A Perspective on the Standardized Curriculum and Its Effect on Teaching and Learning

Ervin F. Sparapani, Ph.D.

David M. Callejo Perez, Ed.D.

That education should be regulated by law and should be an affair of state is not to be denied, but what should the character of this public education, and how young person's should be educated, are questions which remain to be considered .... The existing practice is perplexing, no one knows on what principles we should proceed [should the useful life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training] all three opinions have been entertained. Again, about the means there is no agreement: for different persons, starting with different ideas about the nature of virtue, naturally disagree about the practice of it. There can be no doubt that children should be taught those useful things that are really necessary, but not all useful things (Aristotle, as quoted in Westbury, 2008).

Introduction

This paper focuses on curriculum design, specifically standardized curriculum and its impact on teaching and learning. In this paper we will discuss some of the issues related to standardized curriculum, and provide some suggestions for practice that can address teaching and learning. When we think about a standardized curriculum, three key perspectives emerge when addressing the role of standardized curriculum. First, and primarily, the issue is political. Second, is the issue of whether a standardized curriculum is appropriate for everyone and meets the educational needs of different persons with different ideas. Third, is the pragmatic notion of how teaching practices can both meet the needs of the learners and those of the policy makers. We contend, not disregarding governmental mandates, that even though a curriculum may be standard, teachers need to use a variety of teaching approaches to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

It is not our intention to provide a history of or rationale for curriculum design or development, but to provide a dialogue to address how to deal with standardized curriculum. This article will focus on the curriculum (specifically in K-12 schools) and how curriculum decisions affect the teachers who teach the curriculum and the students who experience the curriculum by understanding the relationship between curriculum, educators, and students through the interactions occurring within the environment in which those interactions occur. We look at four such relationships. First, for the students that come to our schools, we need to know where they come from and where they are going, their history, their beliefs, etc. We have to utilize techniques that help us understand where to meet students in terms of the curriculum and the school. Second, teachers need to self-reflect on their practice, writing about education, teaching, curriculum, and learning. Third, curriculum needs to reflect our philosophy and that of our place. The last aspect is that the relationship between these three (learner, teacher, and curriculum) needs to be lived out in the school/classroom through understanding of place, a critical pedagogy where we learn from our students, their future students, current teachers, and our own institutions (Carini, 2001).

The reality of how teachers and students experience the curriculum and the standardization culture came immediately to our attention, when one of us (Sparapani) had a surreal experience in a doctor's office.

When visiting doctor's offices, I typically have a book with me so that I can read something while I am waiting. On this day, the book I had with me was Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Actually, I was reading the book not only because I am interested in differentiating instruction, but mainly to help inform my thinking about this article.

When I was called into the examining room, I continued reading the book while I was waiting for the doctor to arrive. When the doctor entered the room, he saw that I was reading a book and asked what I was reading. I have been seeing this doctor for several years. He already knew that I was a teacher educator, and over the years we have had a number of discussions about issues related to education. It was not a surprise to him when 1 told him that I was interested in something called differentiated instruction, and was reading a book about differentiating instruction and curriculum design. This piqued his interest. He asked me what differentiated instruction was. I tried to explain differentiated instruction to him as clearly and succinctly as I could, and its relationship to curriculum design.

His response to my explanation was typical of many people, and gives insight to the point of this article. He, casually, but in all seriousness, said something like,

"You know, I don't understand why teachers don't just tell students what they need to learn and then give them a test to make sure they've learned it. That's what my teachers did with me, and that's the way I want my kids' teachers to teach them and the way I expect my kids to learn. In my opinion, teachers waste too much time with all this other stuff, and it doesn't help learning anyway."

This doctor's comment brings to the surface the belief of a lot of people (educators and non-educators alike), and generally when people say things like this to me, I don't say anything. This time, however, I asked him how he treated his patients.

He asked me what I meant, and I said, "How do you treat your patients? Do you treat them all the same?"

He said, "Basically, yes, I do. I try to listen, to be respectful, and to treat each patient with dignity."

I responded, "Don't you think teachers do the same thing with their students?"

He said, "Hmm. I never thought of that, but, yes, I suppose they do."

Then I said, "And do you prescribe identical medications for every patient?"

He responded, "Well, yes. There are standard kinds of treatments."

I said, "I realize that, but don't you sort of customize the treatment depending on the patient's condition?" He responded, "Well, yes, but it depends on the patient's age, severity of the condition, and the patient's general health."

"Don't you think teachers should try to do the same kind of thing when they teach?" By that I meant that each student is unique, and then I asked, "Don't you think teachers should try to meet the needs of each student, as best they can, depending on their age and intellectual ability?"

He continued, "Well, yes, they should. Isn't that what they do?" I said, "Typically, they want to. That' s what this differentiated instruction idea is about."

He said, "If they want to, why don't they?" I replied, "Because of what you said initially. The public wants teachers to tell students what they need to learn and then test them against some standard, and if the student doesn't perform well on the standard, based on the test that's used, the teacher is at fault."

He then asked, "Isn't that the way it should be? Shouldn't the teacher be held accountable?" I responded, "If a patient comes back to you after you've prescribed something, and says the treatment didn't work and says it's your fault, what do you say to the patient?"

Well [sic] "I ask the patient if they followed the treatment appropriately?"

"So, you're placing responsibility on the patient."

"Well, not exactly." I responded to him about what he meant with "not exactly?'

He then said, "So, you're saying that teachers shouldn't be held accountable for how their students perform."

To this, I kind of grimaced because he just wasn't getting it. I responded,

"No, I'm not saying that. I believe teachers should be held accountable for how their student's perform; however, I am saying that I don't think teachers are any different than you. A lot of times accountability has to do with whether the patient (or in this case the student) does what they're supposed to do based on what the teacher has taught and prescribed. We don't live in a one size fits all world. Each person is unique, and we need to provide them with a variety of opportunities to learn, not just tell them something and expect them to know it. There are many ways of knowing and demonstrating understanding. That' s what differentiation is about."

At this point, I was finished with my appointment, and I went on my way; however, even though my appointment was finished, the discussion stayed with me, particularly as we began writing this article. The comment the doctor made about teachers just telling students what they need to learn and then testing them kept coming back to us again and again, and cemented the direction of our thinking and, as a result, the focus of this article.

The conversation with the doctor made us realize that anyone who has been an educator for any length of time realizes that their lives are spent dealing in some way with curriculum; and when dealing with curriculum, there are three overriding issues that need to be considered, which are articulated by Aristotle. Issues we emphasize in our paper are (1) people are unique, (2) what works in one place may not work in another place, at least not in the same way, and (3) governments will have a lot to say about the design and implementation of curricula.

Defining Curriculum

Although most educators dislike the notion that their profession is instrumental, the reality of this rationality sits at the forefront of teacher innovation and inclusion in the curriculum process. Practitioners cordon behind ontological excuses of time constraints and curricular rigidity to avoid direct contact with theory. Indeed, it appears that when curriculum moved from the realm of the practical to that of the possible, teachers were left at the curriculum crossroads. The de-professionalization of the teaching profession has historical origins and today continues to be dominated by (a) accountability issues that handcuff teachers and administrators, (b) societal and parental expectations of what schooling should be, and (c) educational textbook writers grounded in the subject-matter approach to teaching (Klein 1994, p. 22).

As is the case with much reform, we need to remain grounded in the conversation about measureable outcomes that Washington, D. C. has continued to pursue since Lyndon Johnson's administration. Educators need to ask the following questions: (a) How can the evaluation of students, teachers, administrators, and even our communities improve our community schools?, (b) How can that evaluation be used for strategic planning?, and (c) What constitutes evidence of thinking for our students, teachers, administrators, and communities? We suggest that school leaders look inward and reassess how they measure learning. As educators, what we have to keep in mind is that the impetus, planning, and budgetary support for the subject-centered and test-driven curriculum revision taking place comes from outside the state and local school districts.

Student work is more than merely a benchmark; it is the foundation of growth toward learning. Significance of learning cannot be determined by the size of the quantitative measurement (statistical) but by what it represents. Worthy artifacts can show breakthroughs such as instances where skills or strategies that were confused are now performed well. Under NCLB, parents became disconnected from their children's schools. This is one reason many choose alternative options for their children such as charter schools, home schools, or private schools (Apple, 2004). This practice continues currently in many school districts. Historically, schools and teachers have had adversarial relationships with parents, mainly over moral and religious content. Schools should invite parents to invest in the common cause that is the education of their children. School leaders need to think about data as a living and dynamic history of their schools. As Dahl (1970) notes, revolutions emerge from individual solutions to common problems. We need to consider all solutions. We need to search for multiple ways to measure thinking.

Diversity and Curriculum

Diverse populations require diverse evaluation systems. Looking at the merit and worth (absolute and relative) of a particular person is much more difficult than an automobile or a coffee maker. With an automobile or a coffee maker, you can easily measure its specifications and performance. A social or educational program is much more complex and includes many elements. If we agree about the complexity of educational programs, then we have to agree that there are also many different ways to evaluate them. Thus, why do we only use one type of measurement to measure these diverse activities that make up learning? Any democratic action taken to change and transform schools must begin by asking how schools define reform, and educational programs should require the use of dialogical and conscious approaches to open- ended dialogue that encompass the transformational language of democracy and action. A position that is often overlooked is that a sustainable definition of leadership can be realized through inquiry and reflection, rather than through the management-controlled approaches schools are currently experiencing.

Freire (1970/1997) declares, "Pedagogy of the oppressed must be animated by authentic, humanistic (not humanitarian) generosity and present itself as pedagogy of human kind" (p. 36).

Concurrently, transactional leadership functions on a system that exchanges performance for rewards or punishment; however, the exchange could be social, political, philosophical, economic, or psychological. The relationship among people remains as long as the common interest is maintained—goods such as votes or money are bargained though participants have no investment other than an understanding that they need each other. Once the arrangement is over, participants may choose to go their separate ways. In education, this relationship is mistakenly seen as transformative—although not unique to education as seen by the current debate on health care where disparate groups are attempting to exchange goods for votes—we use transformative language to describe these simple acts of transactional leadership. Burns (1978/1982) clearly uses transformative leadership and transactional leadership to differentiate between management as method, and leadership as art. What is ironic is that we continue to use transformative leadership to describe and justify any action we label reform. What needs to occur in public places is a deep discussion of curriculum as politics.

Curriculum as Transformative Leadership

Currently we are experiencing a management approach to schools that treats subjects as objects (Freire 1970/1997). Curriculum design and evaluation provide a set of standards based on short term goals that seek to respond to pre-determined skill- and content-based subject learning. The dominance of such curriculum pervasive in schools is based on narrowly defined ideas of change and reform—seeking to align performance on mathematics and reading (i.e., the achievement gap) to the larger social issues of poverty and race.

With apologies to Charles Dickens, it is the best of times; it is the worst of times. It is an age of unprecedented spending for program growth; it is an age of record budget deficits and cutbacks. In countless school districts across America, new programs have risen to replace traditional ones and accommodate a growing number of students. Yet, a faltering economy has put the squeeze on operating budgets and has made constituents less likely to support ambitious construction proposals. So, as programs and alternatives open at record pace, new graduates are falling behind because they are taught in programs that are inadequate and unsupported. The push for improving the quality in education is more than just a question of aesthetics. According to Darling Hammond (1999), Darling Hammond, Berry, and Thorenson (2001), and Constantine, Player, Silva, Hallgren, Grider, and Deke (2009) students in traditional schools, who are taught by teachers who are certified through alternative means still do better than their counterparts (this includes comparisons with children of high poverty and minorities). Currently, the debate rages over Common Core Standards (CCS) policy and implementation focusing on control of education (federal or state), fast-tracking of unreliable measurements, research demonstrating no connection between international benchmarks and U.S. economic growth, implementation and impact, and limiting curriculum (lack of teacher input, creativity, and literature within state-adopted CCS curricula).

More broadly, critique has been focused on the suitability of lower grade standards because the development of the standards has focused on what high school graduates should know and then working backwards, causing them to not take into account how younger students learn. Advocates, who have evidence and data that demonstrate the impact of national benchmarks, and who include bi-partisan political groups, teacher and administrator groups, and industry, government, and foundation entities, state that supporting the adoption of the CCS by the states will allow them to articulate to all stakeholders the expectations for students; align curriculum, texts, and other educational media to international standards; provide professional development for teachers based on student needs and best practices; develop and implement student performance assessment process aligned to the common core across the nation; and create policy that helps schools and students meet CCS and high school graduation requirements.

In the arguments made by educational reformers, assessment has been cited as the key to educational change; however, little to no discussion is articulated as to the purpose of curriculum leadership. The idea that emerged from school leaders and their formal and informal educations is that one model will materialize as the dominant form to articulate and prepare future democratic citizens (Levine 2005). This articulation has emerged from management literature that seeks to create a single process for change that can easily be measured and re-adjusted to deal with the changing contexts (Levine 2005; Robinson 2001). We propose that this single process model—which has led American manufacturing to its full collapse—is based on the ability to grow and profit from change (Egan 2008). Robinson (2001) writes that this Industrial Revolution model has driven education, and training is hampered by archaic ideas of intelligence and creativity that, according to Eisner (1997/2008), has wasted the potential of countless numbers of human beings.

Why Standardized Curriculum

As Aristotle says in the beginning quote, education is a political issue, and in recent times countries have had the tendency to take more and more control of the curriculum, resulting in standardized education. This has become problematic, mainly because times have changed, and, as times change, people's needs change. People's needs are different. Believing that all people need the same things and they need those things in the same way causes problems for curriculum design and how the curriculum is delivered. In education, we do not like to think about it, but curriculum is politics (Breault, 1999) and somewhere in the middle are teachers and students. In the process of thinking about and reading literature about the standardized curriculum two thoughts keep emerging. The first thought is how political curriculum is, and, the second thought is that everybody has attended school and has an opinion about education and what people should be taught. Sparapani came face to face with these same attitudes that day in the doctor's office.

Concerning the politics of curriculum, Westbury (2008) writes that over the past two decades the practice and operation of curriculum making by national or state governments or boards of education has become basic to designing and assessing curricula. In his paper, Westbury examines what has happened in a variety of countries, specifically England, the United States, and Norway. Regarding England, Westbury says that the British Education Reform Act of 1988, with its National Curriculum, signaled a radical departure in the design of and implementation of curriculum in schools in England and Wales. He writes that in the United States, in the 1990s, virtually all states developed curriculum standards, in many cases as their first-ever state curricula. And in societies, like Norway, where state-based curriculum making has been a long-standing institution, new curricula are appearing more frequently. Westbury further says that the form of such curriculum making varies by country and can change over time. At one time, or in one country, the curriculum may be content specific. In another country or at another time, the curriculum may address achievement standards. In another country the curriculum may be highly prescriptive or presented as frameworks. Wherever the country or whatever the time, such curriculum making plays a similar role within the educational systems of the country.

Government-determined curriculum mandates spell out what schools should be doing, and how schools should be doing what they do. Whatever the format or intention (Westbury, 2008), government-mandated curricula present authoritative statements about the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies seen as appropriate to populations of students. In addition, these government-mandated curricula can authorize or recommend programs of study and/or methods of instruction that reflect, for example, an understanding of science as inquiry, specific mathematics or civics standards, as well as what are effective, or "best," practices. As such, it becomes obvious that such government-mandated curriculum documents spell out standards for the work of schools, teachers, and students (Hill & Johnston, 2010; Mehta & Spillane, 2010) The second thought, concerning the politics surrounding curriculum, is that everyone has gone to school, so just about everyone has a feeling of being knowledgeable about and has a personal response to educational issues (Levin, 2008). This is central to what the doctor was saying in the story at the beginning of this article, and it is obvious that the doctor's own school experiences influenced his views about education and educational policy. It is very true that a person's own school experiences deeply affect their views about education. In the late twentieth century and here in the twenty-first century, governments around the world have become more and more involved with making educational policies that regulate curriculum. This regulation has resulted in government-mandated standards and benchmarks, measured by some form of government-mandated assessments, which has resulted in educational systems designing standardized curricula.

Is there a place for Standardized Curriculum?

It goes without saying that we live in a global society, and because of recent trends in immigration and other factors, the demographics of the world have changed dramatically. Here, in the twenty-first century, this is especially true (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003; Hodgkinson, 2000/2001). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, documents that the world landscape is becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual as international migration rates grow each year (He, Phillion, Chan, & Xu, 2008). UNESCO reports that in 2000, more than 6,809 languages were in use, including 114 sign languages, in 228 countries. Additionally, UNESCO reports that approximately 185 million people worldwide live outside their countries of birth, up from 80 million three decades ago. Population data from 1999 show that the foreign-born population in Australia is 23.6%, in Canada the foreign-born population is 18.4%, in Sweden it is 11.8%, in the United States it is 11.1 %, in the Netherlands it is 9.8%, and the foreign-born population of Norway is 6.5% (He, et al., 2008).

The cultural and language diversity in the U. S. (Daniel, 2007) further demonstrates this world phenomenon. In 2000, for example, the foreign-born population of the United States is 31.1 million which, as we have already said, represents 11.1 % of the total population. Of that 11.1 % foreign-born population, Latin Americans represent 52%, Asians 26%, Europeans 16%, and other countries of the world 6.0% % (He, et al., 2008).

All this diversity in culture and language means that each person is different, with different needs and understandings, which are brought into the classroom. In addition to bringing differences in culture and language into the classroom, students learn at different rates. Students have different aptitudes. They have different levels of motivation. They have different learning styles. Further, differences in aptitude, motivation, and learning style tend to increase as a student progresses through the educational system. Beyond this, students learn in a remarkable variety of organizational arrangements (Weiner & Oakes, 2008).

Introduced into this diversity is the government-mandated curriculum with its standards and benchmarks. As educators, we have to say that the idea of a standardized curriculum is a good one. We believe this because the idea, in and of itself, solves many issues in education and teacher performance. For one thing, as the doctor in our story says, with a standardized curriculum it is much easier to assess student performance and, supposedly, measure teacher accountability; however, as standardized curricula are evaluated, there is a general fallacy that cannot be resolved. It is the idea of standardized education. There is the assumption in standardized curricula that with this one lesson and these specific examples, using something commonly referred to as "best practice," each student in each classroom can be reached and educated about the topic of the lesson. The conceit of this assumption is astonishing, especially since each person is completely unique, from their brain down to their DNA.

The assurance that somehow the establishment of standards will serve as an adequate guide for reforming curricula may be misplaced. Even given the considerable efforts that have gone into writing them, standards are unlikely to fulfill their proponents' intentions. Rather, they are often symbolic accomplishments. That being said, it is doubtful that government-mandated standards and benchmarks and the standardized curriculum will disappear any time soon.

Teaching Practices for the Standardized Curriculum

As has already been explained, the people of the world live in a complex, multi-faceted society, and that societal complexity brings a variety of learners into the classroom (Daniel, 2007; VanSciver, 2005). The challenge to help all students succeed in such a diverse society is present for teachers every day in every classroom at every educational level. Mastering the art of bringing variety to the curriculum according to the needs of any given set of students is the challenge that such diversity can bring. We believe that the most appropriate way to address the diverse composition of learners in the classroom is by using the instructional concept of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999).

Before discussing differentiated instruction and instructional practices that differentiate instruction, we will discuss what is clearly the most common way in which curricula are planned and made available in most nations. Textbooks, both required and supplemental, accompanied by lecture, are the key here. In most nations, textbooks are the key element of the curriculum for a number of reasons. First, textbooks are essential parts of the curriculum in most schools. Indeed, it has been estimated that 80% of teachers use textbooks in their classrooms as the primary curricular device. Further, it is believed (Apple, 2008) that nearly 50% of student time in public schools is related to textbook use. Other data suggest that in many classrooms 80-90% of classroom and homework assignments are textbook-driven or textbook-centered. Although fully testing accuracy of these claims may need further analyses inside classrooms and at home, nearly all the research on textbooks documents their central location as the primary curricular item, and in many places, in essence, the curriculum.

Often teachers have the belief that focusing on the diversity of the learner, by attempting to differentiate instruction, brings chaos and instability to the classroom. Relying solely on the textbook brings stability to the classroom and an easy focus on the government-mandated standards and benchmarks, in other words, the standardized curriculum. Teachers want order and continuity, not complexity and uncertainty, and teachers believe that relying on the textbook leads not only to order and continuity, but to order and stability as well. Relying heavily on the textbook and lecture as the primary pedagogical devices bring tedium to the classroom, for both the teacher and the student.

As we have already suggested, a better way (a more appropriate way) to deliver the curriculum, a more interesting way for both teachers and students, and a way that still maintains classroom order, is by using instructional practices that differentiate instruction.

Traditional methods of teaching in the form of textbooks, lecturing, and teaching to the test, have benefited teachers' comfort levels by not adapting to change, but have hindered students in their learning process. Teachers struggle with doing an adequate job presenting the curriculum that they teach. Where resources and training are not available, teachers revert back to traditional methods of teaching (Vega & Tayler, 2005; Johnston, 2001; Weitz, 1995). Also, most teachers tend to emulate the traditional methods of teaching, having been trained with the instructor being the center of attention. Unfortunately, this does not assist the students in their learning, as it may be the least effective way in helping students to both recall and apply new information (Apple, 2008; Green, 1999).

Students who truly understand concepts, ideas, and information will naturally perform higher on assessments of achievement (Faulkner & Cook, 2006). More importantly, students who truly understand concepts, ideas, and information will experience academic success, which encourages them to continue to succeed academically (Tomlinson, 2006; Dreher, 1997). The major point here is that by using differentiated instruction all students can learn.

The key to learning in a differentiated classroom is that all students are regularly offered choices, and students are matched as closely as possible with tasks compatible with their interests as learners. The curriculum in such a classroom should be differentiated in three areas, (l) content [The teacher provides multiple options to students for taking in information], (2) process [The teacher provides multiple options to students to make sense out of the ideas being presented], and (3) product [The teacher provides multiple options to students for expressing what they know about what they have learned] (Willis & Mann, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999).

Approaches to Sustainability for Schools in a Culture of Knowledge Transfer

In re-thinking our curriculum for change, we should ask questions such as, *what practical experiences could our students' experiences bring to their own development?* Eisner (1979/2008) claims that evaluation of learning is best determined by the individual. Eisner (1979/2008, pp. 203-210) suggests that:

1. Tasks used to evaluate what the students know and can do need to reflect the tasks they will encounter in the world outside schools, not those limited to schools themselves. Evaluation tasks should think about more than one possible solution and one possible answer to a problem.
2. Tasks should have curricular relevance, but not be limited by the curriculum itself.
3. Tasks should require students to display sensitivity to configurations or wholes, not simply discrete elements.
4. Tasks should permit the student to select a form of representation they choose to use to display what has been learned.
5. The tasks used to evaluate students should reveal how students go about solving a problem, not only the solutions they formulated.
6. Tasks should reflect the values of the intellectual community from which they are derived.
7. Tasks need not be limited to solo performance. Many of the most important tasks we undertake require group efforts.

The predicament in creating change is that society is suffering from an inertia born out of a helpless marriage to economic utility. Schools' reliance on the capitalist sphere has not only tainted the curriculum but also re-oriented students to accept a new kind of reward, "economic utility," and, as such, graduates are told to study not for knowledge sake but to get "well paying jobs" in the future (Postman, 1996, p. 27).

Concluding Thoughts

It probably is no secret that we are not advocates of a standardized curriculum. Around 2300 years ago Aristotle, as suggested in the quote by him at the beginning of this paper, seems to have understood this. He understood that issues related to curriculum are political. We understand that too. He also seems to have believed that people are different and not everyone needs the same thing, at least not in the same way. We believe that too. Here in the twenty-first century, we live in a global society. In that global society, countries are very competitive. Countries want their people to be productive citizens. Countries also want their citizens to think critically and creatively. It is the responsibility of education to teach people what they need to know in order to be productive citizens.

In order to make sure that educators do what the country wants them to do, governments have mandated standards and benchmarks that, in the educational systems, have evolved into standardized curricula. We do not believe that traditional instructional practices that are conducive to standardized learning environments spawn productive citizens or produce critical and creative thinkers.

Our possibilities for change are endless, but these must emerge from our imagination—where we re-invent our resources for teachers and administrators and treat curriculum through a new culture of evaluation (Eisner 1979/2008). We must also examine how to move beyond the industrial model to an idea of curriculum change for academic sustainability—a new idea of what is meant by a competitive advantage. The approach lies in enhancing interactions between the schools and the community to form strategies for transfer of knowledge that develop the local community through intellectual sustainability. Schools need to operate as "complex systems," where state of affairs and their processes are not necessarily placed within traditional structures of particular disciplines. Instead, they are allowed to be a representation of a slice of life, conceptualized as an organized totality, in which elements are not separable, and therefore, cannot be separately studied. In this environment, education is constantly occurring and evolving. Schooling must strike a balance between methodology and curriculum (accountability) and interpretation and curriculum (curiosity) as driving forces. Eisner (1979/2008; 1998) is not concerned with methods or approach but with the notion of seeing. His notion of the educational experience encompasses any situation that involves interactions between groups of people where learning leads to changes in one's outlook (1979/2008). Given Eisner's challenge to leadership, we believe we need to examine practice and what can be done to change how transformative leadership is realized.

Educators are no longer involved in self-determination; allowing fear to dominate how we run our schools (Carini, 2001). In the preface to *A Reassessment of the Curriculum,* Huebner (1964) explained that the curriculum field was bourgeoning. He observed that "ideas are rampant, innovation is encouraged, and the pressure to change is sometimes uncomfortably great...the curriculum worker wishes to act constructively and responsibly" (p. v). Further, Robert J. Schaefer concluded (as stated by Huebner, 1964) that "to regain the sense of excitement which has so long been characteristic of educators interested in curriculum we need to develop new analytical skills and a new faith in the relevance and power of classroom research" (p. 7). The curriculum leader in schools has historically had two choices, like Robert Frost (1920), (1) continue along the traditional path, or (2) choose the one less traveled.

To accomplish this transformative leadership is needed. Transformative leadership is, ultimately, political change, and must begin in common moral relationships with others. Stakeholders need to value an open community based upon ideals in which freedom of expression is protected, civility is affirmed, appreciation and understanding of individual differences are honored, and stakeholders value a caring community in which the wellbeing of each person is important.

Curriculum needs to (1) engage in an active process of questioning that examines what is visible and hidden in an aesthetic method, intended to foster close links between theory and practice, (2) develop leadership skills to affect change, and (3) prepare learners for a wider understanding of learners and learning, confronting the complexity of diversity in traditional and non-traditional educational settings.

Most teachers are not involved in policy making, nor are most teachers involved in designing curricula. All teachers, however, are involved in delivering the curriculum. The identified curriculum, whether designed by governments or schools, sets down the beliefs about what should be taught. In that sense, any curriculum document should be viewed as a guide. The curriculum is not dogma (Fryshman, 2008). We have forgotten that, and have created an educational structure that is convenient for government, convenient for teachers, and convenient for society, but seemingly highly unsuitable for many young people.

References

Apple, M.W. (2004). Away with all teachers: The cultural politics of home schooling. In D. Callejo Perez, S.M. Fain, & J.J. Slater (Eds.). *Pedagogy of place: Seeing space as cultural education.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Apple, M. W. (2008). Curriculum planning: Content, form, and the politics of accountability. In the *SAGE handbook of curriculum and development*. Available at SAGE Publications. <http://www.sage-ereference.comlhdbk_curriculumlArtic1e_n2.html>.

Breault, R. A. (1999). The sound-bite curriculum. *The Teacher Educator*, *35* (l), 1-7.

Burns, J.M. (1978/1982). *Leadership.* New York, NY: Harper.

Carini, P. (2001). *Starting strong: A different look at children, schools, and standards*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Constantine, J., Player D., Silva, T., Hallgren, K., Grider, M., & Deke, J. (2009). *An evaluation of teachers trained through different routes to certification, final report* (NCEE 2009-4043). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D. C.: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences.

Dahl, R. A. (1970). *After the revolution.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Daniel, M. C. (2007). Authentic literacy practices for English Language Learners: A balanced curriculum design. *Journal of Reading Education*, *32* (2), 18-25.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

Darling-Hammond, L., Berry, B., & Thorenson, A. (2001).   Does teacher education matter? Evaluating the evidence. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *23* (1), 57-77.

Dreher, S. (1997). Learning styles: Implications for learning & teaching. *Rural Educator, 19* (2), 26-29.

Egan, K. (2008). *The future of education: Reimagining our schools from the ground up*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Eisner, E. (1979/2008). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Eisner, E. (1998). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Faulkner, S. & Cook, C. (2006). Testing vs. teaching: The perceived impact of four assessment demands on middle grades instructional practices. *Research in Middle Level Education* Online, 29, (7). Available at www.nmsa.org/Publications/RMLEOnline/Articles.

Freire, P. (1970/1997). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, Y: Continuum.

Frost, R. (1920). *Mountain interval*. New York, NY: Holt.

Fryshman, B. (2008, August 27). Curriculum is not dogma. *Education Week*, *52*, p. 28.

Futrell, M. H., Gomez, J., & Bedden, D. (2003). Teaching the children of a new America: The challenge of diversity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *84* (5), 381-385.

Green, F. (1999). Brain and learning research: Implications for meeting the needs of diverse learners. *Education, 119*, 682-688.

He, M. F., Phillion, J., Chan, E., & Xu, S. (2008). Immigrant students experience of curriculum. In the *SAGE handbook of curriculum and development*. Available at SAGE Publications. <http://www.sage-ereference.comlhdbk_curriculum!Article_nII.html>.

Hill, P. & Johnston, M. (2010). In the future, diverse approaches to schooling. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *92* (3), 43-47.

Hodgkinson, H. (2000/2001). Educational demographics: What teachers should know. *Educational Leadership, 58* (4), 6-11.

Huebner, D. (1964). *A reassessment of the curriculum.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Johnston, F. (2001). Exploring classroom teachers spelling practices and beliefs. *Reading Research and Instruction*, *40*, 143-156.

Klein, M. F. (1994). The toll for curriculum design. *Peabody Journal of Education. 69* (3), 19-35.

Levin, B. (2008). Curriculum policy and the politics of what should be learned in schools. In the *SAGE handbook of curriculum and development*. Available at SAGE Publications<http://www.sage-ereference.comlhdbk _curriculum! Article _ n l .html>.

Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school leaders*. Washington, DC: Education Schools Project. Available at www.edschools.org/pdf/Final313.pdf.

Mehta, J. & Spillane, J. (2010). Unbounding promises and problems. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92* (3), 48-52.

Postman , N. (1996). *The end of education: Redefining the value of school.* New York, NY: Knopf

Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. New York, NY: Wiley and Sons.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2006). An alternative to ability grouping. *Principal Leadership*, (Middle School Edition), *6* (8), 31-32.

Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. A. & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiating instruction + understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Vansciver, J. H. (2005). Motherhood, apple pie, and differentiated instruction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *86*, 534-535.

Vega, Q. & Tayler, M. (2005). Incorporating course content while fostering a more learner-centered environment. *College Teaching, 53* (2), 83-86.

Weiner, K. G. & Oakes, J. (2008). Structuring curriculum: Technical, normative, and political considerations. In the *SAGE handbook of curriculum and development*. Available at SAGE Publications<http://www.sage-ereference.comlhdbk_curriculum!Article_n5.html>.

Weitz, A. (1995). Change -how to remove the fear, resentment, and resistance. *Hospital Material Management Quarterly*, *17* (2), 75-80.

Westbury, 1. (2008). Making curricula: Why do states make curricula, and how? In the *SAGE handbook of curriculum and development*. Available at SAGE Publications. <http://www.sage-ereference.comlhdbk_curriculum!Article_n3.html> .

Willis, S. & Mann, L. (2000). Differentiating instruction: Finding manageable ways to meet individual needs. In *Curriculum Update*, Winter, pp. 1-8. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.