The University of Edinburgh  
The Moray House School of Education  
Board of Studies  
[21 May 2015]  

The Curriculum: Change, Context and Development

Brief description of the paper

This paper contains a proposal for a new course for MSc Education.

Action requested

For approval

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? No

Risk assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? No

Equality and diversity

Have due considerations been given to the equality impact of this paper? Yes

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Originator of the paper

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The Curriculum: Change, Context and Development

I. Credit rating: 20 credits, SCQF Level 11

II. Rationale

This proposed course was written based on a non-operational course in MSc Education, adopting new perspectives and updating the course material, and in particular, places an increased emphasis developing strong international comparative aspects. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many MSc Education students, especially international students, may lack a critical awareness of the social implications of education on addressing issues of social justice and equality. This course is constructed based on a key question around the purposes of curricula. Are they a reproduction of existing social relations for the labour market, or/and as a force for social justice? Or is there a much more complex story within different contexts?

This course introduces a variety of perspectives in order to understand curricula, through reflection on sociological and philosophical approaches to international curriculum studies. To locate different traditions and theories into practice, this course will examine the change and development of curricula through case studies. The course provides students with an opportunity to synthesise ideas, debate and evaluate a range of values, purposes and practices associated with curriculum changes within and across various global contexts.

III. Aim and Outcomes

The main aims of this course are to develop students’ critical awareness of curricula and the role they play in social reproduction and cultural selection and to evaluate curriculum development in light of theories from the Sociology of Education.

On completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1) demonstrate knowledge of the principle concepts and theories relating to the study of the curriculum

2) demonstrate a critical understanding of the possible philosophical and social stances taken and the implications for curriculum change

3) apply knowledge and critically analyse curriculum change in local and global contexts.
IV. Course Delivery

The taught component of the course will consist of 25 hours contact time, delivered over 10 x 2.5 hour sessions. The course will include presentations by the tutor (and occasional guest speakers), and opportunities for group/class discussion on recommended readings and topics related to weekly content. On week 8, 9 and 10, students will be given an opportunity to work in groups to conduct and present a case study of curriculum development in context.

V. Course Content

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<th>WEEK</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
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| 1    | Tripartite Curriculum - Formal, Informal and Hidden Curriculum  
This week will provide a foundation for the course by introducing key concepts including Formal Curriculum, Informal Curriculum and Hidden Curriculum, discussing what they are and why they are developed in this way. These historical traditions will be located in the theoretical context of a concern for social justice and /or the needs of the labour market. |
| 2    | Curriculum development - Historical Contexts  
This session will introduce the historical development of curriculum. Centred around the questions of what is knowledge and the role of education in society, this session will explore various educational ideologies and discuss the curriculum changes driven by different traditions, such as child-centred, functionalist, libertarian and social justice traditions. |
| 3    | Curriculum and Its Moral Visions - philosophical contexts  
This session will provide source material used to justify the nature and value of a Formal Curriculum, Informal Curriculum and Hidden Curriculum. It will explore the ideological aims of the curriculum, i.e. how it relates to the type of society we live in, to political purpose and to our moral vision. |
| 4    | Curriculum and social concerns - sociological contexts  
This session will discuss the role of education in the reproduction of existing values and social structures and the development of critical thinking. How do we reconcile the need to pass valuable knowledge and skills to a new generation, alongside the need for problem solving and creativity in a global world? It will explore educational responses to social and gender inequalities. |
| 5    | Internationalisation and globalisation of curriculum  
This session will discuss the new global education context, in which there is an emerging international trend in curriculum content, context and change. It will discuss the tensions between education ideologies in the global world, exploring competing sets of ideas, values and beliefs about education. In particular it will focus upon the discourses of education as a force for human capital and the needs of the labour market and as a force for human interests and social justice requirements. This session will provide students with an understanding of the impact of globalisation and internationalisation upon curriculum development. |
6 **Case studies (1) - Curriculum in Scotland**

The next two sessions will explore how curriculum is developed now in response to all these issues. It will ask what we can learn from examples of curriculum reform across the world.

This session will focus upon the curriculum development in Scotland. Rooted in the liberal tradition, Scottish education was seen as a source of economic flexibility, of modernising ideas, and of personal opportunity. In recent years, however, curriculum change in Scotland has been criticised as being less concerned with universalism and comprehensive inclusion and more technicist and managerialist. Debate abounds around the development and implementation of the latest school curriculum in this context – Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Focusing on the case of Scotland, this session will explore how social justice is addressed in Scottish education, and also how labour market requirements are featured in the recent curriculum development.

7 **Case studies (2) – International Comparative Studies of School Curriculum (case may vary year to year)**

**Mathematics curriculum in China**

This session will locate relevant theoretical debates on curriculum in the context of China with a focus on the subject of Mathematics in Chinese schooling. Acknowledging the growing international attention on Chinese students’ good academic performance in Maths, we will explore the development of the Maths curriculum in China and the issues and opportunities which have arisen in the implementation of such a curriculum.

8 **Working groups**

Students will work in groups to apply appropriate concepts and theories to the interpretation of curriculum changes and development in the context of a specific country, region or disciplinary subject.

Group members are expected to work together to make a decision on the country, region or disciplinary subject to focus on. Each group is expected to explore the chosen case from some of these aspects, including formal, informal and hidden curriculum, the rational and drivers of curriculum changes and development, and their impacts.

9 **Presentations**

Students will give oral presentation of the findings of their group work. Each presentation should last no longer than 15 minutes, followed by a 5 minutes Q&A session. The presentation will be graded on its content and delivery.

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1 Professor Jian Liu, will be invited to contribute to this session as a guest speaker. As the Director of the Centre of Educational Innovation Research at the Normal University in Beijing, Prof. Liu currently also works as the Deputy Director of National Assessment of Education Quality and Collaborative Innovation Centre. He was a key organiser and designer of the recent curriculum reform in China. His research interests include mathematics education, youth cognition, and textbook development.
### Conclusion

This session will draw conclusions with a discussion on two fundamental issues in this course: i) who/what are the drivers of and what are the aims of the curriculum and ii) how can education respond to current major challenges, such as social inequality; do these two overlap or different, even competing force? How is a curriculum constructed so it can respond to and challenge social inequality? It will conclude with a discussion about how we might design a curriculum for the future.

### VI. Assessment

**Formative assessment:**

During the semester, students are expected to write a 500 word essay of their views on “The development of school curriculum in a global era”. Students are encouraged to present a critical view and relate what they write to the course readings so far.

Students are expected to post their essay on the Learn discussion board by the deadline. Students will be paired up to give comments on each other's work. General feedback from the tutor will be provided.

**Summative assessment:**

**Component 1: Group work (20%) (Week 8 and 9)**

Students will be expected to work in groups to conduct and present a case study of curriculum change in a particular context (which should not the same as in sessions 6 and 7).

In groups, students should work together to choose a case (which can be a particular country or region and/or a disciplinary subject area) to focus on. Students are expected to apply relevant theories that are covered in session 1 to 5 to critically discuss the nature and/or impact of the curriculum changes and development that their group chose.

Each group is expected to give a presentation at session 9, which will be graded. The presentation will be marked on its content and delivery.

Each group can arranged a 30 minutes meeting with the tutor prior to the presentation.

The mark awarded to each student is a combination of a shared group mark (received from the tutor based on the group presentation) and a peer evaluated individual mark (received from other group members based on individual contribution). The total mark is 100 (80 for group presentation, 20 for peer evaluation).
Component 2: Individual course work (80%) – 3200 words assignment

Students will be expected to write an essay on one of the given topics. Students can discuss relevant issues in a particular area of education in a context with which they are familiar (e.g. pre-school curriculum in Scotland, foreign language studies in China). Possible assignment topics:

1) "It is justifiable to divide knowledge into ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ areas of learning, disciplines, and to ensure that all children have access to all these spheres. To do otherwise is to diminish children’s capabilities and their eventual horizons.” Reflect critically upon this statement; do similar education inputs produce similar educational outputs?

2) “Education cannot be value-free. Different value systems will generate different curricular”. Discuss in relation to the curriculum changes and development in one particular country.

3) The ‘hidden curriculum’, it is argued, ‘is the means whereby inequalities in society are legitimised through their reproduction.’ Can the formal curriculum itself be similarly accused?

4) Critically discuss the impact of globalisation on the changes and development of school curriculum in a particular context.

Students may also wish to negotiate one more essays of their own choosing.

VII. Reading List

Proposed Core Texts:


Recommended Texts:


Lawton, D. 2014 Class, Culture and Curriculum.
Additional Readings:


Levinson, M. 2012. 'No Citizen Left Behind'. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

