

CHAPTER ONE: CURRICULUM

1. WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

a dynamic set of interconnected, interrelated, and overlapping “processes” → planning, enacting/ implementing, evaluating

these processes at every curricular level:

lesson level (micro level):


- a teacher plans a lesson for a class → Product: **lesson plan**
- teacher and learners enact the lesson – it may diverge from it → teacher makes adjustments depending on what happens in the classroom
- teacher evaluates its effectiveness and makes decisions

program level (macro level):


- a person or group of people designs a curriculum plan for an educational program
- teachers and learners enact the curriculum
- effectiveness is evaluated informally/formally

unit and course level:

- a teacher (or group of teachers) makes a plan for a course → Product: **syllabus**
- teacher and students enact the course
- teachers and others evaluate the effectiveness of the course

 **Note 1:** Curriculum is a broader concept than syllabus:

- (a) it applies to the program level, which subsumes units and lessons
- (b) it is more comprehensive because it includes not only planning but also enacting and evaluating

 **Note 2:** syllabus also refers to the content of a program, as in “the program syllabus,” especially in British English
curriculum also refers to the instructional content of a course, as in “the curriculum for my course,” especially in American English

2. TWO VIEWS OF CURRICULUM

Tyler (1949):

(1) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

specification of aims

(2) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

specification of content

(3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

organization

(4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

Tyler’s model:

- ends-means model
- linear approach
- systems-design model

2.1. Implementation

a top-down approach: the curriculum is designed by curriculum specialists and is implemented by the teachers and learners

the processes are sequential, each carried out by different specialists in a hierarchical manner:

It puts the learners and the teachers at the end of the chain of decisions.

Domain →	Curriculum planning	Specification of ends and means		Program implementation		Classroom implementation		
Participants →	Policy makers							
Products →	Policy							
		Needs analysts	Method ologists					
		Syllabus						
					Materials writers	Teacher trainers		
					Materials	Training program		
						Teachers	Learners	
						Teaching acts	Learning acts	

problems:

- ⊖ Each different group of people performs different curricular functions → Each product is ‘handed off’ to the next group:
 - ➡ lack of alignment between each stage ↔ lack of coherence in the curriculum
- ⊖ Classroom at the end of the chain of decisions → teachers/learners as implementers of received wisdom, rather than decision-makers in their own right ↔ fidelity perspective
 - ➡ curriculum decisions made at a remove from the classroom → curriculum is not realistic
- ⊖ No room for evaluation of the curriculum once it is implemented in the classroom

2.2. Enactment view

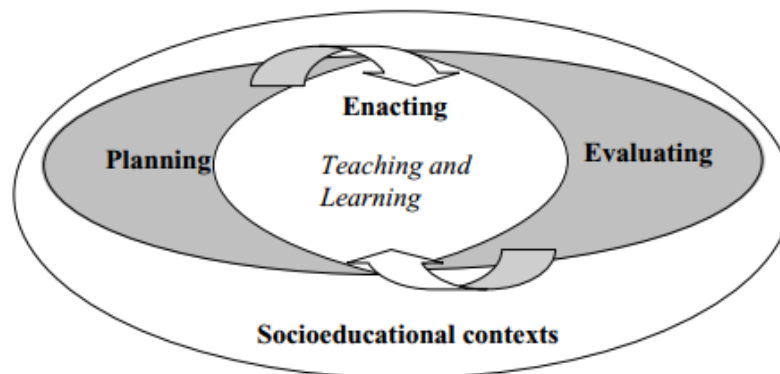
the middle one renamed *enacting* to reflect the agency of teachers and learners → importance of negotiation and interaction

curriculum is a complex, dynamic system where everything is interconnected

nonlinearity and adaptation are the norms:

Classroom enactment ↔ planning
 Planning ↔ evaluation
 Evaluation ↔ teaching and learning

→ these processes are embedded in specific contexts



3. IDEOLOGY OF THE CURRICULUM

planners' ideologies about schools, learners, and teachers provide the philosophical underpinnings for educational programs

3.1. The content model: Classical humanism

content model starts with the content/subject matter of what is to be learned ↔ the content matter is the basis for a curriculum ; mastery of content is an end

ELT → curriculum planning starts with an analysis of the target language, rather than learners' needs

classical humanism → cultivation of a certain mentality, sensibility, and vision through *classical contents*

the content is a valued cultural heritage; the content is knowledge which is agreed to be universal, unchanging and absolute (as such, it is essentialist).

characterized by the desire to promote intellectual capacities such as memorization, the ability to analyze, classify, etc.

people have fairly definite ideas of what a good education is: religion/ethics, L2, rhetoric, history, etc.

ELT → this model underpins the grammar-based curriculum → transmits knowledge of the language: ignores factors such as context, appropriacy of use

Criticism:

- ⊗ unable to take into account the wider purposes of education, the abilities or problems of the individual learner, etc.
- ⊗ globalization and the growth of multicultural societies → cannot justify the transmission of one particular culture;
- ⊗ the ethos of 'education for all';
- ⊗ basic premises of science no longer rest on objective theories → the foundations of universal knowledge are no longer secure

3.2. The objectives model: Socioeconomic efficiency & Social reconstructionism

objectives model starts with the objectives of the teaching-learning program

origins → the work of behavioral psychologists who defined learning as *a process of observable changes in behavior which could be measured*

based on an instrumental view of education as a means towards ends (**ends-means model**)

to understand a complex thing it must be taken apart systematically into its smallest components

attraction of the model:

- Clarity of goals
- Ease of evaluation
- Accountability

socioeconomic efficiency emphasizes the role of an educational program in producing learners who are economically productive

needs of society should be attended to by *task analysis*, by forming objectives for each task, and by teaching skills as discrete units

educational engineers → discover the total range of habits, skills, abilities, forms of thought, etc. that its members need for the effective performance

ELT → basis of the outcomes-based approach

reflects a Research, Development, and Diffusion model

social reconstructionism emphasizes the roles schools and learners can play in addressing social injustices and inequality → schools must engage teachers/students in an examination of important social and personal problems → *empowerment*: focus on developing knowledge and skills to create a world where people care about each other → associated with critical theory

Criticism:

- ⊗ reduces people to the level of automatons ≠ autonomy, self-fulfillment and personal development
- ⊗ imposes a linear process on something that is cyclical
- ⊗ concentrates exclusively on the products rather than the processes of learning
- ⊗ presupposes that learners' needs can be identified with a predetermined set of skills and objectives ≠ other aspects of education?!

3.3. The process model: Progressivism

process model defines goals of educations in terms of the procedures by which the individual develops *understanding*, e.g., transfer issue: the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible → methodology

progressivism stresses the individual needs of learners, the role of individual experience, and the need to develop self-reflection, learner strategies, autonomy, etc.

reconceptualists:

- learning is rooted in the questions of learners that arise through experiencing the world
- learning is active

- learner is a problem solver and thinker who makes meaning through her individual experience
- effective teachers provide experiences so that students can learn by doing

constructivists:

- learning involves active construction and testing of one's own representation of the world (i.e., development of understanding)
- learning is seen to involve re-learning and reorganization of one's previous understanding and representation of knowledge

common sights: small groups debating, custom-made activities, teachers walking freely, posing thought-provoking questions

less attractive than the objectives model for large-scale curriculum development

ELT → finds expression in the process syllabus, e.g., Bangalore project

3.4. Cultural pluralism

schools should prepare students to participate in different cultures

students need to develop cross-cultural competency or intercultural communication → one cultural group is not superior to others ; multiple perspectives representing the viewpoints of different cultural groups should be developed

seeks to redress racism, to raise the self-esteem of minority groups, etc.