Definition of Curriculum

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SUMMARY

It is well to recognize that the term curriculum is used in different meanings and under different names. In this paper, different definitions of the curriculum are examined in the literature. To eliminate fuzziness and confusion in the use of the term, curriculum is defined as a field of study which includes all of the working areas of the field.

ÖZET
Programın Tanımı

Program kelimesinin farklı anlamlarda ve farklı adlar altında kullanıldığı bilinmektedir. Bu yazıda, kaynaklardaki çeşitli program tanımları incelenmiştir. Terimin kullanılışındaki belirsizlik ve karşılıklığı gidermek için, program bütün çalışma alanlarını içine alan bir bilim dalı olarak tarif edilmiştir.

Curriculum is a difficult term to discuss because it is interpreted in many ways. All writers on the subject of curriculum have tried to define curriculum. Thus, one can find as many definitions of curriculum as one can find curriculum textbooks and there is no agreement on the definition of curriculum.

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Dictionary of Education defines curriculum as "1. a systematic group of courses or sequences of subjects required..., 2. a general over-all plan of the content or specified materials of instruction..., 3. a group of courses and planned experiences which a student has under the guidance of the school..."[1]

Caswell and Campbell defined curriculum as "all the experiences children have under the guidance of teachers."[2] Smith, Stanley and Shores stated that:

> A sequence of potential experiences is set up in the school for the purpose of disciplining children and youth in group ways of thinking and acting. This set of experiences is referred to as curriculum[3].

Ertürk defined curriculum as "all of the planned learning experiences to educate specific students in specified time period[4]. Doğan considered curriculum as "all of the planned activities to bring into desired learnings in students"[5].

Saylor and Alexander insisted that curriculum is "a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served by a single school center."[6] For Eisner curriculum is "a program that is intentionally designed to engage students in activities or events that will have educational benefits for them"[7]. Gagne defined curriculum as "a sequence of content units arranged in such a way that learning of each unit may be accomplished as a single unit..."[8] Wilson defined curriculum as "a planned set of human encounters thought to maximize learning."[9] After criticizing the existing definitions of curriculum Tanner and Tanner insisted that to convey full meaning of the term, the curriculum should be defined as:

1 Dictiory of Education, ed. Carter V. Good (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), p. 149.

2 Hollis, L. Caswell and Doak S. Campbell, Curriculum Development, (New York: American Book Company, 1935), p. 69.

3 B. Othanel Smith, William O. Stanley, and Harlen J. Shores, Fundamentals of Curriculum Development, Rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1957), p. 3.

4 Selahattin Ertürk, Eğitimde Program Geliştirme, (Ankara: Yelkentepe Yayınları 4, 1972), s. 14.

5 Hıfzı Doğan, "Program Geliştirmede Sistem Yaklaşımı", Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, (Cilt 7, Sayı: 14) s. 361.

6 Galen J. Saylor and William M. Alexander, Planning Curriculums for Schools, (New York: Halt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1974), p. 6.

7 Elliot W. Eisner. The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company Inc., 1979), p. 40.

8 Robert M. Gagne, "Curriculum Research and the Promotion of Learning," in Curriculum Development: Issues and Insights, eds. D.E. Orlonsky and B.O. Smith (Chicago: McNally Pub. Co., 1978), p. 395.

9 L. Craig Wilson, The Open Access Curriculum, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971), p. 64.

the planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic re-construction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continous and willful growth in personal social competence[10].

Mackenzie also criticized the definitions of curriculum which focus on the experiences of learners. He insisted that "experiences cannot be directly observed"[11] and defined curriculum as "the learners engagements with various aspects of the environment which have been planned under the direction of the school"[12]. Doll stated that curriculum is "the formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding, develop skill, and attitudes, appreciations, and values under the auspices of that school"[13].

According to Varış, "curriculum is an operational term. Since the important thing is not to have a complete definition but to have an effective effort, the persons who interest in the field should always take different ideas in terms of the implementation activities"[14].

After giving different definitions of curriculum, Fidan defined curriculum as "the appearance of the curriculum design in implimentation"[15].

In the literature, curriculum specialists use the term curriculum to mean many different thing. Some follow Hopkins who insisted that curriculum must not be pre-planned and defined curriculum as "those learnings each child selects, accepts and incorporates into himself to act with, on, and upon, in subsequent experiences[16]. Some agree with Johnson who considered curriculum as a guide for instruction and defined curriculum as "a structured series of intended learning outcomes"[17]. Still others join Macdonald who considered curriculum and instruction separately and defined curriculum as "those planning en-

10   D. Tanner and L.N. Tanner, Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice, (New York: Macmillian Pub. Co. Inc., 1975), p. 45.
11   Gordon N. Mackenzie, "Curriculum Change: Participants, Powers and Processes" in Innovations in Education, ed. Matthew B. Miles (New York: Teachers College Press, 1964), p. 402.
12   Ibid.
13   Ronald C. Doll, Curriculum Improvement: Decision Making and Process, 4 th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978), p. 6.
14   Fatma Varış, Eğitimde Program Geliştirme: Teori ve Teknikler, (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1971), p. 14.
15   Nurettin Fidan, Okulda Öğrenme ve Öğretme, (Ankara: Kadıoğlu Matbaası, 1985), p. 20.
16   Thomas L. Hopkins, Interaction: The Democratic Process (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1954), p. 39.
17   Mauritz Jr. Johnson, "Definitions and Models in Curriculum Theory," in Curriculum and Evaluation, eds. Arno Bellack and Herbert M. Kliebart (California: McCutchan Publishing Cor., 1977), p. 7.

deavors which take place prior to instruction"[18]. Some accept Lewis and Miel's interpretaion and use it to mean "a set of intentions about opportunities for engagements of persons-to be-educated with other persons and with things (all bearers of information, processes, techniques, and values) in certain arrangements of time and space"[19]. Others prefer Beauchamp's definition of curriculum which is "a written document... the overall plan that is intended to be used by teachers as a point of departure for developing teaching strategies to be used with classroom groups of pupils"[20].

Several writers on the subject of curriculum tried also to categorize definitions of curriculum. A useful classification of the definitions of curriculum is Lewis and Miel. In illustrating distinctions among different curriculum definitions and their relationships to instruction, Lewis and Miel put curriculum definitions under two subheadings: (1) "Curriculum as something intended" –Johnson's and Phenix's definitions, (2) "Curriculum as something actualized" – Caswell's and Campbell's, and Mackenzie's definitions[21].

After given different definitions of curriculum, Beauchamp said that in the literature "the experience," "the social design" and "the psychological notions" are associated with the concept of curriculum. He concluded that "the existence of differences in definition should set the stage for differences in curriculum design and theory"[22]. Then, there is no question that the definition one holds of curriculum has a great deal to do with the design of the curriculum.

Because one's understanding of the problems of curriculum design depends upon one's definition of curriculum which gives one a sense of direction to a framework for the curriculum design; it seems necessary to define the term curriculum.

The framework can be taken from Beauchamp, who mentioned that the word curriculum could be used to refer:

> (1) a curriculum... a document designed to be used as a
> point of departure for instructional planning

18   James B. Macdonald, "Educational Models for Instruction-Introduction," in Theories of Instruction, eds, James B. Macdonald and Robert R. Leeper (Washington, D.C.: ASCD, 1965), p. 6.

19   Arthur J. Lewis and Alice Miel, Supervision for Improved Instruction: New Challanges, New Responses, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), p. 57.

20   George A. Beauchamp, Curriculum Theory, 3rd ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: The Kagg Press, 1975), p. 7.

21   Arthur J. Lewis and Alice Miel, Supervision for Improved Instruction, (Belmonnt, California: Wadsworth Pub. Co. Inc., 1972), p. 44.

22   George A. Beauchamp, Curriculum Theory, (1975), p. 106.

(2) a curriculum system refers to... curriculum planning, curriculum imp-lementation, and curriculum appraisal

(3) curriculum as a field of study or as a field of inquiry, encompasses: a) curriculum design, b) curriculum engineering, and c) the research and theory building necessary to explain curriculum design and curriculum engineering[23].

The curriculum would be defined in terms of Beauchamp's third reference – as a field of study – because first, it includes both curriculum design – selection, arrangement, and organization of the curriculum; and curriculum engineering – curriculum planning, curriculum implementation, and curriculum evaluation; second, as its subject matter, curriculum as a field of study includes "a curriculum, the curriculum, curricula, and various phenomena of curriculum construction"[24] and "it focuses on... selecting, justifying and arranging... learning"[25].

Furthermore, everybody who tries to learn or to do something would need a plan to guide him or a curriculum, the definition of the curriculum would be defined without given any preference to any level of education.

As a result, the definition of the curriculum is a field of study in which considerations are given to selecting, arranging, organizing, and justifying of plans for the purpose of determining directions to educate human beings individually or as a group in the most expeditious and efficient way possible.

23 George A. Beauchamp, "Basic Components of a Curriculum Theory," in Curriculum and Evaluation, eds, arno A. Bellack and Herbert M. Kliebart (California: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1977), p. 23.

24 John I. Goodlad and Maurice N. Richter, Jr., The Development of a Conceptual System for Dealing with Problems of Curriculum and Instruction Cooperative Research Project No. 454 (Los Angeles, California: Institute for Development of Educational Activities, University of California, 1966), p. 12.

25 Ibid., p. 13.