module (including an enormous range of Falmer Press publications), facilitates this task.

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Introducing This Book

Preliminary Comments

We make sense of our world and go about our daily lives by engaging in concept building. We acquire and develop concepts so that we can gain meaning about persons and events and in turn communicate these meanings to others. Some concepts are clearly of more importance than others. The key concepts provide us with the power to explore a variety of situations and events and to make significant connections. Other concepts may be meaningful in more limited situations but play a part in connecting unrelated facts.

Every discipline and field of study contains a number of key concepts and lesser concepts which relate to substantive and methodological issues unique to that discipline/field of study. Not unexpectedly, scholars differ over their respective lists of key concepts, but there is nevertheless, considerable agreement. With regard to the curriculum field there is a moderate degree of agreement over key concepts.

Key Concepts in Curriculum

To be able to provide any commentary on key concepts in curriculum assumes of course that we have access to sources of information that enable us to make definitive statements. A wide range of personnel are involved in making curriculum including school personnel, researchers, academics, administrators, politicians, and various interest groups. They go about their tasks in various ways such as planning meetings, informal discussions, writing reports, papers, handbooks, textbooks, giving talks, lectures and workshops.

To ensure that a list of key concepts is comprehensive and representative of all these sources would be an extremely daunting task. A proxy often used by researchers is to examine textbooks, especially synoptic textbooks (those books which provide comprehensive accounts and summaries of a wide range of concepts, topics and issues in curriculum).

Schubert (1980) undertook a detailed analysis of textbooks over the period 1900–1980 and this volume provides a valuable overview of curricu-
lum thought over major historical periods. Marsh and Stafford (1988) have provided a similar historical analysis of major curriculum books written by Australian authors over the period 1910–1988.

More recently, Rogan and Luckowski (1990), have produced a useful analysis of nine major synoptic curriculum texts produced by American authors. Their purpose in undertaking this analysis was to portray major concepts within the curriculum field. They noted that all texts included an analysis of four major themes, namely paradigms, conceptions of curriculum, history, and politics, but that there was little consensus on preferred positions within each of these topics. This diversity of stance within topics may reflect the nature of the curriculum field compared with the apparent singularity of purpose and methodological procedures followed in some science disciplines.

A Sample Analysis

To illustrate the organization of concepts included in this volume I undertook a review of six major synoptic curriculum books that are widely used at the college/university level. As indicated in Table 1.1, they include: two from the USA (McNeil, 1985, third edition; Schubert, 1986); two from the UK (Kelly, 1977; Lawton, 1986); one from Canada (Robinson, et al., 1985); and one from Australia (Brady, 1987, second edition).

It is very evident that the two American texts are far more comprehensive in their coverage of topics than the others. In size alone, these volumes have double the number of pages of the UK and Australian texts. The two authors (McNeil and Schubert) cover very similar topics if we use the broad categories of:

Conceptions of curriculum/models/approaches
Curriculum history
Curriculum policy and policy-makers
Curriculum development procedures/planning steps
Curriculum change/improvement
Politics of curriculum
Issues and trends/problems/future directions

By contrast, the two UK authors (Lawton and Kelly) are far more limiting in that their major focus is upon only two categories, namely 'conceptions of curriculum' and 'curriculum development procedures'. Lawton (1986) has additional chapters on 'politics' and the 'democratic curriculum' and Kelly (1977) has an additional chapter on 'social contexts'. It is interesting to note that both authors consider the 'common curriculum' in some detail and that this topic is not covered in any of the other texts included in the sample.

The Canadian text (Robinson, et al., 1985) has 'curriculum development procedures' as its major focus and the majority of the chapters focus upon
various aspects of this topic. With the exception of several chapters on learning models, no chapters address the other six categories included in the American examples. The Australian text (Brady, 1987), is also very limited and only includes chapters in the two categories presented by Robinson, et al. (1985).

Categories of Concepts Included in This Volume

After examining a wide range of synoptic curriculum texts, including the six described above, I made a decision to include material relating to the following categories:

- Student Perspectives
- Teacher Perspectives
- Curriculum Planning and Development
- Curriculum Management
- Curriculum Ideology

Figure 1.1: Concepts included in ‘Student Perspectives’

For each category a number of brief chapters, termed modules were developed. Each module focuses upon a key concept in terms of its major characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. Follow-up questions and references are also included in each module.

Student Perspectives is the first category and contains five modules. The titles of these concepts are listed in figure 1.1. The five modules are closely inter-related in that they portray various aspects of the classroom life of the student, such as client, colleague, resistor, and passive recipient of instruction.

Figure 1.2: Concepts included in ‘Teacher Perspectives’

Gender issues (module 3) can be a major source of conflict in schools and can often lead to sex role stereotyping and lack of self-esteem for girls. The hidden curriculum (module 2) of the classroom, in terms of its rituals and rules, can exacerbate the problems for females and can discriminate markedly against minority groups.

In some schools there may be opportunities for students to participate in curriculum decision-making (module 4) and where this occurs, more cooperative and satisfying learning can result for both students and teachers. However, examinations (module 5) often loom large and this can limit the opportunities for creative planning and cooperation between students and teachers. Examinations can also have the effect of encouraging didactic forms of teaching.

The learning environment (module 1) in terms of the physical arrangement of furniture and resources and appropriate levels of noise and temperature, can facilitate or hinder learning. Some open planned classrooms can provide a liberating atmosphere for students whereas some traditional architectural forms can be sterile and forbidding.

The concepts included in these five modules emphasize student interests and problems of unequal power relationships between students and teachers. Questions are raised about functions of schools, about schools as a source of conflict for students and about the legal and moral rights of students as clients and consumers.

Teacher Perspectives is the second category and this contains four modules, consisting of ‘empowerment’, ‘textbooks’, ‘leadership’ and ‘appraisal’ (see figure 1.2). It can be argued that ‘empowerment’ and ‘appraisal’ are two of the most contentious issues facing teachers today. Some writers maintain that teachers are taken too much for granted, that they are only permitted to undertake technical tasks and that over recent years they have become de-skilled and disempowered. Others argue that there are opportunities for teachers to become empowered (module 6), and one such opportunity is via teacher appraisal (module 9) schemes which can provide valuable feedback and professional development experiences for teachers. Teacher appraisal provides opportunities for teacher self-monitoring and for staff members as a
Key Concepts for Understanding Curriculum

Figure 1.3: Concepts included in 'Curriculum Planning and Development'

CENTRALLY-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

AIMS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

TYLER’S MODEL

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

WALKER’S MODEL

SELECTION OF METHOD

ACTION RESEARCH MODEL

ASSESSMENT, GRADING AND TESTING

Collectivity, to systematically develop and build upon their strengths and interests.

Leadership skills (module 8) emanating especially from the school principal, are of considerable importance in encouraging teachers and giving them opportunities to achieve greater intrinsic rewards. Excessive use of textbooks (module 7) by teachers is symptomatic of teacher disembowerment and domination by multinational publishers. Yet, an informed understanding of the purposes and limitations of textbooks can lead to them becoming a valuable resource for students and teachers.

The concepts dealing with the teacher perspective endeavour to examine some of the human aspects of teaching — the pressures which can bear down upon teacher creativity and initiatives, and yet the opportunities which exist for professional growth.

Curriculum Planning and Development is the third category and contains ten modules. These are listed in figure 1.3. A useful starting point is to examine the three planning models (module 15, 'Tyler’s Model of Planning'; module 16, 'Walker’s Deliberative Approach to Planning'; and module 17, 'Teachers as Researchers/Action Research').

These modules represent three very different approaches to curriculum planning. The Tyler model provides an explicit set of procedures for planning which is biased upon a scientific-rational orientation. Walker’s model is far less precise and emphasizes the amount of dialogue and interaction (deliberation) which needs to occur between members of a planning team. The Action Research model highlights the need for classroom teachers at a school to take responsibility for their curriculum development. The emphasis in this model is upon using classroom problems as the basis for collaboration, for searching out solutions, and for implementing changes.

The different value stances implicit in these three modules are also reflected in the remaining seven modules. For example, ‘Curriculum Frameworks’ (module 10) can be construed as being a useful platform to demonstrate commonalities between subjects and is consistent with ideas contained in Walker’s model. Then again, some writers argue that curriculum frameworks are an important control mechanism — an instrument of compliance. These writers link frameworks with the Tyler model and conclude that they are overly restrictive.

‘Assessment, Grading and Testing’ (module 14) has links with the three models, with the intensity of the connection being affected by the value orientations described above.

The modules ‘Aims, Goals and Objectives’ (module 12) and ‘Selection of Method’ (module 13) have special relevance for the Tyler and Walker models and to a lesser extent, to the Action Research model. By contrast, ‘Situational Analysis/Needs Assessment’ (module 11) and ‘School-Based Curriculum Development’ (module 19) are directly related to the Action Research model and less so to the other two models.

The module ‘Centrally-Based Curriculum Development’ (module 18) is depicted in figure 1.3 as being separate from the other nine concepts. The reason for this is that centralized modes of curriculum development operate at a different level. For example, centrally-based curriculum development is often controlled by senior administrators and increasingly, politicians. They are the ones who have access to the knowledge and information and they make decisions as a superordinate group. Eventually these decisions are transmitted to the subordinate group, the teachers.

In total, it can be seen that the ten concepts included in this category are closely interrelated. All are involved in one or more of the processes of curriculum planning and development.

Curriculum Management is the fourth category and contains six modules. These are listed in figure 1.4. ‘Innovation and Planned Change’ (module 20) is of major importance because it refers to a variety of change processes. For example, ‘Curriculum Implementation’ (module 21) is one of the specialized change processes. ‘School Evaluations/Reviews’ (module 25) are often undertaken by management groups to pinpoint changes needed in schools.

‘Effective Schools and School Improvement’ (module 22) considers some of the changes which tend to be prescribed for schools via state legislation and mandates, as well as other initiatives. Some of these efforts over recent years have been successful but many have faltered, which points to insufficient attention being given to important implementation factors.

‘School Councils and Governing Bodies’ (module 23) have been chang-
reflecting about curriculum matters and seeking meaning and direction to curriculum experiences.

A specialized example of theorizing is included in the module 'Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Curriculum' (module 29) which argues that schools reproduce the values and attitudes needed to maintain dominant social groups.

'School Subjects' (module 27) examines the coalitions of interests which occur between sub-groups in a discipline. This seems to lead inexorably toward academic or pedagogic or utilitarian emphases for individual subjects.

'Curriculum History' (module 26) also examines ideological emphases. In this module the focus is upon ideological changes over the decades. The dominance of the technological emphasis is given special attention. It is argued that studies of curriculum history have value because they provide valuable insights about the complex relationships between the past, present and future.

'Curriculum Reform' (module 30) examines some of the ideological bases for reforms initiated recently, especially the current emphasis in several countries upon excellence, and economic productivity. Some of the reforms currently being proposed are pluralist and even contradictory, while others are closely integrated and presented as a total package of reform by the groups concerned.

The five categories described above provide a framework for discussing the thirty concepts. Each category does have specific characteristics and there is some logic in the modules allocated to each. Yet it must be stressed that each module is treated separately and independently. The reader is not expected to read the modules in any set order and there are no prior readings required of earlier modules to master later ones. After reflection and discussion, the reader may discover that there are different combinations of concepts that are more meaningful to him/her. Some of these alternatives are discussed in the following section.

Some Alternative Groupings of Concepts

A theme which is very evident in the curriculum literature relates to 'cooperative, democratic decision-making at the school-level'. It assumes shared decision-making between teachers, parents and students. The emphasis is also upon the development of appropriate physical and human resources to bring about maximum learning for students. The listing of modules in figure 1.6 links together ten concepts that are related to this theme.

The 'Collaborative School Management Model' (module 21) is a very good example of cooperative decision-making. Other modules such as 'School Councils and Governing Bodies' (module 23) and 'Situational Analysis/Needs Assessment' (module 11) all contribute to our understanding of school-based decision making.
Another theme which is also frequently cited in the literature can be depicted by the terms 'performance driven, student outcomes, and academic excellence'. This theme is concerned with economic indicators, rational planning and observable student performances. The listing of modules in figure 1.7 links together nine concepts that support this theme.

The use of textbooks (module 7) and the influence of examinations (module 5) are clearly related to a performance-driven theme. So too are such concepts as 'Tyler’s Model of Planning' (module 15) and 'School Evaluations/Reviews' (module 24).

Many other themes might be also described but these two examples are sufficient to illustrate the combinations that can be formed.

There are benefits for the readers in reflecting upon each concept and considering examples from their teaching experiences which tend to support or do not support the statements included in a module. The questions at the end of each module should also stimulate the reader to ask probing questions and to explore matters further, perhaps by making use of the references included at the end of each module.

There are no simple answers or recipes for major issues in curriculum. However, the time spent in reflecting extensively over curriculum matters can be most rewarding. It is to be hoped that the key concepts presented in this volume provide an accessible entry-point for readers embarking upon this journey.