

Identify different concepts and definitions of 'Curriculum' and show how they can be related to what you do as a teacher in the classroom.

### Introduction

Having a consistent value of teaching is always important for a good education system. Therefore, curriculum can always be found in both eastern and western education system. However, with different interpretations towards the term “curriculum”, attitudes and values towards pedagogical approach may vary, which in turn affects how students learn in schools. I, as a student teacher, could take them as reference and think about what kind of teacher I would become in the future.

### Meaning of “Curriculum”

The term “curriculum” has different interpretations among scholars. In this session rather than listing the existing interpretations, I would take one step forward, trying to evaluate them with reference to Hong Kong education context.

According to Kelly (1999), curriculum is negatively viewed as a “syllabus which may limit the planning of teachers to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to transmit or a list of the subjects to be taught or both” (p83). In other words, simply convey subject knowledge is insufficient to be an effective curriculum. It should offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content in order to be a productive curriculum.

But in the Hong Kong Yearbook published in the year of 2006, curriculum is more positive in nature, which could achieve the objective of motivating learning, enhancing knowledge and abilities and developing positive values or even attitudes. These elements could help achieve whole-person development of students.

These two ideas are polarized, yet they are not contradicted with each other in a sense that they just view curriculum in either macro or micro level. For the first one proposed by Kelly( 1999), possibly he comments it in micro level.

Undoubtedly, curriculum has the possibility of restricting what in-service teachers would like to teach in lessons. If the school tends to stick to the curriculum suggested by the education department, its negative effect will become more explicit. Whereas in the Hong Kong Yearbook published in 2006, the commentator could evaluate the curriculum in macro level. In Hong Kong, schools are not necessarily following the curriculum strictly. They can make some changes flexibly in order to cater for the level and needs of students.

Remarkably, Hong Kong underwent curriculum reform in 2000. Before 2000,

Hong Kong still used traditional curriculum, which put emphasis on knowledge aspect instead of immersing other generic skills in the subjects, as the major guideline for schools except international ones. After 2000, the EDB started curriculum reform by inserting both generic and genetic skills in key learning areas in primary stage. Regarding secondary stage, the department attempts to achieve integrated curriculum. Students have to apply what they have learnt with various skills. This situation is not just found in Hong Kong. In other western countries such as the US, the education department stresses the importance of merging skills to subjects so that students can apply them in authentic situations. With different timeframe and social values, the society will have different comments on the term “curriculum”.

### Implication on classroom practice

When reviewing the meaning of curriculum proposed by different scholars, I think of the role teachers should take in classrooms. From the news article about pro-home schooling, supporters criticize that school curriculum is negative because it contributes nothing but modification of the behaviour of student (Kelly, 1999). Personally I do not agree with the claim. Curriculum itself is a “planned outcome” (Morris and Adamson, 2010), it will not brainwash unless all the textbooks are published under surveillance and censorship or teachers convey messages in class inappropriately. Teachers should try to be open-minded and objective. Teachers are not responsible for teaching them absolute right or wrong, but the skills of judging whether the issue is appropriate or inappropriate. If teachers and schools always open for discussion, students will have low possibility to be brainwashed. Apart from obtaining knowledge in received curriculum, students can learn outside classroom. In the case of Hong Kong, the high transparency and information flow enables students to learn more about the society and the world by themselves.

Regarding the meaning of the term “curriculum” as suggested by the Hong Kong Yearbook in 2006, the meaning tends to urge students improving the society instead of accommodate social needs. According to the questions raised by Marsh (2009), curriculum should not be used to accommodate social needs, instead, it should function as a guidance for students to have further improvement. I, as a student teacher, should not follow the curriculum blindly. Instead of fulfilling the requirement or finishing the syllabus set by the EDB and schools, teachers can spend longer time discussing the topic with students in selective basis if possible. By transferring personal beliefs to students, they can learn more than simply subject knowledge.

### Nature of curriculum

Kelly (1999) identifies three kinds of the nature of curriculum: planned curriculum,

received curriculum and hidden curriculum. Planned curriculum means what is laid down in the syllabus. Received curriculum refers to the reality of students' experiences. Hidden curriculum is knowledge that implicit knowledge students learn in school. Regarding classification, Morris and Adamson (2010) raise the idea of null curriculum and outside curriculum on top of the three concepts stated by Kelly (1999) above. Null curriculum means topic excluded in the curriculum. Outside curriculum means knowledge students learn outside classroom and school.

### Implication on classroom practice

In describing the nature of curriculum, it inspires me in thinking about what kind of teacher I would like to be in the future, as well as the meaning of teaching in classroom.

I, as a student teacher, think teachers should not view themselves as transmitter, instead of solely conveying subject knowledge to students in lessons; they should teach what it is worth teaching inside and outside classrooms. The concept of null curriculum reminds me that some topics are excluded due to political consideration, but it does not mean that part of knowledge is unworthy learning. For instance, Hong Kong textbook takes a short elaboration on the June-Fourth Incident in the subject of Chinese History. Being a Chinese History teacher, he or she could choose to follow the curriculum set by the government, but as a teacher who takes full responsibility on the holistic development of students, they should know the truth and justify by themselves.

From the past experiences gained in authentic teaching field, I understand that time available for teaching in school is very limited. To further facilitate students' learning, teachers could encourage students grabbing learning opportunity by themselves. It is impossible to have a deep discussion on each topic under a curriculum. Teachers could have collaborative teaching session, teaching students how they can carry out self-learning outside classroom. During school attachment, which was a kind of past experience gained in authentic teaching field, I had a chance to observe collaborative teaching lessons, and I was even granted an opportunity to teach in one of the sessions. In the observation part, I noticed that English teacher jointly cooperated with computer teachers, teaching students how to check the pronunciation of unknown words online. Students had the chance to practice the skills they learnt in that session.

### Conclusion and reflection

To conclude, the interpretations of curriculum inspire me to think about what kind of teacher I would become in the future. Being a teacher is not just about conveying subject knowledge to students, he or she has the responsibility to let

them learn in daily setting. Teachers should not confine themselves in the curriculum, but take the initiative to teach as much as they can. I believe that if teachers teach students wholeheartedly, they will remember what they have learnt, and convert them into skills that may be useful in their daily lives.

### References

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