

Philosophical Foundations for Curriculum Decision

A Reflective Analysis

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Abstract

This paper discusses the author's curriculum experiences under different philosophical, epistemological and theoretical backdrops. The analysis of different perspectives bridges epistemological and philosophical/theoretical lenses to my understanding of curriculum and different curricular decisions. This praxeological experience as a student and then as a teacher within the context of tension between traditional goal oriented curriculum to backward design from goals to action oriented curriculum portrays the landscape of my curriculum images under different circumstances and practices.

Introduction

What are different philosophical/theoretical bases for curriculum decisions? How these philosophies/theories impact on curriculum decisions? These are the main questions that I would like to address in this paper. The concepts of this paper originated from my graduate course work, but I was not able to organize in a logical form in the course paper. I was interested to organize my thoughts in relation to what I studied in various graduate courses. I was not sure from where I need to begin, and where I need to stop. I was perplexed for a few months to lay a foundation for this paper. Should I begin from Shubert's curriculum images or should I begin from Martin and Loomis's descriptions of philosophical foundations? I thought it would be worth of considering how different people view curriculum (as

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metaphors) and then discuss why they viewed curriculum in such ways philosophically. This will certainly help me to look at my own curriculum perspectives and practices as a teacher and as a student.

When I think of curriculum, immediately it takes me to think of Shubert's curriculum images. Shubert (1985) discusses curriculum as *content or the subject matter*, *curriculum as program of planned activities*, *curriculum as intended learning outcomes*, *curriculum as cultural reproduction*, *curriculum as experience*, *curriculum as discrete tasks and concepts*, *curriculum as an agenda for social reconstruction*, and *curriculum as currere*. These curriculum metaphors are strongly tied with respective ontological and epistemological foundations. The ontological and epistemological foundations of these curriculum metaphors are mirrored in different philosophical backdrops of curriculum specialists. To me, varieties of such a curriculum metaphors reflect the "way of interpreting philosophy and its effect on curriculum" (Ornstein, 2011, p. 3). Ornstein (2011) states that four major educational philosophies that have great influence on school curriculum in the United States: *perennialism*, *essentialism*, *progressivism*, and *reconstructionism*. These curriculum images under different philosophical underpinnings largely shaped the school mathematics curriculum in the US and across the globe. Ornstein (2011) introduces these philosophical standpoints in relation to curriculum as *traditional philosophy* (perennialism and essentialism) and *contemporary philosophy* (progressivism and reconstructionism). Mathematics education curricula also have been considerably influenced by the context of these ontological, epistemological, and philosophical perspectives and beliefs of teacher educators. I think, at a personal level, these philosophical bases change over time due to impact of one's experiences, learning, and maturity over time.

Changing Images of Curriculum

For some people, a curriculum may be an *object for discussion* in a classroom, and for others, it is *a process to be followed* in the class. Some people consider curriculum as an *activity to be conducted in the class*, and for others, it is the *end results achieved by the students* at the end of the school year. For some people, curriculum is *static and more structured around a frame*, and for others, *it is ever changing and dynamic with social, economic, and political milieu*. There are different views and different metaphors for curriculum. It is worth of discussing Shubert's (1985) curriculum images in this paper before I begin to reflect upon my experiences of various curricula in Nepal and in the US.

Curriculum as contents or the subject matter. This metaphor seems a remarkably traditional metaphor of curriculum that equates curriculum with the subject to be taught in schools (Shubert, 1985). Teachers/educators prepare a list of contents laid out in a structured frame in an order of contents from simple to complex, stating prerequisites, assessment and grading policy. In school, such a curriculum is more driven by the standards and textbooks. This image of the curriculum has exclusive focus on the subject matters or topics to be covered in classroom teaching and learning. It does not speak about other noteworthy aspects such as child development and flexibility of the learning environment. It looks like a structured plan with sequence of contents.

Curriculum as a program of planned activities. This metaphor focuses extensively on activities planned for classroom delivery incorporating scope and sequence with balance of the subject matter, teaching methods, materials, and activities. The planned activities may range from annual plan, unit plan, lesson plan, activity plan, and assessment plan. These plans are mostly structured around some guidelines such as school/district guideline or curriculum standards. This curriculum metaphor sounds to be a mechanical layout of

curriculum matters in advance of actual teaching and learning. In most of the cases, we have to cope with situations in the classroom that we cannot anticipate in advance, and these planned activities may not fit to the actual classroom context. There are over-emphases on what to and how to do, and less or no emphases on how to develop.

Curriculum as intended learning outcomes. This metaphor assumes that the curriculum should focus on the intended learning outcomes shifting the emphasis from means to ends (Shubert, 1985). Shubert (1985) further states that “intended learning outcomes are convenient ways to specify purposes in which sequence of learning outcomes are set forth” (p. 28). The over emphases on only learning outcomes puts many other outcomes that are not listed in the curriculum under a shadow. Teachers consider only those outcomes listed the expected learning outcomes in the form of the end results of teaching and learning activities. There are similar expectations from all the students despite their background, cognitive levels, and ability to learn different contents. This image of the curriculum brings all students in a racecourse without considering where they begin, but watching at where they end.

Curriculum as a cultural reproduction. This image assumes that the school curriculum should be directly linked to the cultural aspects, and it should reflect the culture within the school, community, and the broader society. According to Shubert (1985), “the job of schooling is to reproduce salient knowledge and values for the succeeding generation” (p. 29). To me, this image of the curriculum tries to maintain the status quo in a society through curriculum and schooling. The students are not expected to look at their society through a critical point of view, but value its practices and follow the same knowledge from generation to generation. This image does not anticipate any radical changes in the society in terms of conventions, rules, norms, and social and cultural values. This kind of curriculum image portrays the curriculum in a relatively stable society. To me, this kind of practice is preferred

to maintain the hierarchical social order with all forms or structures of social classes with political and social motive to maintain the status quo for some privileged group.

Curriculum as experience. This metaphor assumes that the curriculum should be based on means-ends continuum (Shubert, 1985). The epistemologists and philosophers who consider this image of the curriculum as an important aspect of education attend that experience is a bridge that connects means with ends. For them, curriculum is a dynamic process of experiencing the sense of meaning what it is and its direction that depends upon dialogical and dialectical interrelationship between teacher and students. I think, curriculum as personal experience and growth is exceptionally flexible. Sometimes it is difficult to manage such a curriculum with a diverse nature of students, their experiences, and priorities. Also, we don't have exact tool to assess students' experiences, though we can understand their experiences through reflective practices, but it is exceedingly difficult to assess them. To me, it is not possible to express all of our experiences through language that we have. The inner feelings, emotions, excitements, a sense of satisfaction, motivations, thinking, and deeper abstractions cannot be expressed to other people in the same form as we experience. Development and implementation of curriculum based upon experiences broadens the curriculum to an immensely wider scope that sometimes teachers just feel overwhelmed, and impossible to consider it within the scope of subject and classroom activities. However, it is a positive aspect of this image that focuses on the productive and meaningful learning experiences through curriculum.

Curriculum as discrete tasks and concepts. This image assumes that the curriculum is simply a set of tasks to be mastered (Shubert, 1985). The list of tasks or concepts in the curriculum is influenced by the idea of banking curriculum in which teachers invest their knowledge to the students. To me, this kind of curriculum is highly influenced by scientific

management aspect, and it is more related to training approaches in business and industry. It intends to change behavior of students through the discrete tasks and concepts they master in a highly mechanical way. The students are taken to the process without knowing the meanings of what they are doing and why they are doing.

Curriculum as an agenda for social reconstruction. This image assumes that schools should not remain just passive follower of social practices, but it should be an agent for social reconstruction. Schools should teach students about various social ills making them aware of both good and bad practices, and motivate them to change or reconstruct the social practices in order to create a more equitable and just society. To me, this image of the curriculum is influenced by critical school of thought such as Frankfurt School. When curriculum is viewed and planned from this perspective, it may consider that students to be motivated to take a leadership role in order to end the social evils such as hunger, poverty, suppressions, oppressions, terrorism, wars, racism, sexism, and many more that prevails all societies. These issues can be incorporated in different disciplines with context. However, it is difficult to carry this mission through schools because schools do not run only by teachers, but there are many other stakeholders who may not agree on such high mission of schools. Also, school becomes a means of indoctrination of political thoughts or philosophy that many parents or policy makers may not disagree.

Curriculum as currere. This image assumes that a curriculum is like running of a race (Shubert, 1985). This image of the curriculum emphasizes individualism. Students are encouraged to reconceptualize their individual differences, and set a goal for themselves based upon their past and present experiences. Grumet (1980 as cited in Shubert, 1985) claims that the curriculum becomes a way for reconceiving one's perspective on life. It is about developing an understanding of self and others. Students make a decision about where

to start, what is the process, where to go, and how to go. Schools provide services to the students to reach their goal. According to Shubert (1985), “curriculum is the interpretation of lived experiences” (p. 33). I think, this curriculum is extremely broad, and sometimes the personal goal of students may not match with school, and even it may be beyond the capacity of parents to provide support to achieve the goals. Students may develop an experience of helplessness and loneliness in their endeavor that may lead to frustration, anxieties, and loss of confidence. Letting students set their goal, and run their race on their own may develop a sense of accomplishments, and feeling of self-respect. But, if their goal is too ambitious, then the curriculum as *currere* can be a source of psychological problems if students cannot meet the goals. Teachers should be conscious about such individual student’s goal, and they can lay a foundation through classroom discussions and engagement in productive learning activities. Parents’ support is particularly critical in the implementation of such curriculum image in the long run.

To me, these curriculum images have a strong root in philosophical foundation of education. Therefore, I tried to link these images with philosophical aspects so that it will be easy to understand what are the different lenses to look at the curriculum, and what are their impacts in curriculum decisions. We can see praxeological significance of different curriculum images. These images as discussed by (Shubert, 1985) not only signify various social and political interest to the curriculum and how these interests influence on curriculum inception, design, implementation, and actual classroom practices. The agents of these curricula are the curriculum authors, curriculum policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Who plays a dominant role in the food chain of curriculum praxis has a significant impact from the inception of a curriculum to the end results. These images change over time and context with the introduction of new images as the epistemology, philosophy

and theory of curriculum gain a new momentum.

Static to Dynamic Isms in Curriculum

There are philosophical isms as powerful forces on the curriculum at all levels. These isms interact with each other and try to play a dominant role through ontological, epistemological, and methodological standpoints of curriculum inception, design, implementation, evaluation, and reform. These isms are reflected through different curricular images as discussed in the previous section, but it will be worthwhile to discuss them separately.

Perennialism. According to Martin and Loomis (2007), perennialism focuses on the universal truth, and considers that these truths are always valid. The perennialists believe that educational values are almost stable, and they are universal truths, and therefore, it is not necessary to change a curriculum with such values. This is very conservative and inflexible philosophy in relation to curriculum. They believe that universal truths are not *place and time dependent*. They emphasize the same kind of curriculum to all students in the same grade level. They claim that the goal of education is to teach the truth that is same everywhere, every time, and for everyone. Therefore, the curriculum should be the same for every student. They also claim that every person is born equal. They focus the same curriculum to provide an equal opportunity to all. The curriculum influenced by perennialism includes classical knowledge that has been taught for years such as mathematics, science, geography, and literature. The curriculum includes the topics or chapters or units to be taught that are of universal in nature. According to perennialism, curriculum is determined by society based upon broad social interest (Martin & Loomis, 2007). This philosophy assumes the curriculum as content or the subject matter, and curriculum as planned activities based upon fundamental social values, norms, and practices.

Essentialism. Martin and Loomis (2007) state that essentialism focuses on teaching of the essential component of academic and moral knowledge. Essentialists believe that students should be taught *core curriculum*. Their emphasis is on high *academic standards*. They focus much on essential knowledge, skill, and attitude such as reading, writing, and computing together with many others. Who decides what is essential for a child? Is it the teacher or school to decide or the society at large? I think, they focus on essential things that students should learn things based upon decisions of the society at large. Their emphasis is on mastering these basic skills, and efficient to function in their job or daily life. Such emphasis was visible in Woods Hole Conference in 1959 after the Sputnik success. The conference was chaired by J. Bruner. Many scientists and people from different disciplines attended the conference. The conference put emphases on curriculum with less material but depth of teaching. Later in 1983 the report “A Nation at Risk” pointed to the curriculum weakness saying that American children were at risk due to lagging behind other nations in the areas of science and mathematics. This report pointed to the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes lacking in science and mathematics curriculum. According to essentialism, curriculum is determined by the society and teachers with mutual agreement (Martin & Loomis, 2007). This philosophy also views curriculum as a list of contents, or list of planned activities.

Progressivism. This philosophy focuses on personal experiences, children’s interests and their needs (Martin & Loomis, 2007). These philosophers emphasize on curriculum that is relevant to children. John Dewey is one of the main proponents of progressivism in education and curriculum. According to Dewey, students should be involved with real problems so that they gain ownership to the problems and how they solve it. They should be asked meaningful questions that make them creative and critical thinkers. Students should be engaged in problem solving using the scientific method, and they should be able to develop

their own theories. Progressive curriculum focuses on the freedom of students to develop naturally, students' interest as the center point of teaching, teacher's role as a facilitator (not a dictator of tasks), multi-dimensional development of a child, and school community cooperation. According to progressivism, curriculum is determined by the teachers and students based upon *mutual agreement* and *understanding* (Martin & Loomis, 2007). This philosophy assumes curriculum images as intended learning outcomes and curriculum as experience.

Reconstructionism. This philosophy focuses on social ills and intends to change the social structures in order to mitigate contemporary social problems. These philosophers emphasize students' understanding of social issues, and preparing them for combating those issues. Therefore, students not only study different disciplines, but they also learn about social structures, classes, and politico-economic orders. This philosophy looks at the present society with critical eyes, and points to the ill aspects of society in terms of wars, crimes, economic down turns, and many social, economic, and political issues. Social reconstructionism assumes that education should facilitate the new social order with more just and equity at the local, national, and global context. Then schools should play a role for reconstruction of the society. The school curriculum should focus on social problems that include hunger, violence, terrorism, racism, sexism, environmental degradation, weapons of mass destruction, suppressions, oppressions, and many more depending upon complexities of students cognitive, social, and affective domains of learning. According to social reconstructionism, curriculum is determined by the teachers and students based upon *democratic practices*, and *mutual understanding* (Martin & Loomis, 2007). This philosophy considers curriculum as an agenda for social reconstruction.

Existentialism. This philosophy focuses on human free will. These philosophers

consider that students as individuals are responsible to outline their own future. Students are the center of the classroom, and they decide what to study, how to study, when to study, why to study. They are responsible for their education though school and the teachers provide support to their learning. Existentialism puts emphasis on the responsibility of people (or students) to make their choices, and their choices define their existence (who they are). Teachers and schools play a significant role to layout the curriculum structure very flexibly for students grade-wise. This philosophy recognizes individual differences among students. The teacher functions as a facilitator to help each student learn in his or her own pace. Since this philosophy focuses the individualism, teachers use differentiated curriculum, and differentiated instruction in order to provide an opportunity for all students to make progress from where they are, and in their own pace. J.P. Sartre is the proponent of this philosophy. According to existentialism, students determine curriculum because they are responsible for making choices of what they learn (Martin & Loomis, 2007). I think, this philosophy considers curriculum as currere in which students decide their goals making choices from available educational pathways.

Post Modernism. Postmodern philosophy assumes that the curriculum is not just a game of language, but it is a self-organizing educational endeavor. Doll (1993) predicts that “if post-modern pedagogy is to emerge,...it will center around the concept of self-organization” (p. 163). Fleener (2002) argues that self-organization occurs not when there is control but when there is anomaly, perturbation, difficulty, and complexity. Rather than the curriculum limiting possibilities and keeping all students on the same track, a postmodern curriculum should encourage diversity, multiple perspectives, and exploration. Doll (1993) suggests a curriculum matrix, web-like and complex, to characterize and reflect the complexity of organization and the emergence of the pattern envisioned in a postmodern

curriculum. For Doll, a matrix, like a web, has no beginning or end, and while it is bounded and structured, these features of organization emerge through construction and expand through use. Doll further mentions that a web is a non-linear and non-sequential yet has a point of intersection, connection, and focus. He claims that a web can grow from simple origins to be more connected, complex, and coherent. “The curriculum itself grows changing the participants as well as the educational landscape as it goes” (Fleener, 2002, p. 165). According to Doll (1993) such a curriculum should be rich within itself, recursive within and out, relational from one to other, and rigorous.

I think these educational philosophies have a significant impact on educational goals and therefore on curricula. These philosophical perspectives did not develop at a time or they did not emerge baseless, but they emerged on the backdrops of earlier philosophies, from pre-Socratic era to Socratic era. These philosophies continuously played around education with an idealistic goal to a holographic view of educational processes. Perennialist and essentialist curriculum seem to be more structured, rigid, idealistic, and decontextualized. Whereas progressive, reconstructionist, and postmodern curriculum seem to be more eclectic, and they consider various curriculum images as possible outlets for teachers to follow, schools to consider, and students to make a choice. We need to consider all images as possible to consider depending upon subjects we teach, lessons we design, students’ interest, and sociocultural context. Different images of the curriculum have different connotations to the curriculum, but no one is complete and perfect. I think, a holistic (holographic) approach to move from one image to another will help us address many issues, interests, and possibilities. As a teacher or student, we need to learn about all kinds of philosophies, all kinds of curriculum images, and all kinds of possible theories because we have to face all kinds of challenges to cope with curriculum decisions.

Isms and Curriculum Experiences

When I was a student in a high school and then in a university, in Nepal, the curricula were more like content and the subject matter. The teachers had fixed set of curricula and textbooks from which they used to teach us different subject matters as they were structured in the textbooks. In most of the cases, the textbooks were the ultimate source of what teachers used to teach us, how they used to teach us, and when they used to teach us. There used to be excessive focus on topics to be covered. As mentioned by Shubert (1985), there was no focus on “important dimensions such as cognitive development, creative expressions, and personal growth” (pp. 26-27). There was one-way flow of information from teachers to students without any interactions of what students learnt, how they learnt, and when they learnt. There were almost none of any planned activities beyond the fixed contents in the textbooks. I think the curricula at that time were influenced by perennialism and essentialism because we learnt the set of contents that were designed more than a decade ago, and schools were following the same structured textbook bound curriculum throughout the years.

As a schoolteacher, I was following the same tradition in school. I considered the textbooks as the major sources of curricular activities. I followed the textbooks as the sources of contents, activities, and assessments. I completed the course contents in the textbooks as per the school plans. I usually planned my lessons before teaching though I had to adjust my plans in most of the cases. I used to plan activities for students and activities for myself as a teacher in two separate columns. I was trying to come out of the *curriculum as content or subject matter to curriculum as program of planned activities*. I began to shift my role of teacher as simply transmitter, of the fixed content or the subject matter to the students, to a planner of curriculum activities. This shift was guided by the notion of student centered teaching in Nepali schools. I was not aware of what were varieties of student centered

teaching. I was simply motivated to engage students in activities of solving problems individually or in groups. Certain school mathematics units were motivated by rote learning before beginning problem solving in a collaborative way. The dominant image of the curriculum was *curriculum as intended learning outcomes*, and the dominant philosophy was essentialism though I may not be aware of this philosophical perspective.

When I was in a University for my MPhil degree in education, the curriculum was a kind of *program of planned activities* with some elements of experience. I think, there was more autonomy to the instructors in planning of what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach the course contents than in other institutions I studied earlier. Some instructors were using curriculum as a program of planned activities incorporating scope and sequence, interpretation and balance of subject matter, motivational devices, teaching techniques, projects for students, and class discussion sessions with student participation (Shubert, 1985). The instructors used to distribute the program of planned activities that clearly stated what the instructors would do, and what the students would do throughout the semester works. However, some instructors used innovative curricula to provide better learning experiences to us than in traditional classrooms. They used to engage us in discussions in various relevant topics within the subject of study. These topics were selected from the issues in schools and higher education. Sometimes, the instructors used to bring the discussion topic to the class, and other times, students used to select the topic of discussion based upon their interest, pertinent issues, and goal of the course. We used to critically analyze the leadership roles in education from the local level to center (Ministry of Education). I think the curriculum used to focus critical paradigm together with progressivism. They also offered us opportunities to learn from field research experiences. The instructors were “the facilitators of personal growth, and the curriculum was the process of experiencing the sense of meaning...”

(Shubert, 1985, p. 30). When I was teaching like a teacher educator, I was using curriculum as *program of planned activities* at the beginning of my career. Then I moved ahead toward curriculum as an *agenda for social reconstruction*. I used to lay out a plan for a semester clearly stating what we would do in the class. I was impressed by Freire's critical pedagogy, and Habermass's fundamental interest in curriculum. I used to layout role of instructor and role of students. Introduction of social justice issues in mathematics education was an intense beginning to incorporate the agenda of social reconstruction.

I was playing the role of a facilitator. I did not dictate the lessons or discussions, but I tried to motivate students to take a lead in the class. Sometimes this approach was not much effective, and even counter productive. Because, such approach was just a beginning in the context of the institution where I was teaching. When I planned for students' active participation in the discussions, and construction of ideas through self-learning and group discussion, they (students and administration) used to blame me of not teaching, not lecturing, and not being active. Maybe, they were true in the sense that they looked at me as a teacher from traditional point of view. I was able to layout a foundation for the perennialist and essentialist curriculum. It was a very big challenge to me to change their perspective from a traditional learner to a constructivist learner. It took time. Next year, I found some moment of satisfaction when students began to realize the power of the approach that I was trying to portray in my classes. I was trying to help them become constructive learners, collaborative learners, creative learners, and responsible learners. I saw the classroom dialogues as means of social reconstruction, at least reconstructions of classroom practices with a vision of have some positive impacts in the schools. I always tried to bring new aspirations in their teaching and understanding of what teaching meant to them.

Again, I came to be a student. I felt as if I turned back to a cave. I turned back to

structured curriculum of engineering as a graduate student. It was reverse turn-around of theory, method, and philosophy when I joined engineering program. I reversed my journey from a constructionist approach of teaching and learning to the transmissionistic teaching and learning which was heavily guided by pure scientific rigors and strict criteria of learning outcomes. This moving back and forth was a moment of extreme frustration, loss of my identity as a constructivist learner and a teacher. I looked through the cave to the outer world, the world of subjectivity, the world of constructionist pedagogy, and the world of experiential learning. I state the moment of being in engineering program as moment of being in a cave. However, this shift of curriculum and pedagogy from a mathematics education program to engineering program was not all a fatal attempt. I learnt many ideals of engineering education, the way engineers think, and the way engineering professors design curriculum, carry out teaching and learning, and conduct assessment. The reverse movement through the program of different nature, different objective, and different philosophy helped me to cope with unfamiliar contexts. It forced me toward reverse direction of thinking. I began to look at the structure of the courses, plans of activities, projects, and assessments from a different perspective that I had not looked at before so consciously. I thought how the engineering education would be if the professors were aware of various educational philosophies, if they were aware of various pedagogical perspectives, and if they were aware of agenda of social reconstruction through modified engineering education.

Slowly, I found a new hope, new ray of light beaming toward me and toward my learning and career when I joined mathematics education program of my doctoral study. I came out of cave, and then reconstructed my worldview that was crushed by hard science, and hard notion of what teaching meant to be preaching. I realized that I was on my way to the curriculum as a *program of planned activities* to some extent, and then it was shifting to

curriculum as experience (Shubert, 1985). I still do not find that the curriculum is an agenda for social reconstruction that once I was using this notion in my classroom teaching. I am regaining my voice. I am reconstructing my worldview. I am trying to develop my personal theories of curriculum, learning, and teaching. Then, curriculum as experience will be the foundation to guide me in learning throughout the program. I would like to begin my “educational means and ends as inseparable parts of a single process known as experience” (Shubert, 1985, p. 30). As suggested by Shubert (1985), I would like to attend to my experiences reflectively and reflexively. Then, to me, the curriculum becomes a process of experiencing meanings through active participation in dialogic and dialectic processes with my past self and presents self to create a future self. I will also abide by these processes bridging self and other. I agree, “learning experience is the curriculum that students actually come to know or realize” (Shubert, 1985, p. 30). From this perspective, curriculum is actual experiences that I will gain throughout the course. The experiences I will gain or go through this learning process will constitute my curriculum. If I have to categorize this curriculum as intended, implemented, or achieved curriculum, then I will go with the third category. For me, a curriculum is what I will achieve in terms of generative experiences while going through this process. But, I won’t stay in one metaphor for the development of the notion of curriculum. The generative experiences of the curriculum should lead to an agenda for social reconstruction. The programs in College of Education certainly have begun this step through continuous revisions of various curricula, introduction of new research programs, and plans and visions of better education to the teachers who can transform the school education across the state and the nation.

Future Implication

In this stage, I would like to guide my learning with a view of curriculum as an agenda for

social reconstruction. The curriculum experiences should motivate a person (me and others) for a better future and a better life individually and collectively. For a better collective life, the curriculum should be viewed as a means for social transformation. The curriculum should be a medium of reconstruction of productive thoughts, reconstruction of democratic ideals, values and norms for more just and equitable society. I think, curriculum is dynamic enterprise in terms of knowledge that is growing, technology that is advancing, the society that is being more complex, with multicultural values, norms, and practices at present. The society as a whole is not in the status quo. Then why curriculum can be in the status quo. There may be two views: curriculum should be an agenda for social reconstruction or agenda of social reconstruction should guide a curriculum. There should be a balance in curriculum and agenda for social reconstruction.

When I have to suggest a new curriculum metaphor, then to me, curriculum-as-a-cloud will be my suggestion. For me, it can be an appropriate way to understand the nature and function of curriculum in the realm of complex society. A cloud has no definite form. It appears as a collection of delicate cotton with white color, in neat and clean form with artistic shape (apparently) freely floating in the sky, but it is under the control of gravity, wind direction, humidity, and temperature as giant forces that play on it. A cloud, sometimes, appears as a band of red and orange color spread in the sky just after the sunset. A cloud appears as images of giant whale, shark, or an abstract art in the blue sky. Sometime, it appears as a collection of dark smoke and brings thunders, storms, and floods. Sometimes, it is calm but creative, and brings us rain and continues pouring on the earth for hours creating hope to the farmers for better production. A curriculum appears in different forms. Sometimes, it is pleasant and productive, other times it is simply a routine (like forming cloud is a routine of the rainy season). I don't mean that curriculum, as a cloud, is useless or

form less, but curriculum as a cloud is complex, sometimes visible and many times invisible. The notion of curriculum as a cloud is chaotic in the sense that it is sometimes difficult to predict how it behaves and it is difficult to make sense of or meaning (interpretation). Another part is implementation in a progressive or constructionist form can have a tremendous impact on a local to the global context economically, socially, culturally, and politically. Therefore, curriculum as a cloud may help us understand its subtleties, its formlessness, its power, self-adaptiveness, and its impact on life of individual, community, a nation or even in the global arena.

The curriculum metaphor changes over time, changes over context, and changes over experiences. To me, curriculum epistemology and philosophy with different metaphors is a dynamic interplay of time, space, and identity as a student, teacher, or researcher. I agree with Ornstein (2011) that “we need to find a middle ground in which there is no extreme emphasis on the subject matter or student, cognitive development or socio-psychological development, excellence or equality” (p.8), and I think this middle ground is more balanced in terms of what to teach, how to teach, when to teach, why to teach, to what extent to teach in a curriculum “that is politically and economically feasible, and that serves the needs of students and society” (Ornstein, 2011, p. 8). Curriculum metaphor as a cloud serves the purpose of looking at curriculum as a dynamic phenomenon. To me, cloud is not just an object (like a state of water vapor), but it is dynamic interplay of water vapor, temperature, turbulence of air, gravity, and particles in the atmosphere. Likewise, a curriculum is a dynamic interplay of sociocultural, economic, and political contexts at local and global arena, and it is impacted by various isms of people in the food chain of curriculum game players.

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