful in terms of discussing subjective truths about the world (Denman)

A more detailed discussion of the Socratic Method can be found at Stanford University

Curriculum Focus: Classical Subjects, literary analysis (Ornstein, 105)
Pragmatism/Progressivism

**Pragmatism:** “*Education based on individual’s experience.*” (Hill, 40) Charles Sanders Pierce depicted it as, “to know what we think, to be masters of our own meaning.” The emphasis placed here on both the individual their experience.

Pragmatism deems learning valuable if the experience in and of itself is, “worthwhile,” and has, “influence upon later experience.” (Hill, 40 - 41)

*Teachers* use this to focus on: child - centered education and morality. feedback, “*learning by doing,*” (Miller, 201 via. Hill, 41), project and place based learning.

**Progressivism** however, places great emphasis on the experience paying less attention to the individual. Hegal and more recently Fukuyama depicted progress as being the focal point (and if not the ending) of history and social identities. (Fukuyama, 35)

Progressivism is often used to promote democracy. Learning is a process to which there is active student participation through, “*problem solving and scientific inquiry.*” (Ornstein, 105)

Student involvement in the curriculum is tantamount, but differing with pragmatism, the student is not the focus of the learning. **Progressivism deals with the how,** while **pragmatism deals with the how and the who.**

**Curriculum Focus:** A focus on student interest and student centered learning.
The emphasis placed on reconstructing society by Freire in the accompanying video is one of critical thought. Freire, Brameland, and Counts advocated for education that fosters critical thinking in order to challenge conventional wisdom and socially accepted norms. (Hill, 42) They feel that education is the fundamental tool that should be used to encourage such thought. This follows political thinkers like Noam Chomsky in the questioning of neoliberal agendas.

Ornstein points out that reconstructionalist teacher’s role is to, “serve as an agent of change and reform,” (105) in order to facilitate learning environments whereby critical thinking surrounding, “problems confronting humankind,” are explored.

**Curriculum Focus:** Social Sciences and Humanities, Social and Political Issues (Ornstein, 105) (cross-curricularly could be employed to tackle issues in any discipline from maths to sciences).
Curriculum Design

Components of Design

Curriculum design is concerned with the nature and arrangement of four basic parts: objectives, content, learning experiences, and evaluation. (Ornstein & Hunkins, P. 151)

➔ When designing curriculum consideration must be given to how all parts interrelate.
   ◆ Philosophy
   ◆ Learning Theory
   ◆ What should be learnt?
   ◆ How do people learn?
   ◆ How should the acquired knowledge be utilized?
   ◆ Our basic beliefs

➔ Consideration should be given to these questions:
   ◆ What should be done?
   ◆ What subject matter should be included?
   ◆ What instruction strategies, resources, and activities should be employed?
   ◆ What methods and instruments should be used to appraise the results of the curriculum?
   (Ornstein & Hunkins, P. 151)
Sources of Curriculum Design

...designers must clarify their philosophical, social, and political views of society and the individual learner-views commonly called the curriculum sources. (Ornstein & Hunkins, P. 152)

SCIENCE AS A SOURCE...
➢ Scientific method
➢ Problem solving
➢ Learning how to learn

SOCIETY AS A SOURCE...
➢ School is an agent of society
➢ Socialization is a key function of school
➢ Collaboration among learners

MORAL DOCTRINE AS A SOURCE...
➢ Looks to the past
➢ Content driven by subject
➢ Appreciation for great thinkers of the past

KNOWLEDGE AS A SOURCE....
➢ Teaching valued knowledge
➢ Stimulation and development of the minds of learners
➢ Primary source of curriculum

THE LEARNER AS A SOURCE...
➢ Derived from knowledge of learner
➢ Learner primary source of curriculum
➢ Consideration for values and interests of learner
Design Dimension Considerations

✓ **Scope**...the breadth and depth of content
  ◆ “...refers to the breadth of the curriculum at a given time - the horizontal organization of content [Goodlad & Su, 1992]” (Sowell, P. 52)

✓ **Sequence** (and continuity)...cumulative and continuous learning
  ◆ “…ensures that ideas, themes, and skills are dealt with more than once in school curricula [Goodlad & Su, 1992]” (Sowell, P. 53)

✓ **Integration**...bringing concepts, skills and values together
  ◆ “...refers to linking all types of knowledge and experiences contained within the curriculum plan” (Ornstein & Hunkins, P. 158)

✓ **Articulation**...vertical and horizontal planning of curriculum
  ◆ “...the ways in which curriculum components occur...in a program’s sequence…” (Ornstein & Hunkins, P. 158)

“Curriculum design addresses relationships among curriculum’s components.”
(Ornstein & Hunkins, P. 151)
CURRICULUM DESIGNS: **Subject Centered**

**Subject-Centred Design**
- Popular and widely utilized
- Emphasizes standards and accountability
- Direct instruction, lecture style teaching
- Focus on essential knowledge
- Textbook, material driven

**Discipline Design**
- Fosters learners to think and utilize information
- Stresses understanding of structures and processes of the discipline (subject)
- Learners “think like a historian or biologist”

**Broad-Fields Design**
- Provides a broad understanding of all content areas
- Brings together well-accepted fields of study (e.g. Social Studies [Geography, History, Political Science])
- Holistic curriculum
- Most promising for future as it allows for hybrid forms of content and knowledge

**Process Design**
- Focus on development of intellectual character
- Emphasis on procedures in which knowledge is derived

**Correlation Design**
- Identifies areas where subjects can be connected while maintaining separate identities
- Example: Science and Mathematics

Rooted in **Academic and Systematic Conceptions of Curriculum.**
CURRICULUM DESIGNS: **Learner Centred**

**Child-Centred Design**
- Students are active in their learning environments
- Based on students’ needs and interests
- Learners actively construct understanding
- Hands-on exploration in classroom
- Social, emotional, and logical knowledge included in learning

**Experience-Centred Design**
- Curriculum is created “in the moment”
- Cannot be preplanned as learning is derived from the learner’s experience at the that time
- Emphasis on learners interest, creativity and self-direction in curriculum

**Romantic (Radical) Design**
- Individuals learn to critique knowledge
- Designed to break societal norms and barriers
- Views society as deeply flawed and educational institutions serve as a means of control

**Humanistic Design**
- Self directed learning
- Learners draw on their own resources to improve understanding
- Environment fosters empathy, respect for self and for others

Rooted in the **Humanistic** Conception of Curriculum.
CURRICULUM DESIGNS: Problem Centered (Society Culture Based)

Life Situation Design
- Three fundamental assumptions:
  1. Dealing with life situations is crucial and it makes educational sense to organize curriculum as such
  2. Students see the relevance in content presented
  3. Students study social/life situations
- Focuses on problem solving procedures
- Emphasis on real or authentic situations in curriculum learning

Reconstructionist Design
- Fosters social action
- Promotes social, political and economic development for society
- Engaged in critical analysis of communities (local, national, global) to address humanity’s problems

Rooted in the Social Reconstruction Conception of Curriculum.
Connections to Curriculum Design

Subject Centred Designs
- Subject Design
- Discipline Design
- Broad-Fields Design
- Correlation Designs
- Process Design

Learner Centred Designs
- Child Centered Design
- Radical Design
- Humanistic Design

Problem Centred Designs
- Life-Situations Design
- Reconstructionist Design

Underlying Philosophy
- Essentialism
- Perennialism
- Progressivism

Academic & Systemic

Humanistic
- Progressivism
- Reconstructionism
- Existentialism

Social Reconstruction
- Reconstructionism

Conceptions of Curriculum


Images Used

