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### AERA-SIG Curriculum Newsletter

American Educational Research Association

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NEWSLETTER  
of the  
AERA Special Interest Group of  
CREATION AND UTILIZATION OF CURRICULUM KNOWLEDGE

Issue No. 7

July, 1974

SIG AERA Symposium: Report

A symposium, "Toward Disciplined Inquiry in Curriculum: Breaking with Conventional Modes," was presented at the AERA Annual Meeting on April 16, 1974, in Chicago. This symposium was organized to give SIG members an opportunity to examine some of the emerging modes of disciplined inquiry in curriculum. Four different modes were described by Michael Apple, William F. Pinar, Decker F. Walker, and Ian Westbury. Jonas Soltis, as discussant, proposed a framework for analyzing the presentation that stimulated lively debate from the floor in the discussion session immediately following the symposium.

Soltis advised curriculumists to identify clearly the type of inquiry appropriate to the various kinds of problems encountered in the broad domain of curriculum. Indeed, because curriculum problems are so diverse, it is fruitless to attempt to adopt any one mode of inquiry. Instead, the distinctive modes described by the symposium participants should all be used depending on the nature of the problem and the nature of the evidence that will be accepted as justification for the knowledge produced by the particular inquiry. Soltis classified the four modes of inquiry represented by the symposium speakers as: empirical, conceptual, ethical, and subjective.

Decker Walker's paper identified five different investigative techniques suited to the empirical mode: retrospective case studies; large scale demographic/descriptive studies; curricular criticism; studies of practical wisdom; and longitudinal studies of the life consequences of school learning.

Ian Westbury emphasized the need to conceptualize the school as a work setting where goals, structure, and technology interact in ways that affect the nature of curriculum. An inquiry taking these elements into account will lead to a concept of curriculum that differs significantly from the concept that excludes everything but goals.

Michael Apple's work presented a form of curriculum inquiry that Soltis referred to as ethical in nature. Such inquiry is concerned with ethics and power-politics. It is a mode of inquiry into the moral and political impact of the language of education which depends on a methodology of critical science growing out of Marx' writing and the sociology of knowledge.

And finally, William Pinar's emphasis on phenomenological questions, provided an example of a type of curriculum inquiry that is personal and subjective. The objective of such inquiry is to gain a deeper understanding of the elements of the unique experience of the individual when he interacts with subject matter.

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And finally, William Pinar's emphasis on phenomenological questions, provided an example of a type of curriculum inquiry that is personal and subjective. The objective of such inquiry is to gain a deeper understanding of the elements of the unique experience of the individual when he interacts with subject matter.

All who are concerned with research in curriculum are indebted to the symposium members for pointing the way to a variety of modes suitable to the field. An appropriate follow-up activity for SIG members might be to locate examples of studies that have already been completed, or ones currently underway, that illustrate these modes of inquiry. Whether or not the symposium was entirely successful in presenting alternatives to conventional modes of inquiry is probably immaterial. If it helped to clarify thinking about modes of inquiry in curriculum research, either along the lines suggested by Jonas Soltis and the panel members, or in other ways stimulated by the symposium, it can be looked upon as a significant contribution to the 1974 AERA program.

----Reported by Naomi Hersom, University of Alberta

#### Call for Proposals for 1975 AERA Program

AERA has announced a deadline of August 15, 1974, for the submission for proposals for papers or symposia to be presented at the 1975 Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. on March 31 - April 4, 1975. All who have proposals especially pertinent for the SIG on "Creation and Utilization of Curriculum Knowledge" are asked to prepare the required materials and cover sheet as described in the May, 1974 issue of Educational Researcher, and to forward them for consideration for SIG sessions to Edmund C. Short, 141 Chambers Building, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802. It must be recognized that program time allocated for use by the SIG is very limited and that only outstanding proposals can be accepted. SIG proposals must follow the same format as those submitted to divisional programs.

#### New SIG Co-Chairman

Dr. George Willis, of the University of Rhode Island, has agreed to serve during the 1974-1975 as Acting Co-chairman of the SIG, along with Dr. Edmund C. Short, of The Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Willis has contributed papers to the Annual Meeting of AERA, to the Report of the Rochester Conference in Humanistic Curriculum Theory (edited by William Pinar, from McCutchan, 1974), and to several issues of Curriculum Theory Network.

SIG members are invited to correspond with Dr. Willis with suggestions for future SIG projects or activities. His address is: 705 Chafee Building, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island 02881.

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Report of Discussion at 1974 SIG Business Session

The April 17 business session focused on the topic, "Researchable Problems in Curriculum." The session was chaired by Joseph Bosco, State University of New York at Albany; and began with the airing of brief position statements by Decker Walker (Stanford University), Donald Chipley (Pennsylvania State University), F. Michael Connelly (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), and George Willis (University of Rhode Island) concerning alternative research perspectives and/or procedures. The presentations were followed by a question and answer period which offered members of the audience of about 50 persons the opportunity to follow up on any concept or point found in the introductory statements.

Although each of the statements reflected a somewhat different approach in their presentation, they all seemed to touch on an aspect of curriculum research which clearly needs further investigation. Consequently, the presenters were asked to submit an abstract which pinpointed the main ideas they sought to share in this session. Presented here, then, are these abstracts.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS CURRICULISTS OUGHT TO STUDY?

Decker F. Walker  
Stanford University

I have come to believe that there are only five types of problems for research and scholarship in the field of curriculum.

1. What are the significant features of a given curriculum?
2. What are the personal and social consequences of a given curricular feature?
3. What accounts for stability and change in curricular features?
4. What accounts for people's judgments of the worth or merit of various curricular features?
5. What sorts of curricular features ought to be included in a curriculum intended for a given purpose in a given situation?

(Notice that the fifth question differs from the first four in two ways: it requires a normative answer and it is dependent on a particular context.)

These problems are of little intrinsic interest. They interest because, once answered, they may help improve somebody's education. This is, in large part, what is meant by the statement that curriculum is a practical field of study.

Each of these questions contains the word curriculum (or curricular features). This term remains undefined to reflect the lack of consensus among those who call themselves curriculumists concerning what features of educational programs are curricular. Such disagreement on definitions need not be debilitating if we are willing to let each scholar define the term as he or she sees fit for the purposes of his or her own research.

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Notice also that questions about terminology and definitions or about the curriculum field do not appear on this list. This is because I consider such meta-theoretical questions to be derivative from and dependent on the primary questions of the field, just as questions of the nature of science or the basic terms of science, etc. are derivative from and dependent on the primary activity of science.

I hope readers of this note will be challenged to write their own list of questions they believe the curriculum field has, does, and should address. I am particularly interested in hearing about other questions not subsumed under these five, and would gladly exchange correspondence with interested persons on this topic.

#### MAKING SENSE OUT OF CURRICULUM RESEARCH

Donald R. Chipley  
 Pennsylvania State University

Among the many researchable problems that plague curriculum specialists is the problem of making sense out of curriculum research. Hence, we shall identify certain factors that cause curriculum specialists difficulty and propose a model for use in clarifying understanding of curriculum research studies.

The first problem-factor derives from the pluralistic character of curriculum. The term, curriculum, is defined in a variety of ways; and curriculum is an area which is characterized by a variety of different perspectives. The second problem-factor stems from the lack of precision that often characterizes curriculum statements. Central concepts such as values, experience, content, process, objectives, competencies, etc. are repeatedly used with little or no attempt being made to distinguish the special meanings different authors associate with these terms; and curriculum perspectives are rarely operationalized enough to be distinctively assessed. We would maintain that even though pluralism is a problem-factor, it is not the place to begin since American education is rooted in a democratic base which cherishes cultural diversity. Imprecision, then, is the factor we would nominate for primary consideration.

Having decided where to begin, let us define the key terms of this paper. Curriculum refers to certain concepts and operational perspectives used by educators as they develop structures intended to improve the design, implementation, and/or evaluation phases of a school program. Imprecision refers to a type of inadequacy which is proposed to exist whenever statements, particularly, curriculum statements, are presented without making explicit the special meanings associated with the central concepts or the operational specifications to be associated with an author's basic perspective. Curriculum research refers to a specific form of educational inquiry which begins with questions about distinctive curricular concepts and/or perspectives and then moves to gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data in order to make judgments about the adequacy, effectiveness, and/or efficiency of given concepts or a perspective as relate to the design, implementation, and/or evaluation phases of structural development.

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The next question is -- what can be done to help curriculum specialists to distinguish the character and make sense out of a varied field of curriculum research studies. Here, we would propose a model which contains three component dimensions--viz., developmental focus, technical form, and investigative function, and resembles the Guilford 'Structure of Intellect' cube in its graphic representation.

One dimension of the model is developmental focus (DF). DF is important because a curriculum research perspective undergoes certain stages of development (individual, community, and intelligentia) in making the transition from private idea to cultural standard. Individual is the beginning stage since a curriculum research perspective originates as a personal perception or private idea in the mind of an individual. Community, the next stage of development, takes place when the private idea is embraced by a constituent group of educators and implemented in a school-related context in order to put the idea to the test of public action. Intelligentia identifies the final stage of development where productive ideas are transformed into significant cultural standards. In the final analysis, it is necessary that such representatives of the 'Curriculum intelligentia' as ASCD, Professors of Curriculum, SIGs in Curriculum, State Curriculum Departments, etc., identify and support productive ideas or else they will not survive long enough to become part of the ongoing chain of cumulative enlightenment that makes up the culture of the community of curriculum specialists.

Another dimension of the model is technical form (TF). Since curriculum research studies occur in a variety of forms, it is helpful to have some mechanism for differentiating different studies into distinctive types of studies as well as into their major component elements. A sample portion of one mechanism devised to facilitate structural analysis of historical, linguistic, moral, behavioral, pragmatic, and aesthetic studies is presented below.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Method/Data Sources</u>	<u>Findings</u>
Historical Examples: <u>The Curriculum Field.</u> (Seguel, M. H., 1966)  <u>Common Elements in New Mathematics Programs.</u> (Sherman, H., 1972)	What is the origin of, pattern of, evolution of, and/or main factors that influenced the development of a specific curricular concept and/or perspective?	Review, analyze and summarize data from bibliography of primary and secondary topic sources. Supplement with data from interviews, census studies, etc.	1. Anticipated with: a. Substantial Support b. Some or Partial Support c. Slight or Little Support 2. Unanticipated with: a. Substantial Support b. Some or Partial Support c. Slight or Little Support

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## **Type**

### **Historical**

Examples: The Curriculum Field. (Seguel, M, H. 1966)

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### **Questions**

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### **Method/Data Sources**

Review, analyze and summarize data from bibliography of primary and secondary topic sources. Supplement with data from interviews, census studies, etc.

### **Findings**

1. Anticipated with:
  - a. Substantial Support
  - b. Some or Partial Support
  - c. Slight or Little Support
2. Unanticipated with:
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<u>Type</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Method/Data Sources</u>	<u>Findings</u>
Linguistic Examples: "Curriculum Language & Classroom Meaning" (Huebner, D., 1966)  "Curriculum Criticism" (Mann, J.S., 1969)	What are the intended meanings of central terms or organizing con- cepts; what is the root metaphor underlying a par- ticular perspec- tive; and what is the function of the major con- cepts and perspec- tive in terms of the message(s) be- ing delivered?	Review and analyze statements extracted from initial and supplementary text sources with further examination of data from interpretive commentaries.	Same As Above

The final dimension of the model is investigative function (IF). With curriculum research there seems to be at least three basic reasons which underlie most of the research that is done. They are: social inventory, personal curiosity, and individual and/or group decision-making. Social inventory usually has to do with determining how much X presently exists (studies of how many middle schools, programs of open education, new math courses, etc., are examples of this type of study); and is often done to give an account of what energies and resources are presently invested to support a particular educational development. Personal curiosity usually is grounded in an investigator's interest in exploring new ideas and/or new relationships, and is mainly done to extend one's knowledge about a given concept or pattern of relationship. Studies conducted to find out what might happen if one modified P instead of R are examples of this type of research study. Individual and/or group decision-making usually relates to uncovering and assessing various alternatives to a problem-situation (for example, alternative approaches to creating more flexible school and classroom environments); and is done to determine in light of a specific knowledge-base which approach represents the more rational alternative, and thus should be favored in building a concrete plan of attack.

Such a model would benefit the consumers of curriculum research because it would enable them to analyze research so as to better determine who originated the study, what type of study it was, and why the study was done. Moreover such a model would help students of curriculum research because it would enable them to discover where gaps existed either in a particular study or in certain types of studies, and thus indicate where correctional actions were urgently needed. Finally, such a model could even benefit the leadership groups that comprise the intelligentsia in the area of curriculum for it would supply them with one specific means for clarifying and promoting greater precision in respect to doing, communicating about, reviewing and utilizing curriculum research studies.

**Type**

Linguistic

Examples: "curriculum Language & Classroom Meaning" (Huebner, D., 1966)

"Curriculum Criticism" (Mann, J.S., 1969)

**Questions**

What are the intended meanings of central terms of organizing concepts; what is the root metaphor underlying a particular perspective; and what is the function of the major concepts and perspective in terms of the message(s) being delivered?

**Method/Data Sources**

Review and analyze statements extracted from initial and supplementary text sources with further examination of data from interpretive commentaries.

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## RESEARCH PROBLEMS IN CURRICULUM: ALTERNATIVE PARADIGMS

F. Michael Connelly  
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

The conceptual organizers of development and of practice are one of the key targets requiring research. Quite appropriately, curriculum development and new curriculum practices are initiated by the construction of ideas and terms thought to account for some problem or need in practice. My colleague, Len Berke, calls these "rethorical inventions" and gives as an illustration intellectual skills and instructional objectives. The list could easily be increased by such current terms as "individualization" and "open-education". These notions are formulated in practice and are not ordinarily derivative from research. But once established as a guiding conception for development and for practice, these terms require both analytic study concerned with elaborating meaning under different possible practical circumstances and they require empirical research on those possibilities under actual school curriculum circumstances. Without such research on guiding conceptions "bandwagons" take hold with only superficial effects.

Any particular theory or line of research gives only a partial view of its subject. Accordingly, it is easy to attribute far more generality to the results than is warranted when research is pursued prior to a clear assessment of its need and domain of applicability. A fully developed account of this point is given by Schwab (1971), whose position is as follows. Each theory represents one of several possible starting points for curriculum development. Thus, a theory of enquiry represents a subject matter starting point and a theory of ego development represents a psychological starting point. Furthermore, there is considerable variation within each such starting point. Thus, there are multiple theories of subject matter and there are multiple theories of ego development. The various starting points may be likened to the major directions on a compass and the multiple theories within each to slight movements of the pointer. Furthermore, each theoretical view is associated with a particular range of curricular possibilities. To give a simplified example, within a subject-matter starting point it is possible that a theory of inquiry will maximize student understanding of how knowledge is developed and changes, and will minimize content coverage, while it is possible that a theory of the logic of the interrelations among concepts and between these and the world will maximize concept coverage at the expense of an understanding of how concepts arise and function in inquiry.

Given this view, the general problem for research is that of elaborating the practical circumstances and practical possibilities entailed by particular theories and lines of research; the matching of these into more or less compatible mixes; and the making available of this work to practitioners.

In making the case that curriculum research ought to follow from curriculum development and curriculum practice, a number of research areas and problems can be identified. Consistent with the case, there are two possible lines of research currently of special interest to me. The two lines of research are in no way intended to be inclusive of the kinds of research that ought to be pursued. The lines of research emanate from a central notion of the teacher as curriculum decision maker and of

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the consultative support needed by the teacher in this role. The account that follows briefly describes the "research paradigm" involved and sets out the two lines of research.

#### Form and Content of the Paradigm Governing the Proposed Research

Following Schwab's lead, our paradigm form is given by the notion of curriculum as a practical activity and the study of it as a practical discipline. The word "practical" is not intended to convey our conventional wisdom on the use of the term. To be "practical" is to be concerned in the final analysis with unique school events--for example, with a single classroom, a specific child, or an individual department. The end in view is action, rather than knowledge, even in the case of theoretical disciplines. Thus, the principle aim of curriculum research is less with the generation of new knowledge than it is with the improvement of school practices. Individual studies may, of course, be empirical and aim for empirical generalizations or be theoretical and aim for broad statements of principle. But to be of significance as curriculum research, these studies should have a demonstrable origin in inadequate classroom practice and should be seen to bear on the improvement of that practice. The work is incomplete until the relationship between empirical or theoretical findings and practice is established.

There are two sides in this effort, the scholars and the practitioners (see Figure 1) with graduate studies seen as a mediating loop.

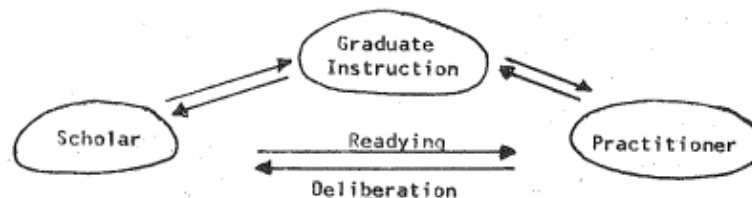


Figure 1

The scholar readies knowledge for practical use or for purposes of instruction in several ways. Among the most important of these are the matching of different, competing, knowledge claims and the setting forth, explicitly or through an instructional methodology, of the assumptions and theoretical perspectives in terms of which the knowledge was generated. For example, one might set forth knowledge on classroom discussion by comparing and contrasting the work of Bellack with that of Flanders, and by setting up for inspection the underlying assumptions in each.

From the practitioners perspective the translation of curriculum ideas and generalizations into practice depends upon a deliberative process undertaken by the practitioner in which there is a reflexive exchange between the ideas and the peculiarities of the individual situation at hand. In the process, the ideas are legitimately warped and woofed with the uncomfortable consequence for the scholar that he will rarely see his ideas enacted in pure and pristine form. Such warping and woofing is not the consequence of miseducated teachers or bad theory but is in the nature of the beast.

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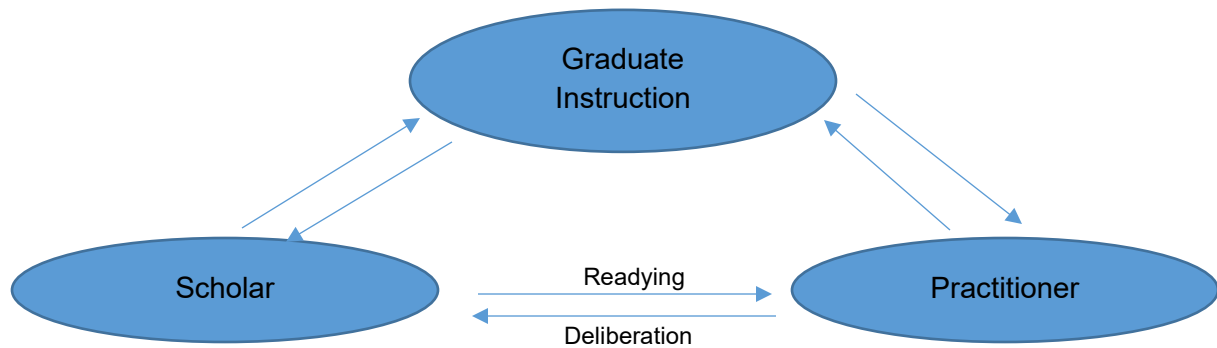


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## RESEARCHABLE PROBLEMS IN CURRICULUM: SOME DIRECTIONS

George Willis  
University of Rhode Island

Jonas Soltis, in summarizing and responding to remarks made at the recent AERA symposium entitled "Toward Disciplined Inquiry in Curriculum: Breaking with Conventional Modes," has suggested that there are two ways of going at disciplined inquiry: either borrow from other disciplines or invent a new discipline. Let me suggest that what we as curriculum theorists should now be doing--or at least among those tasks we can do with substantial profit--is both these things.

It seems to me that we are in the process of inventing a new discipline. Yet, since invention is difficult and time consuming, it also seems that within this process we cannot help borrowing, usually from older, better established disciplines. We can benefit from the judicious incorporation into our emerging discipline of considerations drawn from other fields. These considerations can be particularly helpful, first, in aiding the identification and arrangement of competing issues, definitions, and positions within curriculum; secondly, in aiding basic clarifications about the nature of such issues; thirdly, in aiding the establishment of models directly useful in curriculum development and practice.

For instance, in a paper entitled "Curriculum Criticism and Literary Criticism" I have argued that study in the humanities and study of the curriculum are similar because both eventually deal with very complex human reactions, particularly with aesthetic reactions. Therefore, definite analogues exist between the humanities and curriculum, and certain subject matters, principles, and methodologies drawn from the humanities are applicable to curriculum. I then pointed out a few analogues drawn from literary criticism and how these might be useful in thinking about curriculum.

But aside from literary criticism, other areas within the humanities seem to me to be richly potential for this kind of borrowing. Linguistic theory has developed principles derived initially from rhetoric and poetics. Ethical theory has changed historically from a preoccupation by moral philosophers with questions of substantive ethics only, to the modern refinements of analytic ethics. Phenomenology has evolved some techniques which may be useful in analyzing the immediate perceptions of individuals in educational settings. Each of these areas, I think, can be considered among the disciplines from which insights about the nature of curriculum can be gained.

Now, if these remarks about building a discipline in part by borrowing from other disciplines are generally correct, then a number of tasks suggest themselves, and, in effect, "researchable problems" spring up around each of them. Most broadly, the main task is doing careful comparative analysis of principles--past, present, even future--within curriculum and within related disciplines in which definite analogues exist. More specifically the tasks include such things as:

- Identification and assessment of analogous developments in related fields.
- Critical appraisal of the history of the curriculum field and of its current principles, with an eye toward developing new (or reviving old) principles and formulating criteria for judging comparative merits and demerits of these principles.

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--Development of some kind of classificatory or taxonomical arrangement for ordering what we are finding out.

Obviously, this list is not exhaustive, and it seems somewhat remote from the familiar problems of curriculum development and practice. One can add to it, extending it considerably. Nonetheless, by continually subdividing it, one gets down surprisingly quickly to sub-tasks which impinge more and more directly on the practical, nuts and bolts tasks in curriculum, which still need much work.

Ultimately, the major task is, in my mind, metatheoretical; it calls for on-going critical debate and clarification about the data and the principles we use. How do we reconcile the conflicting and competing data we develop?

In effect, this paper is a suggestion that we research and develop means for identifying and weighing between alternative modes for conducting curriculum development and practice. I have not raised any issues which are new. (Many began to obtrude in earnest into the professional literature about ten years ago.) But I do think we would be a bit better off in the future if we dealt with them in an increasingly self-conscious and systematic way. That, it seems to me, is essentially what building our own discipline is all about.

----Compiled and edited by Donald Chipley, Penn State

#### Membership Dues

Persons wishing to enroll as SIG members should submit their 1974-1975 dues (\$1.00) to Edmund C. Short, 141 Chambers, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802. Payments made since the AERA Annual Meeting in April are considered effective for the year 1974-1975.

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