

Introduction

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The question of who makes curriculum decisions is a fundamental and timeless issue which has received continuing discussion and debate throughout the history of the curriculum field. The answers to this question have changed over time and are certain to change in the future, given the increasing rate and complexity of change in the world. It is one of those fundamental questions that will always need to be reconsidered as new social contexts, pressures, and knowledge come to bear upon it. The array of participants who are officially designated or who function through default to make curriculum decisions is complex enough, but the question centers around not only *who* makes them, but also what type of curriculum decision is under discussion. Thus, the question is very complex and multifaceted, but the complexity is not often recognized when debates about curriculum are held in public and educational forums and when operational answers to it are formulated.

In recent times a definitive answer has been given to the question of who makes curriculum decisions by the increased power that is being vested in the state for curriculum responsibilities. Congressional legislation and cases heard by the Supreme Court also have played an increasing role in curriculum decision making at the federal level. This book discusses the current answer to the perennial question and documents the impact of how it has been answered on the curriculum, educators, and students. In addition, it identifies some related educational issues, such as the education of teachers and the new roles

different educators are expected to perform, which must be addressed now and in the future when the question is reconsidered.

Each author was invited to contribute a chapter to this book because of his or her special expertise and unique perspective on the question of who makes curriculum decisions. All of the authors wrote with the current movement toward centralized curriculum decision making as a frame of reference, but each wrote from his or her own value perspective as to the impact of the movement upon American education and what will and should be done about it. No author formally defines that nebulous concept of 'curriculum', but each focuses upon a rather common definition, since the shared perspective of all the authors is the current movement to centralize curriculum decisions. Thus *curriculum*, in these chapters, is implicitly defined as decisions dealing with the goals, content, materials, and evaluation procedures, at least in part, that students experience while they are at school. If each author had been invited to define curriculum as he or she chose, this may not have been the preferred definition for many of them. But it is clear that many assume that this is what curriculum is, especially as decisions have become increasingly centralized.

Each chapter reflects the beliefs, expertise, and style of the author. Since the authors were invited to contribute a chapter because of their national stature, no attempt was made to force each one into a similar style of writing through extensive editing. Thus, not only do the chapters reflect the differing perspectives on the question of curriculum decision making, but the intensity of each author's beliefs and position on the issues is preserved.

The book does not intend to portray a unified discussion on the question of who should make curriculum decisions but rather to suggest the diversity of issues which relate to it. Each chapter helps identify the different issues, value contexts, and complexities that surround the central question. It should not be surprising, then, that each of the authors discusses the question in different ways. In spite of the uniqueness of each chapter, however, all of them collectively contribute to an increased understanding of the issues.

Some educators are suggesting that a new wave of reform is beginning—a movement to school-based management and curriculum reform. How this will affect the current trend of a state-dominated curriculum is not clear. It may be that the pendulum will swing once again to local control over the curriculum; it may also be that the state will continue to have dominance over the basic curriculum decisions, as Piphio suggests in his chapter. Whatever answer is given to the question of curriculum decision making in the future, this book will remain a resource because of the curriculum-related issues discussed

in it. The perennial question of who makes what type of curriculum decision is made much clearer for future rounds of discussion—as they undoubtedly will occur—because of the contributions of these authors and their unique perspectives.

In the opening chapter of Part I, John Goodlad, University of Washington, places each of the succeeding chapters within the current social and political context of curriculum decision making and provides his own view of how he and other thoughtful educators must act within that context. He emphasizes the importance of the question of who makes curriculum decisions and suggests that it cannot be answered simplistically as a question of who has the power to make them. Goodlad argues that the question must always be answered within the political context and on the basis of normative criteria. Further, the basic decisions about curriculum must be made when the ground rules usually are not clear. The question must be answered consistently, however, through the process of inquiry and must always be made for the common good.

Frances Klein, University of Southern California, presents a conceptual framework for describing and examining curriculum decision making which helps to document and interpret the confusing array of potential and actual participants in the processes of curriculum development. The framework is a matrix consisting of levels of decision making and the types of curriculum decisions which ultimately must be made. The interaction identified through the matrix clearly identifies the complexity of the question. The assumptions inherent within the framework are identified, the potential role of it within curriculum development is discussed, and the complexity of the concept of curriculum is made clear.

Tyll van Geel, University of Rochester, discusses congressional legislation and the role of the U.S. Supreme Court as major forces in curriculum decision making at the federal level. He presents two visions, traditionalism and liberalism, and analyzes the ever-changing struggle over the federal role in education as conflicts between the two visions. The differing educational goals of those who hold the two visions are reflected in both the legislation of Congress and in Supreme Court decisions. In his conclusion, he notes that although liberalism has been the dominant vision in many instances, the tension between the two visions will continue to shape federal decision making about curriculum, and that the current tension may be reshaped by just one Supreme Court appointment in the future.

Chris Piphon, Education Commission of the States, discusses the recent decisions made by the states which focus upon curriculum. The number of decisions made by the states clearly point out the degree of

state control being placed upon local school districts. Piphio agrees that the states have a significant amount of control over the curriculum, but there is much variation in how that control is exercised from state to state. He further notes that the movement to increased state control over the curriculum occurred with the support and agreement, or at least acquiescence, of local educational leaders. The trends he identifies suggest that state control will continue in the future and even will be likely to increase.

William H. Schubert, University of Illinois at Chicago, places the current movement of centralized curriculum decision making in a historical context by discussing past answers to the question as well as the forces which have helped frame the answers. He discusses the current movement to centralized power, but he also identifies current forces opposing the move to a centralized and mandated curriculum. He insightfully notes that each succeeding generation within its own unique set of circumstances must answer anew where control over the curriculum will be located. Schubert's discussion clearly documents the persistency over time of the question of who will make curriculum decisions.

Part II presents the unique perspectives of five leaders in American education on the impact of centralized curriculum decision making and the critical issues related to it. Gary Griffin, University of Arizona, analyzes two competing orientations to teaching for which teachers can be prepared in preservice and continuing professional education: teachers as paraprofessionals and teachers as professionals. His examination of each reveals how the current trend toward centralizing curriculum decision making forces the paraprofessional role upon all teachers and restricts the professionalization of teaching. He also makes clear that if teachers are to function as professionals, they will need a broadened body of knowledge and skills, including what is necessary to be informed and effective curriculum decision makers. He highlights the importance of the orientation taken in preservice teacher education since it is at that level that teachers begin to be socialized into professional norms and educated for the role they ultimately will play in curriculum decision making. Specific suggestions are made for improving teacher education in order to ensure that teachers will function as professionals who are skilled in curriculum decision making.

Martin Brooks, assistant superintendent for instruction of the Shoreham-Wading River Central School District in New York, discusses the impact of state decisions regarding curriculum upon the local school district from his perspective. He presents seven messages received by local districts as curriculum development becomes

centralized at the state level and suggests some strong effects this movement has had at the district level. Brooks proposes some alternative actions which could be taken by the state, actions that build on the history of the school district rather than simply assume that the current trend toward centralizing curriculum decision making is appropriate for all school districts. His discussion of the pressures on and the responses from local districts brings into sharp focus the impact of the state's heavy involvement in curriculum decision making.

Audrey Schwartz, University of Southern California, analyzes from a sociological perspective how the roles of the local school board, the superintendent, principals, teachers, and students are modified with externally imposed curriculum reforms. As a basis for her analysis she uses two metaphors which affect the view of education and curriculum that people hold: the machine metaphor and the organic metaphor. After a brief historical review of how these metaphors have been reflected in educational policies and practices, she places into perspective the current attempts to improve American education by state and other external mandates regarding the curriculum. The tensions among the various professional roles of educators caused by the two differing metaphors are illuminated by her discussion. She concludes that both metaphors are competing for attention at the beginning of the 1990s, with the machine metaphor driving the pressures for state and national policies affecting curriculum and the organic metaphor driving the policies about classroom practices. The impact of the next wave of reform is expected to flatten the bureaucracy as teachers become empowered to develop curriculum at the local level.

Robert McClure, National Education Association, discusses the centralization of curriculum decision making from both a historical perspective and from the current perspective of the largest professional organization for teachers in the nation. His organization has long supported local curriculum development, as it continues to do today. Four issues are discussed regarding how the shift in power to the state has had an impact on teachers and educational practice. In each case, he concludes that the shift has restricted the efficacy of both teachers and educational practice. In conclusion, he describes a current project sponsored by the National Education Association which challenges the centralization of power in the state for curriculum development and places the responsibility for it in the hands of informed local school faculty.

Finally, Frances Klein, University of Southern California, discusses the characteristics, assumptions, and impact of a state-dominated curriculum from her viewpoint as a curriculum theorist. Although

there is a base of support for the movement among some curriculum scholars and practitioners, others are not supportive of the type of curriculum which results from state control. Four issues from curriculum theory are discussed which relate directly to the type of curriculum which can be expected with centralized curriculum development. The contributions of curriculum theory to an enlightened debate on the centralization of curriculum are then placed in a context of broader educational issues.

Two persistent themes emerge from most of the chapters. One is that there has been a significant increase in the centralization of curriculum, particularly at the state level, over recent years. The second theme is that, by and large, the changes in curriculum and educational practices which have occurred as a result of this centralization of decision making have not produced desirable results for teachers or students. Most authors express these two themes, although they differ in how they reach that conclusion and the intensity with which they express their conclusions. Each author, however, makes clear his or her value screen for the evidence presented, and readers will be challenged to consider whether or not they agree with the individual authors.

Through the contributions of each of the authors, it is hoped that readers will evolve a clearer understanding of the timeliness and timelessness of the question, the complexities of the issues involved, and the tremendous impact upon the curriculum, teachers, and students which occurs as a result of the possible answers. The book should be a continuing resource to all those interested and concerned with the question of who makes curriculum decisions as it comes under debate in the future.