A critical Review and Analysis of the Definitions of Curriculum and the Relationship between Curriculum and Instruction

Esayas W/Tinsae
Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies,
College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Department of Mathematics Education, Ethiopia

Introduction

Before defining the term curriculum, it is better to define Education and relate with curriculum. Education has been described differently by different scholars of the field. According to Nyagah G. (2010) education is defined as a process of acquiring the desirable knowledge, skills and attitudes to fit well in and become a useful member of that society. The term education means “to draw out”, i.e. facilitating realization of self-potential and latent talents of an individual. The teacher thus uses curriculum to bring out the best of learners.

What then are the functions of education?

Education has a variety of functions including the following:

- Intellectual function. This is to enable men awaken in and have a taste of knowledge. It is also to develop intellectual powers of learners.
- Productive function i.e. provides individuals with knowledge, skills and attitudes that could be used for economic activities in a society. Vocational training contributes to this function.
- Social function. In this context, education is considered as a process of preserving and transmission of cultural heritage. Beside education helps learners acquire skills for interpersonal
- Education is also a means of individual development. It therefore serves a personal function (Nyagah, ibid).

Definition of Curriculum

The term ‘curriculum’ originated from the Greek word “curere” meaning “to run a course”. But debate is still continuing as to the definition of curriculum. It has varied definitions and this variation is due to scholars’ position or approach or philosophical basis or understanding of the world in general.

Though there is no universal/ common definition of curriculum, different scholars defined curriculum in their philosophical or contextual basis. Some of the definitions are:

The definition of curriculum placed on continuum from the narrowly focus to the broad. The narrow focus is one that define curriculum as plan for discipline or course of study. In its broader sense, however, the curriculum is considered to everything that transpires in the course of planning, teaching, and learning in an educational institution (Derebssa, 2004).

Moreover, a wider conception of curriculum-nontechnical and more philosophical, personal and interesting approaches, includes numerous theories and ideas that are aesthetic
(Elliot Eisner, 2006), feminist (Carol Gilligan, 2010), pluralistic and divers (James Bank, 2011)... cited in Lunenburg, 2011)). Much of this “new” approach to curriculum is considered more speculative, expressive, emotional, and argumentative and political based on controversy and crisis, far different from the rational, logical, behaviorist, technocratic ideas that have characterized mainstream curriculum making.

Murray P. (1993). Curriculum is defined as all the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institution and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented.

Dewey J. (1902). Defined as Curriculum is a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child’s present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies . . . the various studies . . . are themselves experience they are that of the race.

Bobbitt F. (1918). Defined as Curriculum is the entire range of experiences, both directed and undirected, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual.

Rugg H. (1927). Defined as curriculum is a succession of experiences and enterprises having a maximum lifelikeness for the learner . . . giving the learner that development most helpful in meeting and controlling life situations?

On the other hand, Curriculum is viewed as a nontechnical approach, that is Therefore, through critical referring and reviewing, and bringing all these points together for me,

Curriculum is defined as a combination whole including philosophical perspectives, the learner’s and teacher’s experience, instructional methodologies, and expected and unexpected outputs acquired within a learning institution.

The above combination whole definition of curriculum can be decomposed into a narrow and broad viewpoint of curriculum as:

I. The narrow definitions: see curriculum as a plan, programme, experience, course of study or a package that can bring about learning.

II. The broad definitions: on the other hand see curriculum as a process. The process includes the philosophical viewpoint behind coming up with a ‘package’ and the continuous effort of making it serve the needs of society. It includes values, attitudes, and experiences of students inside and outside the school.

Instruction is the imparting of knowledge, developing of skills and attitudes, and meeting of special needs in various ways ranging from structured to individualized activities, including instructional support activities which aid and enrich the teaching-learning process. Good (1973): Instruction is the way Knowledge imparted in the classroom by way of lecture, recitation or discovery through purposive activity.

Therefore, Instruction can be defined as the process of teaching, delivering the curriculum, and providing learning environments for learners.
The Relationship between Curriculum and Instruction

Although curriculum and instruction are related to one another, they are not identical and at the same time one cannot speak about instruction with the absence of curriculum. We may simplistically view curriculum as which is taught and instruction as the means used to teach that which is taught. Even more simply, curriculum can be observed as the “what” and instruction as the “how”. We may think of the curriculum as the program, a plan, content, and learning experience, whereas we may characterize instruction as methods, the teaching act, implementation and presentation (Derebssa, 1999).

Models of curriculum-Instruction Relationship

The relationship between the two systems are shown by (Oliva, 1997) as cited in (Derebssa, 1999) as follows

Dualistic models

This model puts curriculum on one side and instruction on the other side. In such a way that they never meet. But the two entities lies a great gulf. What takes place in the classroom under the direction of the teacher seems to have little relationship to what must plan says should go on in the classroom. The planners ignore the instruction and in turn are ignored by the instruction.

Interlocking models

When curriculum and instruction are shown as system intertwined, an interlocking relationship exists. No particular significance is given to the position of instruction or curriculum. In either of versions of this model, the same relation is implied no matter which element appears on the left or on the right.

This model clearly demonstrates an integrated relationship between the two entities. The separation of one from the other would do serious harm to both. Curriculum planners find it difficult to regard instruction as paramount to curriculum and to determine teaching methods before program objectives.

Concentric Models

The proceeding models of the relationship between curriculum and instruction reveal varying degrees of interdependence from complete detachment to interlocking relationship. Mutual dependence is the key future of concentric models. Two conceptions of the curriculum-
instruction relationship that show one as sub-system of the other can be sketched. Variations “A” and “B” both convey the idea that one of the entities occupied as supper-ordinate position while the other subordinate. Concentric model “A” make instruction a sub system of curriculum, while concentric model “B” make curriculum sub system of instruction.

Cyclical Models
The cyclical model conception of curriculum–instruction relationship is simplified system model that stress the essential element of feedback. Curriculum and instruction are separate entities with continuing circular relationship. Curriculum makes continuous impact on instruction and vice versa, instruction has impact on curriculum. This relationship can be systematically represented in the diagram below.

This model implies that instructional decisions are made after curricular decisions, which in turn are modified after instructional decisions are implemented and evaluated. This process is continuous, repetition and never ending.

Common beliefs
Most curriculum theoreticians today appear agree with the following comments.

- Curriculum and instruction are related but different
- Curriculum and instruction are interlocking and interdependent
- Curriculum and instruction may be studied and analyzed as separate entities but cannot function in mutual isolation

Hence, the dualistic conceptual model of relationship between Curriculum and instruction with its separation of the two entities, and the concentric models that make one sub-system of the other, both pose serious problems and these are not accepted by many as correct models, the cyclical has much to recommended by many scholars as correct model.

According to Morrison E. (2002, Tyler's on his book, “Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction”, outlines four major questions and one of them is “How can the learning experiences/curriculum be organized for effective instruction?” here Tyler revealed the relationship of curriculum and instruction as curriculum is what is taught and instruction is how
it is taught. In addition, Tyler recommends that we assess the curriculum/learning experiences themselves to determine which activities need to be revised and improved for future instruction.

Moreover, Nyagah G. (2010) defined instruction as the actual operationalization of the curriculum in schools. It therefore involves translating curriculum designs into classroom activities and changing people’s attitudes in order to accept and participate in curriculum activities. The process also involves preparation and making available materials/resources necessary for successful curriculum implementation.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, Curriculum is defined as a combination whole including philosophical perspectives, the learner’s and teacher’s experience, instructional methodologies, and expected and unexpected outputs acquired within a learning institution. All the models and definition of relationship between curriculum and instruction shows as there is an explicit and implicit relationship exists between them. Instruction is viewed here as an aspect of a curriculum and vice-versa. In short curriculum is a program and instruction is a method. Curriculum can be thought of as “doing the right thing.” And Instruction can be thought of as “doing the thing right.”

**References**


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