

CURRICULUM PLANNING, TEACHING AND LEARNING: An Interrelated Coherence*

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In his initial didactic theory building, Van der Stoep does not give attention to curriculum planning, or the development of a curriculum theory, as an inherent part of a didactic theory (in this regard, see Van der Stoep and Van der Stoep, 1968). On the other hand, Bruner (1966: 72) strongly insists that a didactic theory without a curriculum theory represents fruitless thinking, although he himself neglects, in his theory of instruction, to develop an accountable, or even any curriculum theory (Tanner and Tanner, 1975: 40). These latter two authors refer to the separation of curriculum and instruction as a dualistic position (Kruger, 1980: 35). Consequently, the question arises whether Van der Stoep allowed himself to be caught in this so-called dualistic thinking. This question is discussed during this study, and hopefully is answered adequately.

It appears that Van der Stoep first gave attention to the curriculum aspect of the larger didactic theory building after J. S. Hill earned his doctorate under his guidance with a study of what criteria have accountability for selecting and ordering curriculum content. (Note well the footnote¹ on page 306 (page 396 of English translation) of Van der Stoep and Louw, 1976). Irrespective of Hill's (1974: 20) definition, which Van der Stoep adopted, he apparently also identified himself with the idea of curriculum as a document. (In this respect, also see the reference² in Landman (1985: 49)). The acceptance of curriculum as a document can refer to a distance or separation among curriculum planning, which leads to establishing the document, and the teaching and learning, which are actualized in terms of the guidelines contained in the document.

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¹ "This definition is taken from the work of J. S. Hill: **Kriteria vir die seleksie en ordening van kurrikuluminhoud**. (Unpublished D. Ed. dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, 1974), pp. 20-21."

² "The curriculum is a scientific-accountably designed document that includes selected, ordered and evaluated content as well as didactic considerations that are instrumental to attaining its stated aims in the school's didactic-pedagogic situation."

For Hill, the description of the curriculum as a document is self-evident because, at the time, his curriculum planning function was very focused on designing curricula in terms of documents, mostly syllabi. For one who systematically studies curriculum, as an area of knowledge, it is more than the so-called document. Zais (1976: 10) says of this, for example, “this writer believes that a curriculum can refer either to a written plan for instruction, or to a functioning curriculum which operates to guide and govern the environment, and activities of live classroom situations” [In English]. With reference to Zais’ statement one, therefore, seeks pronouncements which emphasize the continuity between curriculum planning, on the one hand, and teaching and learning, on the other hand.

Beauchamp (1981: 24) goes a step further in his enquiry into what areas are included in the concept curriculum. While he recognizes that curriculum, as an area of study, lacks clear definitions, still he suggests the following three uses of the term curriculum: The first refers to the document compiled to introduce selected cultural content to attain previously specified aims. (This usage corresponds with Hill’s definition). For Beauchamp, a second meaning refers to the curriculum system, and the third to curriculum as an area of research (In this regard, also see Westphalen, 1977: 12).

Thus, in a manner of speaking, it appears that Hill’s (1974) definition is an attenuated view of what curriculum includes, as a problem area. Also, Van der Stoep’s further pronouncement about the concept curriculum planning, seemingly is an attenuation: “Establishing curricular content is known as ‘curriculum planning’, and is described as selecting (and, thus, ordering), and evaluating contents in terms of aims. In this frame of reference curriculum, thus, is the accountable result of curriculum planning, and implies the exercise of curriculum development activities.”

Regarding curriculum planning, as establishing curricular content, there also are authors who have a broader view of curriculum development than merely selecting, ordering, and evaluating learning content, and who include didactic considerations, as such, which Hill could cite. In 1949 Tyler states an additional important principle, in his quest for suitable learning experience, by which

pupils could attain the curriculum aims (Tyler, 1977: 11). Related is the question of the ways in which the selected learning experiences can be ordered to elevate their cumulative effect. In the one case, the curriculum is a list of selected and ordered learning content, and, in the other case, of a cumulative series of learning experience, by which the pupils ought to achieve the stated aims (Kruger, 1980: 65). It is obvious that these two points of departure represent two different curriculum cultures, where the first case is strongly attuned to material forming, and the second to formal, person-directed, forming. However, if one reads what Van der Stoep has to say about the destiny of the selected learning content, each possible reference to an attenuation, or one-sided view disappears when, in reference to Klafki (1954), he introduces the concept of double unlocking into the discussion (Van der Stoep and Louw, 1976: 27/page 32 of English translation). This double unlocking (child for the content and content for the child) lays the foundation for categorical forming, by which the separation between material (learning content-directed) forming and formal (child centric-directed) forming is abolished. For Van der Stoep, accountable curriculum planning only has real formative value if the selected contents qualify as elementals, which have the possibility to be changed into fundamentals in the meaningful world of the learners (Van der Stoep and Louw, 1976: 317/page 409 of English translation).

An expansion of the so-called Tyler model is proposed later by Wheeler. In this, the careful reader can point out a functional relationship among curriculum content, learning experience, and aim. The phases from Wheeler's (1976: 31) five-fold decisional structure are quoted verbatim so their nuances can be illuminated. Curriculum planning embraces:

- “1. The selection of aims, goals, and objectives
2. The selection of learning experiences calculated to help in the attainment of these aims, goals and objectives
3. The selection of content (subject matter) through which certain types of experience may be offered
4. The organization and integration of learning experiences and content with respect to the teaching-learning process

within the school and classroom

5. Evaluation of the effectiveness of all aspects of phases 2, 3 and 4 in attaining the goals detailed in phase 1”.

In this case, learning experiences are selected which are deemed to contribute to attaining the curriculum aims (by the learners). The selected learning experiences clearly contribute to achieving the aims and are not the only way of attaining the stated and concomitant aims. Also, the learning experiences selected must allow for certain types of learning experiences (and not necessarily all the intended, selected learning experiences). In planning the curriculum room, thus, is allowed for learning experience, and learning content which are not necessarily specified in the curriculum document. Room is allowed for the possibility that there are alternative choices which can be made for learning experiences proposed by the curriculum compilers (Barrow, 1938: 38). The alternative possibilities cannot be effectively imported to a place other than the school, or where the curriculum is functional. On this level, close relationships among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning are essential. On the other hand, it also is the case that if there is a prescribed, formal, or compulsory curriculum, a teacher's choice possibilities are limited because of the constraints of the compulsory curricular content (Hopkins, 1987: 192).

However, there always is such a degree of flexibility that there still is authentic curriculum choices on a micro level—meaning, especially in a classroom. Even so, because the responsibility of what occurs in a classroom always remains that of a principal, micro-curriculum planning cannot be viewed apart from meso-curriculum planning, i.e., curriculum planning at the school level. If the initial curriculum planning occurs away from the immediate teaching-learning association, the question remains, regarding ways in which continuity between the guidelines and the aims of the curriculum, and the teaching-learning event, along with its effects, in any way, can be ensured.

With this, I return to later pronouncements of Van der Stoep, in which didactic theory building is very closely linked up with curriculum development. Here, he states, with relevance, that didactic practice is characterized by three fundamental activities,

i.e., curriculum planning (establishing content), teaching (unlocking content), and learning (making the content one's own). He says these three activities are very closely related with each other, and it can be shown that these relationships and, especially their harmony can guarantee positive learning results: "In other words, curriculum planning, unlocking, and learning form a unity without which the positive learning effects cannot be attained" (1976: 317/410 of English translation). It is regarding this pronouncement about the harmonious relationships among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning which I gladly exchange and explicate some thoughts and offer certain implications for both theory and practice (see Hustler, Cassidy and Cuff, 1986: 3).

In the foreword to my M. Ed. Thesis, which I completed in 1974 under the guidance of Van der Stoep, in my expression of thanks, I refer to him as the doyen of didactics in this country (Kruger, 1975: Foreword—Foreword to the M.Ed. thesis not part of translated monograph)). The section where I provide additional commentary, I confirm fully the above laudatory remark. Nowhere else in the South African literature is the necessity of a harmonious relationship among the three fundamental didactic activities so clearly described. As far as levels and linkages are concerned, this pronouncement, to some extent, is unqualified and, therefore, also is problematic, but its validity is beyond doubt—as will become clear later.

One is somewhat hesitant to accept that positive learning results can be guaranteed on any grounds. Didacticians are continually aware of the many variables which play in any didactic situation and, therefore, must be prudent in guaranteeing the desired learning effect will be attained. Thus, this view almost appears to be didactically naïve, until one begins to look at the alternatives. Most certainly, it cannot be considered successful teaching and learning, if curriculum planning (as establishing content) moves in one direction, while teaching and learning move in another.

If one places Van der Stoep's reference to the three fundamental didactic activities against the background of the larger structure of providing instruction, an additional problem arises. Some functions of curriculum planning take place in the superstructures

of the teaching system, while others are carried out nearer to ,or in practice. To bring this aspect of curriculum functioning into closer focus, three levels of curriculum planning are distinguished, i.e., the macro-, the meso-, and the micro-levels. However, there is not complete agreement among different authors, and different part-disciplines regarding the highest and lowest boundaries of these levels. The division by De Corte et al (1981: 4) provides a useful guide. They divide the macro-structure, as the organization of schooling, into different levels of teaching, and school types, together with the organization of providing services, such as auxiliary educative services. For them, the meso-level refers to the internal organization of the school, or (notably) a school community. The organization of concrete teaching processes, in terms of a teaching-learning plan within a class or learning group, for them, forms the micro-structure.

This amplification of levels is needed to show how difficult it is to maintain the interwoven nature of curriculum planning, teaching, and learning, if different functions are performed on different levels. Also, Landman's reference to the epistemological argument that a unitary activity, such as curriculum planning, ought to include both teaching content and didactic guidelines, does not refer to its implication, or to different levels of decision-making (1985: 27). Even Hill (1983), in his reflecting on a definition of a curriculum, assumes a clear connection among the selection and ordering of the learning content, the related didactic guidelines, and their fulfillment in the didactic-pedagogic situation, without appropriately scrutinizing very carefully the preservation of the harmony, which then must be brought about on a variety of levels, although this certainly must have been an implicit aim.

In the highly centralized curriculum framework in the RSA, the basic, or primary curriculum development usually is carried out by executive government teachers, with the help of specially established bureaus of curriculum development, with or without the meaningful cooperation by schools and teachers (see Kruger and Muller, 1987: 24). In this way, there arises, both physically and in decision-making ways, a distance among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning. The distance does not necessarily disturb the harmony, but it will seem as if a purposeful attempt must be

made to maintain the harmonious relationships among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning. This requirement means that there is an obligation for each decision maker in the chain of curriculum planning and implementation, to bring about the least possible disturbance of the harmony. The participants on the macro-level of curriculum research and development obviously also must realize that their intervention is a pedagogic activity, and that their adjustments for practice must try to give rise to pedagogical nearness, in the form of actualizable pedagogical essences (Landman, 1985: 164). The inclination toward rigidity and following prescriptions must be equally strongly suppressed as inadequate guidelines. The persons in control of the centralized curriculum bureaus must continually confront themselves, and those under them, with the question: What is done to ensure the relationships among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning?

If one looks at this matter from a micro-level, another perspective is uncovered. Two activities, i.e., teaching and learning, cannot function on any other level. Curriculum planning can't either, but there still must be further reflection about the curriculum planning occurring on the micro-level (Kruger and Muller, 1987: 27). It is shown that the initial selection and ordering of learning content is done on the macro-level. The micro-level function, then is a re-curriculum planning, which involves a second or further ordering. The burden now rests on a teacher to maintain the close relationships which must exist among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning. Therefore, with respect to a theme which appears in the work scheme (lesson plan), where a teacher must choose content, there is selecting, ordering, and evaluating the content (Van der Stoep and Louw, 1976: 317/409 of English translation). According to these authors, a teacher must know what the criteria are for "the effective, and meaningful curriculum planning of content" to properly carry out their curriculum planning function.

If a teacher is not able to maintain the unity among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning then, according to Van der Stoep and Louw, the chances are that positive learning effects will not be attained. (In this regard, see Kruger's [1975: 30/47 of English translation] reference to the fundamentals). The literature is full of

examples of possibly disturbing the three basic didactic activities. For example, Skilbeck (1987: 18) makes a case for school-based curriculum development. According to him, a school is the appropriate place to undertake curriculum development because this is where the pupil and teacher encounter each other. He proceeds to a group of six claims regarding the micro-level of curriculum development. What is interesting about this pronouncement by Skilbeck (*loc. cit.*) is the assertion that there must be room for support from the central education authorities for the school's curriculum planning attempts. Also, Skilbeck does not refer specifically to the fact that the harmony among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning might be harmed by this supportive help.

Zais (1976: 476) views the positions of some authors regarding a teacher's importance as curriculum functionaries to be a bit far-fetched, to say the least. According to him, there will be scarcely enough time remaining to carry out the other two fundamental activities, if a teacher's time and attention are taken up by his/her involvement with all aspects of improving, and implementing the curriculum. Still, it is irrefutably certain that a teacher's role in the total curriculum planning process is of decisive importance. What finally results from any curriculum is what a teacher makes of it. This irrefutable truth has led some curriculum compilers to grope for an alternative, which has come to be known as a teacher-proof curriculum. This far-fetched point of departure would give the exclusive right of establishing curriculum to the curriculum specialist. It is a consequence of this attitude, that a teacher's participation in establishing, and improving curriculum (including improved implementation) has been neglected for so long. A teacher, as main functionary in implementing curriculum, even now, in some circles, is not considered as a primary participant but, according to Zais (1976: 477), his/her role is determined by the curriculum specialists, who so insist on their decision-making prerogative that they do not hesitate to disturb the harmonious progression of the stream of curriculum planning.

One would readily rub under the nose of the international curriculum association the pronouncement by Van der Stoep on the

mutual dependency of the three fundamental activities of Didactic Pedagogics, with his implicit warning that a discontinuity, or disharmony among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning effectively excludes positive learning effects.

Attempts now are underway worldwide to consider and describe the pertinent role of a teacher. There is increasing acknowledgment of the key role played by teachers in the total curriculum event. Whitely (Zais, 1976: 478) describes attempts made in Canada to meaningfully involve teachers in this regard (Westphalen, 1977: 21). The five “elements” of this approach appear to be a possible breakthrough with respect to a truly professional way to meaningfully involve teachers. This begins with the pre-implementation phase, by which “a great number of teachers are involved”. The aim of this phase is to allow the teachers to already experience an integration of the old and the new or changed curriculum. The actions bring the teachers (all?) and curriculum compilers together to discuss the philosophical, sociological, technological, psychological, and evaluative foundations of the “new” curriculum. In addition, the curricular implications of each of the above areas of reality are explained. Finally, this pre-implementation phase is not merely directed to the later smooth implementation of the curriculum, but to the professional growth of the teachers. This latter aim of the Canadian curriculum compilers, now is widely accepted in curriculum circles, i.e., that professional growth must be sought by means of participation in, training in, and involvement in curriculum design.

The results of the attempts reported by Whiteley (Zais, 1976: 478) are not available. However, it seems that there are good intentions to show teachers the ropes in the so-called pre-implementation phase, because of the enmeshed aims of this well-intentioned project. However this may be, the involvement of the teachers must be obtained, to a very large degree, to work against the discontinuity in drawing up the curriculum design (Kruger, 1980: 15). Even though it seems to be impractical to involve all teachers in all attempts at curriculum design, still there is always the possibility to involve schools and teachers in ways by which there is such a representation that continuity among curriculum planning, teaching, and learning can be maintained as far as possible. The

modest pronouncement by Van der Stoep, thus, is a principle for a fruitful practice of designing curriculum.

With this, the discussion of the different perspectives on the three fundamental didactic activities is ended. Hopefully, the reader has gotten the impression of the didactic necessity for a close connection among these activities. From a macro-viewpoint, the challenges for establishing a harmonious relation is different from the meso- or micro-levels of curriculum planning, or implementation. Much work is yet to be done to succeed in establishing this harmonious relation in the total context of curricular provisions, and in all cases. In these attempts, Van der Stoep's pronouncement that one can only succeed at providing education if the three basic activities of curriculum planning, teaching, and learning form a harmonious unity.

Floris van der Stoep stepped into a period where the realization of this ideal still is in the future. The guidelines which he has established in this regard, however, will continually enjoy consideration in a search for the effective and meaningful provision of education. One will feel more secure in this search, if he/she knows that an original and authoritative thinker, such as Floris van der Stoep, still walks on the same path with you.

AUTHOR'S ENGLISH SUMMARY

[Edited slightly]

Curriculum, teaching, and learning: An interrelated coherence

This paper focuses on the contribution of F. van der Stoep to the development of a curriculum theory, in the Republic of South Africa. His principal commitment, as is generally known, is the development of a didactic theory. His earlier writings, therefore, created the impression that he did not regard curriculum theory as an integral part of a comprehensive didactic theory. This is in stark contrast to educationists like Jerome Bruner who, as far back as 1966, took it for granted that a theory of instruction also included considerations of the nature of the curriculum, the knowledge it contains, the way the knowledge is presented, and the learner, or knower, to use his term. By 1976, Van der Stoep includes a chapter

on curriculum in his, and co-author Louw's book: *An Introduction to Didactical Pedagogics* (Author's translation of the Afrikaans title of the book).

At this early stage, Van der Stoep follows certain tenets laid down by J. S. Hill, who had been a doctoral student of his. Hill was head of a curriculum development section of a large department of education at the time. It is, therefore, a logical thing for him to refer to the curriculum as a document, a description, which Van der Stoep duly adopted, without making provision for another approach, i.e., that curriculum can also mean a series of planned learning experiences as several acknowledged authors in the field believe. Add to this that Van der Stoep, stemming from the German psychological school of thought, preferred to think of the curriculum as selected and ordered content.

For any reader who does not realize with what awesome logic, and penetrative ability Van der Stoep reflected on, and duly described the didactic situation, his later postulates might come as a surprise. For, once he did come to the point where curriculum theory is included in his didactic theory building, and description, he expressed himself with the same authority which hitherto had characterized his didactic propositions. In the first instance, he introduced Klafki's theory of categorical forming – a basic concept in all didactic thinking. Categorical forming is the only approach which will enable the curriculum developer to steer away from either materialistic (content oriented) or formalistic (predominantly child oriented) curricula. Van der Stoep subsequently introduces another theory, i.e., the theory of the elemental and the fundamental. This theory is based on the premise that the essentials of the learning content should be the focal point of didactic endeavor. In fruitful teaching-learning situations, these chosen essentials, or elementals, are assimilated, or acquired by a learner, transforming the elementals into fundamentals, or meaningful reality. The object of all curricula would, thus, be to present content in such a manner that a learner can acquire the appropriate fundamentals. Curriculum content, thus, must be chosen for its educative value, characterized by the possibility of effective educative impact (Van der Stoep and Louw, 1976: 317).

This paved the way for Van der Stoep's analysis of didactic practice, as distinguished by three fundamental activities: curriculum design (selecting content), teaching (unlocking content), and learning (acquiring content). These three didactic activities are closely related and should operate in harmony. Van der Stoep goes so far as to say that this harmony between curriculum design, teaching, and learning will guarantee positive learning results. The author reasons that it appears to be risky to speak of guaranteeing learning results, given the wide range of variables influencing the teaching-learning act. On the other hand, it is also apparent that there is no way any positive learning can be achieved where discord between curriculum design, teaching, and learning exists.

The author subsequently pursues a line of thought which the three basic didactic activities are mostly performed or enacted on different levels of providing education. Thus, in a highly centralized system (as in the RSA), the primary curriculum planning activities are conducted on the macro level, while the other two activities take place on a micro (or classroom) level. Maintaining the desired harmony among the fundamental didactic activities, consequently, poses quite a problem. Centralized institutions of curriculum planning should be constantly aware of the fact that they should operate in close liaison with the other participants in the field of didactic endeavor.

A school of thought is developing in which curricular design should be done at the classroom level. This might diminish the chances of causing an imbalance among the didactic activities and bring us closer to Van der Stoep's ideal.

The author agrees with the idea that more curricular decision-making should rest with the schools, and especially with teachers, but points out that this approach also has its problems, notably ineptitude, and unwillingness by teachers themselves to take on the added responsibility of providing, and reviewing curriculum contents.

Once the truth of Van der Stoep's fundamental postulate is accepted, one can start looking into ways and means of securing the desired harmonious relationships among curriculum planning,

teaching, and learning. There is still a long way to go before such harmony can be achieved throughout the entire educative system. It would be a pity to have to walk this way without a person with the insight and authority of Floris van der Stoep.

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