CURRICULUM, SCHOOLING AND SOCIETY IN HONG KONG

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Studying the Curriculum

Changes to the curriculum of schools are a regular feature of life in Hong Kong. In the past twenty years, for instance, there have been several reforms affecting the school curriculum as a whole, and many examples of changes to parts of the curriculum. Some of the reforms which have had a significant impact include comprehensive curriculum reforms, such as the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC), *Learning to Learn* (2001) and the New Senior Secondary Curriculum, including the change to a 3-3-4 structure for secondary and tertiary education (2009); assessment reforms, including school-based assessment and a reorientation towards *assessment for learning*; reforms that seek to cater for diverse learning needs; and language policy reforms, most notably the move to promote mother-tongue instruction (1998) and the "fine-tuning" of the language policy (2009). At the same time, there have been various policies to enhance the professional quality of teachers (e.g., policies to create an all-graduate, all-trained teaching force; tests of teachers' language and information technology proficiency; training programmes for school leaders; and the introduction of the Quality Education Fund to stimulate school-based initiatives).

The purpose of this book is to explain and use the tools of curriculum analysis to examine both the nature of the school curriculum in Hong Kong and the ongoing agenda to reform the curriculum. We also look at what actually happens in Hong Kong schools and why. These are fundamental questions in the field of curriculum studies. While the questions may seem simple, the answers are not. One of our goals is to demonstrate the complexity of curriculum problems and issues, the alternatives and the extent to which they are dependent on the historical, political, economic and social contexts, and, most importantly, the underlying perspectives, or assumptions, of those who promote their solutions.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of curriculum studies — the nature of *curriculum*, the scope of curriculum studies, and different ways of perceiving and researching curriculum issues — and we set out the approach that underpins this book.

The Nature of Curriculum

> [The secondary school] curriculum consists of a common core and, combined with the curriculum at the primary level, provides students with an integrated curriculum for nine years of free, compulsory and universal education. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 1996, 142)

> The primary school curriculum has been reviewed to incorporate the Target Oriented Curriculum elements across all subject curricula. A new curriculum for primary mathematics was developed. … In order to enhance primary school teachers' abilities to implement the curriculum framework … a curriculum package entitled 'Learning and Teaching 2000' was developed. *(Hong Kong Yearbook* 2000, 156)

> In 2002, … the CDC [Curriculum Development Council] developed the *Basic Education Curriculum Guide* setting out the themes essential for curriculum development throughout schools. At the primary education level, school curriculum leaders have been appointed to support primary school heads to lead curriculum development. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2004, 170)

> The curriculum reform is the core component of education reforms. It aims to motivate students to learn, to enhance their knowledge and abilities, and develop in them positive values and attitudes to establish a solid foundation for lifelong learning and whole-person development. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2005, 182)

> The school curriculum in Hong Kong is founded on five essential learning experiences: moral and civic education, intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development and career-related experiences for lifelong learning and whole-person development of students. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2006, 157)

The above quotations show the many different ways in which the term *curriculum* is used. We can see that it is used to refer to the planned content of learning for various levels of schooling (e.g., primary and secondary), for specific school subjects (e.g., mathematics), learning experiences (e.g., moral and civic education), for specific school reforms (e.g., the New Senior Secondary Curriculum), and for certain groups of pupils (e.g., the "underachievers" and the academically gifted).

Just as there are a variety of ways in which the term is used, there are many different definitions of the term *curriculum*. The word has its roots in the Latin word *currere* (to run), and refers to "a race course" or "a running track". The key parts of seven definitions are shown on p. 3:

- … the *disciplined study of permanent subjects* such as grammar, logic and reading that best embody essential knowledge.
- … should consist entirely of knowledge which comes from the *established disciplines.*
- … all the *planned learning outcomes* for which the school is responsible.
- … the *experiences the learner has* under the guidance of the school.
- … those subjects that are *most useful for living in contemporary society*.
- … a passage of *personal transformation* (for both the teacher and the pupil).
- … the questioning of the status quo and *the search for a better society*.

We can see that the definitions vary considerably. The first two focus on the nature of what we teach, the third on the planned outcomes or goals of schooling, and the fourth on pupils' experiences and activities in school. The fifth definition focuses on the needs of society; the sixth focuses on the process of change for individuals; and the last definition focuses on the need for critical inquiry and improvement of the human condition.

This variety of definitions reflects the fact that the field of curriculum studies, like the uses of the term itself, covers a wide range of concerns and activities. Curriculum can include a consideration of the purposes of schooling within a particular society, what we teach, how we teach, both what is planned and unplanned, and it can focus on the outcomes of schooling or on its processes. Each of these different emphases has to be taken into consideration if we are to study and improve the curriculum.

The most basic questions which are addressed in developing the curriculum are: What knowledge is most worthwhile, why should it be taught and how can it be learnt? How a society answers these questions — which relate to the *content* of the curriculum, its *purpose* and its *organization* — has a major influence on what pupils learn and how they are taught. In turn, pupils' experiences in school help to determine their beliefs and who they are. This is clearly recognized in Hong Kong where the government has stated that the school curriculum "defines the views of society about 'what is worth learning'" (Curriculum Development Council 2001, 19).

There are a large number of different groups of people working in the field of curriculum. These include the staff of the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI), textbook and materials writers and publishers, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), the Education Bureau (EDB), educational psychologists and counsellors, and most importantly the thousands of teachers, teaching assistants and school administrators who engage with the curriculum each day as they attempt to help pupils to learn.

The Scope of Curriculum Studies

As the curriculum operates in different ways and exists at different levels, there is not a single curriculum. A country or a state has a curriculum. A school has a curriculum which includes all the pupils' experiences across a range of subjects. Every class and every pupil has slightly different experiences. We can also talk about the curriculum for a group of similar subjects such as science, the curriculum of a single subject, and the curriculum for a specific group of pupils such as the gifted. We are therefore faced with a wide range of events at different levels which come together under the word *curriculum*. Below we identify some of the major forms or foci of the school curriculum each of which provides a different perspective for analyzing it.

The intended curriculum

This is the plan which spells out the intentions with regards to the three key elements of the curriculum, namely what teachers should teach and pupils should learn, why, and how it should be organized. In Hong Kong the *intended curriculum* is set out in key documents such as *Learning to Learn* (Curriculum Development Council 2001). We also have documents which describe the *intended curriculum* for levels of schooling and for each school subject. The curriculum guide for each school subject published by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) explains to teachers the aims of the subject, what to teach and it also advises on appropriate teaching and assessment methods. Essentially the *intended curriculum* is an official plan of what those who have the power to make decisions want the younger generation to learn, how it should be organized and why.

A distinction is also sometimes made between two aspects of the planned curriculum. That which is planned and goes on during the timetabled periods is sometimes referred to as the *formal curriculum*. Those planned school activities which are not part of the subject timetable such as sports activities, outside speakers and school trips are sometimes referred to as the *informal curriculum*.

The implemented curriculum

Curriculum plans are not always achieved in practice. For instance, schools, for various reasons, may have their own interpretation of the curriculum, while teachers often have to cope with multiple demands and unexpected events, which means that the intentions are not always achieved. Moreover, many curriculum plans are statements of an ideal which is difficult to achieve in practice because the necessary

resources, time or skills are not available. The study of the curriculum is also concerned with what actually goes on in classrooms and what pupils learn in schools. This is sometimes called the *implemented curriculum,* the *taught curriculum* or the *experienced curriculum.* Furthermore, not everything taught and learnt in school is tested in the relevant examinations. That which is tested is referred to as the *tested* or *assessed curriculum.*

　　Because of the gap between the *intended curriculum* and the *implemented curriculum*, teachers should not be viewed as technicians whose job is only to deliver a pre-packaged curriculum. Teachers play a key role in determining the implemented curriculum as they make decisions every day about what pupils should learn, how they can learn it, and how it should be assessed. A teacher's personal beliefs, goals and practices are a key influence on the implemented curriculum. Schools in Hong Kong also make a number of key decisions which affect the curriculum, such as whether pupils should be taught in mixed ability groups or in streamed classes. To put it another way: the curriculum is not wholly determined by the government or its key agency, the CDI. This is acknowledged in the reform document, *Learning to Learn*, published by the CDC in 2001:

> The school curriculum defines the views of society about 'what is worth learning', commensurate with students' abilities at different stages and with their ways of perceiving and learning about the world.
>
> We have to move away from the concept of the curriculum as "documents" to the concept of the curriculum as "learning experiences" to enhance the effectiveness of learning.
>
> Learning experiences are a nexus of
> ⇨ aims
> ⇨ learning processes
> ⇨ learning contents
> ⇨ social environment

> (Curriculum Development Council 2001, 19)

The hidden curriculum

Schools sometimes teach pupils attitudes and skills which are not part of any plan. For example, pupils might learn to be selfish, racist or sexist. These attitudes might be conveyed through educational practices such as encouraging competition amongst pupils, ability grouping, teacher-pupil relationships, classroom rules, the content of textbooks, sex role differentiation of pupils and the reward structure

in schools. The pupils might also learn in school to be passive or to have a very low opinion of themselves, or even to be prepared for a certain social status in life — a study by Anyon (1980), for instance, showed how teaching differed even in elementary schools for different social classes, with school for the working class focused on mechanical, rote learning, whilst elitist schools asked students to think independently.

The social roles, attitudes and values which pupils learn that are not planned are referred to as the *hidden* (or *covert*) *curriculum*. The values and attitudes which pupils learn from the *hidden curriculum* are potentially very powerful and could be positive or negative, depending on the viewpoint one adopts.

The null curriculum

In planning a curriculum we make decisions about the content, skills and attitudes we want pupils to learn because, hopefully, we have decided that they are "worthwhile". We also make decisions about what should not be included in the curriculum. Some topics might simply be excluded from the curriculum because time is limited or because those who plan the curriculum believe that pupils should not learn the topic. For example, in the USA, some religious groups have argued that schools should not teach the theory of evolution because they do not believe in it. The content, skills and attitudes that we decide not to include in the curriculum is termed the *null curriculum*. Eisner (1994, 97) argues that

> … what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach. Ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems.

The concept of the null curriculum is important in Hong Kong because the curriculum of many subjects has avoided the inclusion of topics which were seen to be politically sensitive (Stimpson 1991). We will examine this in more detail in Chapter 6.

The outside curriculum

Education takes place over our whole lifetime, not just in schools. We learn from our families, friends, the internet, the media and from our workplaces. Just as school curricula have *intended*, *implemented*, *null* and *hidden* elements, so do the

many "curricula" which exist outside schools. Increasingly curriculum scholars are analyzing the multiple curricula which surround us both inside and outside schools and which have an influence on what we learn and who we are. In this book we will focus on the curriculum of schools but it is important to remember that there are many other influences outside the school which have a powerful effect on what pupils learn.

These points indicate that the study of curriculum is a large, amorphous and ill-defined field (Marsh 2009). It includes the study of what we plan to do and why we do it, what happens in practice and the context in which the curriculum operates. This suggests that the study of curriculum lies at the heart of the study of education, and is linked to the concerns of many other disciplines such as philosophy, sociology and psychology.

However, while philosophers, sociologists and psychologists are all concerned with various questions about schooling, they tend to focus on one aspect of it. Psychologists mainly focus on the nature of learning, philosophers on the aims of education, and sociologists on the links between schooling and society. The study of the curriculum tries to bring these various concerns together and thus analyzes schooling using a range of perspectives.

Studying the Curriculum

Given the considerations outlined above we can now identify the key topics and questions which are addressed in the study of curriculum. These are:

a. Curriculum Intentions: What knowledge is considered most worthwhile?
b. The Content of the Curriculum
c. Delivering the Curriculum
d. Assessing the Curriculum

⎤ THE BASIC OR FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS

e. Curriculum Policy and Planning
f. How is it arranged?
g. How is it assessed?
h. Does it work and how can it be improved?

⎤ TECHNICAL ASPECTS

i. Who makes these decisions?
j. Are the decisions implemented?
k. What are the influences on the curriculum?
l. Who benefits from the curriculum?
m. What are the future priorities?

⎤ SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS

The first four questions are concerned with the most *fundamental or basic components* of any curriculum. When we select certain subjects and topics for pupils to study, we have decided that they are the most worthwhile knowledge available under the circumstances and we should be able to explain why it is worthwhile. If we are not able to do this, then the schooling we provide has no defensible rationale or purpose. Similarly, the teaching and assessment methods we advocate are justifiable if we believe that they are the most effective means available to help pupils learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes that we have selected as worthwhile and to assess their understanding (Schubert 1997).

Questions e, f and g focus on more *technical issues* which are concerned with how a curriculum should be planned, organized and improved. Questions h, i, j and k relate to *social and political aspects* of the curriculum.

The different views of the curriculum which we identified above reflect very different perceptions people have of the nature of society and what is considered worthwhile. It is important to recognize, as noted earlier, that there is not a single way of analyzing the curriculum which is generally accepted. Unlike the study of mathematics or some branches of science, there are no generally accepted universal truths or methods of analysis in the study of the curriculum. Instead, there are different approaches to or traditions of curriculum research. Elliott (1996) identifies three research traditions, which he terms the *technical-rational*, *critical-social* and *experimental-innovative* research.

The *technical-rational* tradition of research views the curriculum as a programme of learning that can be rationally planned and implemented in the light of pre-specified objectives. Goodson (1994) has described this tradition as based on a belief in the "science of education", which implies a technological view of school knowledge. He criticizes this tradition as being preoccupied with setting out prescriptions and guidelines.

The *critical-social* tradition is concerned with answering very fundamental questions about the curriculum, such as who constructed it, what sort of knowledge is valued, and who benefits from the curriculum. Central to these questions is a view that the school curriculum is not a neutral object, but is a product of social and political forces in society and that those in power tend to define the nature of the curriculum. Recent developments in critical-social theories and sociology have contributed to the development of a movement called "postmodernism". Postmodernism refers to a range of ideas, and the movement is subject to different interpretations, even from those who advocate it. Basically, postmodernists reject the traditional idea of "objective" or "certain" knowledge. Instead, they argue that knowledge is socially constructed and linked to the exercise of power. Hence, truth is ideological in nature. In line with postmodernism's stress on pluralism and the contextual nature of understanding, Slattery (2006, 192) argues that curriculum development

> in the postmodern era emphasizes discourses that promote
> understanding of the cultural, historical, political, ecological,
> aesthetic, theological and autobiographical impact … rather than the
> planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of context-free and
> value-neutral schooling events and trivial information.

The *experimental-innovative* tradition is primarily concerned with improving the quality of learning. It is strongly associated with the work of Stenhouse (1975) and Elliott (1996), which stresses the role of the teacher as a researcher, and the value of action research as a means for teachers to improve the quality and effectiveness of the implemented curriculum.

We will see examples of each of these traditions in this book as different chapters focus on topics which are more central to different traditions. Linked to these traditions are various research perspectives that are commonly found in the social sciences are evident in the study of education: *empirical*, *interpretive* and *critical* perspectives. The *empirical* or *positivist perspective* focuses on trying to obtain and analyze data which describes how the curriculum operates. The *interpretive perspective* is concerned with trying to make sense of the way the curriculum operates in society, the influences on it and its functions. The *critical perspective* addresses the normative question — how should the curriculum be changed to create a more just, equal and moral society. Clearly these perspectives are derived from very different assumptions and judgements about both why we should study the curriculum and the appropriate methods to use.

Another key distinction used in the social sciences — that between positivist and normative analysis — is also evident in curriculum studies. A normative approach is concerned with what should happen in schools, while a positivist approach is concerned with what actually happens in schools. It is important to be clear which approach is being used as they can produce very different answers to the questions. Many discussions on the curriculum are confusing because one person is focusing on what should happen while the other is concerned with how things are in practice.

Another way of distinguishing the specific ways of analyzing the curriculum is provided by Reid (1992) and by Marsh and Willis (1995). They distinguish between four key conceptions that people hold in terms of two criteria: the extent to which existing social institutions are seen as determining the nature of an individual's behaviour, and whether we analyze curricula in terms of predetermined theories or principles. The main features of the four conceptions are summarized below.

Systematizers or System Maintainers: They focus on the idea of a curriculum as a plan or blueprint for activities, and expect schools and individuals to implement it unproblematically. They use curriculum aims to determine the details of the plan and spend a great amount of time defining what should be in the various components

of the curriculum plan. The focus is on the parts of the curriculum, especially the identification of objectives, the design of programmes to achieve them and the evaluation of their effectiveness. The curriculum analyst is seen as a specialist who has the essentially technical job of keeping the machine running smoothly and helping teachers and schools to implement the master plan. In essence, the education system and its curriculum are broken down into and analyzed as part of a complex planned system, but the system itself and the plan are viewed as unproblematic and therefore accepted and taken for granted.

Radicals or System Changers: They are the opposite of systematizers, for they believe that the system is not operating efficiently or fairly and requires radical change. The curriculum is seen, along with other social institutions such as the legal system, as a political tool which reproduces the existing social order which oppresses the majority or certain sectors of the population. A great deal of radical analysis is concerned with identifying how schools in general, and the curriculum in particular, play a part in establishing and maintaining the unequal distribution of power in society. Their concern is with analyzing what the curriculum is for rather than with trying to make it work. Central to radical analyses is the strong use of an *a priori* or predetermined theoretical position. This means that they start with a view of the role of education in society and search for evidence to support that viewpoint.

Existentialists — Focus on Individuals: They share the radicals' view that the curriculum should be viewed critically, but they do not share their view that this can be explained solely by reference to the role of education as a vehicle for social oppression. They are more concerned with the individual's lived experience of education in general, and schooling in particular. The broad generalizations and macro explanations of radicals are replaced by a concern with individual experiences, personal growth and consciousness. For some people, the curriculum is liberating; for others it may be oppressive. They thus tend to focus on areas of analysis concerned with the individual and how one can improve one's position, for example, psychoanalysis, biography and gender studies. They do not start with a strong predetermined theoretical position, but tend to try to generate theory from specific concrete cases.

Deliberators — Focus on the Practical: These avoid seeing the curriculum as a plan, a system of social control or a personal experience. They see the study of the curriculum as the discovery of problems, deliberation on those problems and inventing solutions to the problems. They focus then on the way in which plans can be realized in schools and classrooms that are recognized as different and to a degree unique. In effect, this is a compromise perspective and to a degree a contradictory one. It sees plans and institutions as limited; it accepts differences between schools and individuals, and it is concerned with problems and actions.

Each of these four perspectives provides a different way of analyzing the curriculum. However, it is clear that different areas of curriculum analysis have been more influenced by some of these perspectives than others. For example, the analysis of the basic technical questions we identified on pp. 7–8 has been strongly influenced by systematizers; the social and political aspects of school curricula have been more influenced by radicals; the analysis of teaching methods, school improvement and staff development have been the focus of concern of deliberators and existentialists. Each of these conceptions represents a different philosophy about the nature of society and social action. The need is to recognize both the philosophy which underlines an analytical perspective and an awareness that alternative perspectives and interpretations exist.

Complexity, Society and Curriculum Dilemmas

The study of the curriculum will not provide us with a set of simple and certain answers for the fundamental curriculum questions. Although we need not accept all the postmodernists' claims, it may be worth following their advice to be sceptical of simple solutions to educational problems, especially those solutions which are dressed in a cloak of science! The curriculum is strongly connected with all aspects of the wider society in which it exists, especially the political system. People have different values and do not always agree on what knowledge is most worthwhile; and some people have the power to make decisions about the curriculum whilst others are relatively powerless. An education system, with the curriculum at the centre, is therefore a site where different groups in society compete to ensure that their views about what should be taught to the new members of society prevail. As Apple (1999, 13) explains:

> [A]s inherently part of a set of political institutions, the educational system will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles about the meaning of democracy, about definitions of legitimate culture, and about who should benefit most from government policies and practices.

It follows from this that studying the curriculum cannot be undertaken without reference to people's values and to political considerations. For example, what knowledge is most worthwhile, whether education is provided free and who receives education are questions that are influenced by the nature of society. Educational research might provide more information and allow for greater efficiency, but it does not provide simple answers to the fundamental questions. Educational research can be used to support a preconceived viewpoint. For example, a person who believes

that Cantonese should be used as the medium of instruction could gather data to show that pupils learn more effectively when they use their mother tongue. In contrast, a person who believes that English should be used could collect data which shows that pupils who have received instruction in English have better opportunities for further study and employment prospects.

What the above example demonstrates is that many disagreements about the curriculum are essentially dilemmas rather than problems or issues. Ogawa, Crowson and Goldring (1999, 278) define dilemmas as:

> … neither problems to be solved nor issues to be faced. Problems are presumed solvable; issues can be negotiated and are thus resolvable … [D]ilemmas reveal deeper, more fundamental dichotomies. They present a situation with equally valued alternatives. As a result dilemmas cannot be solved or resolved.

Tyack and Cuban (1995, 43) identify five contradictory purposes for education. They argue that Americans want schools:

- to produce young people who are obedient but on the other hand they also expect schools to ensure that they are critical and creative citizens;
- to pass on academic knowledge drawn from the past, but to also teach practical and marketable skills for the future;
- to encourage co-operation, but teach pupils to compete with one another;
- to stress basic skills but also develop creativity and higher-order thinking; and
- to focus on "core" knowledge, while permitting a wide range of subject choice.

These dilemmas are never completely solved and the outcome is usually a compromise which shifts over time between alternatives that are valued differently by different groups in society.

This book draws separately upon the three traditions — technical-rationalist, critical-social and experimental-innovative — in analyzing the historical, political, economic and social influences on the curriculum. Political and economic developments in China have been especially influential on the Hong Kong school curriculum. Figure 1.1 illustrates the historical interrelationship of these forces. However, it needs to be noted that these forces are not just limited to China's influence on schools and the curriculum in Hong Kong: political and economic forces also exist at the global level and at the micro-level within Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the relationship is not just in one direction. The influences affect schooling, and are affected by schooling. Thus, for example, schooling has been affected by the economy, while the competitive examination system has served to reinforce values consistent with a highly competitive economy. Also, the schools have provided the economy with skilled and educated workers who have enabled

Social

Rapid rise in refugees/migrants from the
    Mainland
Religious/missionary bodies
Young and rapidly growing population
Emergence of middle class
Decreasing family size and prevalence
    of nuclear families
Emergence of a Hong Kong identity and
    culture
Strengthening of identity with the
    Mainland

Political

Colonial political system
Belated and limited process of democratization
Concern over consequences of communist rule
International agreements (e.g., minimum
    working age)
Political instability in the 1960s
Changes in political realities of the PRC (e.g.,
    Cultural Revolution and the subsequent
    modernization programme)
Return to Chinese sovereignty from 1997
Government priorities to promote political
    stability and economic prosperity

Schools and the curriculum

Economic

Free market philosophy and practice
Shifts from entrepôt to manufacturing to service-led economy
Influx of refugees providing cheap labour and some capital
Efficient infrastructure (banking, insurance, communications, etc.)
Thriving economy
Sensitivity of the economy to global changes (e.g., the Asian Economic Crisis
    of 1997 and the banking crisis of 2008–09)
Emergence and opening up of China as the world's main manufacturing centre

Figure 1.1   Historical influences on schools and the curriculum in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's economy to develop, and thus reinvest in raising the quality of education in a virtuous circle.

    At this stage, we should define the scope of this book. As Bray and Yamato (2003) note, there are dozens of curricula operating in schools within the Hong Kong SAR, if we take into account all the international and private schools that have links to different education systems. Our concern is with the curriculum that is formulated by the EDB for implementation in schools that fall under its aegis. We will look at the interaction between various societal forces and this school curriculum.

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.1 will be used in the following chapters as we address the questions about the Hong Kong curriculum that are listed on p. 7. In each chapter we identify and analyze the different factors which influence the answers to these questions in Hong Kong. Each chapter considers a different aspect of the Hong Kong curriculum, such as issues relating to the intended curriculum (Chapters 2–4), the implemented curriculum (Chapters 5–6) and the assessed curriculum (Chapter 7). We also look at language policy across all aspects of the curriculum (Chapter 8), curriculum evaluation (Chapter 9) and, in the final chapter, we draw together some of the themes emerging from the book. The structure of this book is spiral, which means that certain topics are revisited, albeit from a different angle. For example, in Chapter 2 we examine questions concerning the content of the curriculum, and then, in Chapter 4, we analyze how that content can be organized.

At the end of each chapter there are questions for you to consider. Our purpose is to encourage you to recognize that "certain" and "simple" answers to questions about how we educate our children are dangerous, for they deny the complex nature of human societies and their curricula.

Questions

1. The Curriculum Development Council (1993a, 7) defined a curriculum in the following terms: "A school curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organizational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils".

    The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (2009, ACSA principles for Australian curriculum, para. 2) states:

    > Curriculum involves what is taught (knowledge, understandings, skills, values); how it is taught (pedagogy, teaching style); and how it is assessed (assessment, testing, reporting). Curriculum shapes and is shaped by social, political, economic and historical forces. It involves the selection, interpretation and implementation of culturally-based knowledge, skills, values and beliefs.

    Compare these definitions. What are the similarities and differences? What would be your definition of a curriculum?

2. Select a specific school subject and use the table on p. 15 to identify the main features of the planned, implemented and hidden curriculum in a specific context. What are the influences on the implemented and hidden curriculum?

Main features of / School subject	The planned curriculum	The implemented curriculum	The hidden curriculum

3. Can you identify any "dilemma" which affects the curriculum of your school or of schools in Hong Kong?

⬛▶ **Further Reading**

A comprehensive overview and analysis of the nature and development of the curriculum is provided by Connelly, He and Phillion (2008) and Marsh (2009). For more on approaches to research in curriculum studies see Adamson and Morris (2007). Tyack and Cuban (1995) provide a clear analysis of the dilemmas facing education systems.

For details of the reform agenda in Hong Kong, see *Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* by the Education Commission (2000). Various documents are also available at the following websites:

http://www.hkedcity.net/main/reform/
http://www.edb.gov.hk/

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