Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum

Edited by
Elliot W. Eisner
and
Elizabeth Vallance
Stanford University

McClelland Publishing Corporation
2526 Grove Street
Berkeley, California 94704
Introduction

Five Conceptions of Curriculum:
Their Roots and Implications for Curriculum Planning

Elliot W. Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance

American education today, perhaps more than in the past, is studied with a variety of conflicting conceptions of the goals, content, and organization of curriculum. The complexity of educational thought is manifested not only in the diversity of papers presented in professional meetings and printed in professional journals; it is also apparent in debates, discussions, and controversies dramatizing school board and PTA meetings, and it is reflected and amplified by the involvement of the general public through the mass media.

The controversies we refer to deal on an overt level with issues surrounding alternative schools, conflicting roles of vocational and academic education in the school curriculum, concern with a student's academic achievement in the "solid" subjects, educational admonitions to enable children to "learn how to learn," purposes and uses of accountability procedures, and the use of input-output models of educational practice. On a more fundamental level, however, the debates and conflicts generated by each of these themes derive necessarily from the degree of incompatibility between the values and goals underlying each side of the issue being debated. Controversy in educational discourse most often reflects a basic conflict in priorities concerning the form and content of curriculum and the
goals toward which schools should strive; the intensity of the conflict and the apparent difficulty in resolving it can most often be traced to a failure to recognize conflicting conceptions of curriculum. Public educational discourse frequently does not bother to examine its conceptual underpinnings.

To the student of curriculum, then, the richness of issues and values in the field provides an arena that can be either a dynamic and stimulating resource or a conceptual jungle difficult to define and almost impossible to manage. Students of education—both those preparing for practical work in curriculum and instruction and those already in the field—might find helpful a set of signposts that distinguishes between conflicting orientations. Those in school administration, particularly those who in some ways link the school and the community, might be better able to help their staff and the community understand the issues at hand if they themselves could distinguish between the conceptual orientations of the different alternatives presented to them.

This book has been prepared to help identify the orientations that emerge from diverse alternative prescriptions for the content, goals, and organization of the curriculum. We have tried especially to enable both professional educators and lay people to recognize and evaluate these orientations in terms of the goals and assumptions embedded within them; the articles reprinted here were selected to exemplify what we consider to be the major orientations to curriculum that currently prevail in the literature.

The development of a set of distinctions concerning the content of published articles about curriculum is somewhat arbitrary. The five general orientations that we have identified do not necessarily exhaust the ways in which positions can be characterized or identified, and there is nothing sacred about the labels or distinctions we offer. They can constitute a powerful tool for analyzing the implications of an otherwise confusing body of arguments, however. The orientations refer to a range of distinct conceptual biases that emerged repeatedly in a rather comprehensive survey of current literature in and related to the field. The orientations, while not exhaustive, are comprehensive in that they identify a broad range of very different approaches to questions persistently asked in the curriculum field: What can and should be taught to whom, when, and how? The way these questions are answered is influenced largely by the assumptions through which they are approached in the first place. These assumptions, and the regularity with which they emerge as distinguishable patterns, define the five orientations that have been formulated: the cognitive processes approach, curriculum as technology, curriculum for self-actualization and consummatory experiences, curriculum for social reconstruction, and academic rationalism.

The answers to the major questions in curriculum—and indeed the questions themselves—are most often couched in terms of the assumptions embedded in each orientation. Before outlining the five orientations, there is a brief indication of some of the considerations that went into developing them.

Some Viewpoints Not Treated Directly

Some important criteria may seem to have been neglected in defining the five orientations to curricular thought offered below, but there were reasons for their exclusion. The first orientation to compete for inclusion in the scheme is that continuum implied by the “child-centered versus society-centered” distinction. The child-centered orientation can be traced back to the ideas of Quintillian, Comenius, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi, while the society-centered orientation emanates from the ideas of Aristotle, Calvin, and Jefferson. In more recent times John Dewey and the progressives gave new life to the distinction, and it has emerged full blown today with controversies over free schools, open classrooms, and other humanist-oriented innovations in schooling. The assumptions underlying the child-centered versus the society-centered distinction are crucial for understanding educational thought today and can illuminate some of the problems in evaluating both the post-Sputnik push for the “solid” subjects and the current movement in alternative education. The continuum is implicit in some of the distinctions we have drawn. If we do not deal explicitly with this dimension, however, it is largely because the distinction does not seem to contribute further insight into the complexity of current thought in curriculum. Significant educational dialogue today does not speak as clearly in these terms as it once did; the issues have shifted and become more refined; the child-society distinction today has lost the crystalline character it enjoyed in the past.

It might also be defensible to organize educational writings along a
differentiating curriculum thought. It is possible to distinguish a set of curriculum orientations according to whether they refer to curriculum as a present “lived in” experience, as an end, or whether they view curriculum as an instrument toward some future goal, as a means. This dimension is a rich one; it refers partially to the distinction between child-centered and society-centered education and can be linked conceptually to certain psychological models as well. The present-future distinction also suggests some criteria for viewing a curriculum proposal as adaptive (fitting the child to deal with here and now), or as reconstructive (providing the tools for dealing with and shaping the future). It is deliberately implied in some of the distinctions we draw in the selection of articles. We have not used the present-future dimension as a major criterion for structuring these readings, however, largely because the central issues in educational discussion do not revolve around the time orientation itself. Though it is a useful descriptive device, it is not a fully salient criterion. The five orientations presented in this short book, then, refer only secondarily to these distinctions, though they should be flexible enough to accommodate them.

It is important to note that, in addition to the above distinctions, there are a number of what might more properly be called pertinent educational issues or sensitive areas susceptible to curriculum policy decisions to which the scheme does not directly refer. These issues include the debates over religious education, cultural pluralism, community control of curriculum, and the “hidden curriculum” of the school. Although these issues must be acknowledged as relevant aspects of the curriculum field, they are essentially points of contention which must themselves ultimately be referred to the conceptualizations of schooling underlying them. The reader may wish to work with them on his own; one test of the scheme presented here may be to determine whether such issues can be profitably evaluated in terms of the scheme.

Five Orientations to Curriculum

The development of cognitive processes. This approach to curriculum is primarily concerned with the refinement of intellectual operations. It refers only rarely to curriculum content, focusing, instead, on the how rather than the what of education. Aiming to develop a
sort of technology of the mind, it sees the central problem of curriculum as that of sharpening the intellectual processes and developing a set of cognitive skills that can be applied to learning virtually anything.

This approach is process oriented in two senses: it identifies the goals of schooling as providing a repertoire of essentially content-independent cognitive skills applicable to a variety of situations, and it is concerned with understanding the processes by which learning occurs in the classroom. The interactive relationship between the learner and the material is of prime concern; “education” refers to the dynamics of learning, and, as such, this conceptualization of schooling is necessarily open-ended and growth oriented. Since it does not deal with specific content and therefore makes no reference to any content “givens” in educational goals, the cognitive processes approach sees the learner as an interactive and adaptive element in a system which, if given the correct intellectual tools, could grow almost indefinitely. The problem of the educator and curriculum specialist, then, is to identify the most salient and efficient intellectual processes through which learning occurs and to provide the setting and structure for their development. Education is seen as an impersonal enabling mechanism; specific intellectual skills are secured as tools for adapting to and shaping future situations.

This orientation to curriculum focuses on the child and refers to the learning process per se rather than to the broader social context in which it occurs. It aims to provide the student with a sort of intellectual autonomy that will enable him to make his own selections and interpretations of the situations encountered beyond the context of schooling. Though educational writers embracing the cognitive processes approach may acknowledge that schooling has effects beyond intellectual development, they assert that the proper concern of curriculum is still the development of cognitive skills, skills that presumably transfer to a wide variety of situations outside of schools. An article by Carl Bereiter illustrates this latter position: “Schools do not and cannot successfully educate—that is, influence how children turn out in any important way. The most they can do successfully is provide child care and training”—where “training” means producing “a certain kind of performance in the child. What the child does with his required skill, how it is integrated into his personality, is a concern that lies beyond training.”

The cognitive processes approach is a particularly salient orientation in curriculum thinking today, and it seems to grow more potent as psychologists develop greater confidence in their ability to identify the mechanisms through which thinking develops. Historically, this approach is related to the nineteenth-century tradition of faculty psychology, which held that the key to learning lay in developing the muscles of the mind as it were, and it assumed that strengthening the various mental “faculties” would enable the individual to apply these cognitive abilities to learning any sort of content. This concern with building generalizable intellectual skills has been greatly elaborated in recent years and is now most fully expounded in the developmental psychology of Jerome Bruner and that of Robert Gagné. The cognitive processes approach has stimulated the development of curricula such as the “science curriculum” of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which was organized around the development of specific cognitive processes. This approach illustrates the way in which assumptions about how children learn influence the development of educational programs.

Curriculum as technology. This approach to schooling, like the cognitive processes approach, focuses on process. It is also concerned with the how rather than the what of education. It conceptualizes the function of curriculum as essentially one of finding efficient means to a set of predefined, nonproblematic ends. As a process approach, curriculum technology differs from cognitive processes in its focus of attention. It is concerned not with the processes of knowing or learning, but with the technology by which knowledge is communicated and “learning” is facilitated. Making little or no reference to content, it is concerned with developing a technology of instruction. The focus is less on the learner or even on his relationship to the material than on the more practical problem of efficiently packaging and presenting the material to him. A step removed both from the individuality of the learner and from the content which defines the curricular experience, the technologists claim to be developing a value-free system.

The language of the curriculum technologist is as efficient as the system it hopes to produce. It is concise, even terse, often skeletal: logical, crystalline, and to the point. Articles reflecting this orientation are very frequently only a page or two long. (The reader is referred to Educational Technology for the fullest exposure to this
mode of thought, though it appears elsewhere, also.) The curriculum technology approach speaks the language of production; curriculum technologists see curriculum as an input to supply and demand systems. They talk in terms of industrial systems, accountability, or systems analysis. Their vocabulary is one of input, output, entry behavior, cybernetic models, biofeedback mechanisms, stimulus and reinforcement, and systems to "produce" learning. Theirs is a self-confident language. Although curriculum technologists do not claim to have all the answers, they ask questions in terms that imply that answers do exist somewhere and need only to be discovered. Curriculum is viewed as a technological process, as a means to producing whatever ends an industrial model education system might generate. As Silverman states (also see Chapter 4),

the problems associated with teaching are interwoven with questions about the retention and transfer of learning. Any model which purports to deal with learning must, if it is to prove useful, deal also with the conditions that effect retention and transfer. In terms of the S-R reinforcement model, questions about retention become questions about the conditions that control and maintain responses.6

The curriculum-technology approach rests on certain "stable" assumptions about the nature of learning, namely that learning does occur in certain systematic and predictable ways and that it can be made more efficient if only a powerful method for controlling it can be perfected. The learner is seen neither as problematic nor as a particularly dynamic element in the system; the real task of the educator arises in organizing the material sometime before the learner ever enters the classroom.

Because it does assume certain constants in the learner's role, however, this approach cannot be as value-neutral as the exuberant language of the articles included here would indicate; indeed, it can be argued that this orientation is highly value saturated since any commitment to method has inevitable consequences for the goals and content of the education it would serve. The failure to articulate these implications is perhaps as strong a value statement as any content bias might be, for to adopt the language of technology without acknowledging the other value systems that have traditionally dominated education, and that might therefore be in conflict with it, is too easily to discredit the possibility of alternatives. While this cau-

tionary criterion applies to any conceptualization of schooling which believes so robustly in the validity of its own convictions, it is particularly relevant to the sudden self-confidence of educational technology. The three articles we have included in this volume offer an introduction to the issues raised by this conceptualization of curriculum.

_Self-actualization, or curriculum as consummatory experience._ Strongly and deliberately value saturated, this approach refers to personal purpose and to the need for personal integration, and it views the function of the curriculum as providing personally satisfying consummatory experiences for each individual learner. It is child centered, autonomy and growth oriented, and education is seen as an enabling process that would provide the means to personal liberation and development.

This approach focuses sharply on content. Unlike the cognitive process or curriculum technology approaches, the concern is very much for what is taught in school. It conceptualizes education as a liberating force, a means of helping the individual discover things for himself. Schooling is seen as a vital and potentially enriching experience in its own right, and content as present experience is a major focus of concern. Interestingly, this orientation is concerned almost as much with process as the two preceding orientations, but in a different sense. Rather than directing itself to how the curriculum should be organized, it formulates the goals of education in dynamic personal process terms. It emphasizes personal growth and, therefore, though it sees the curriculum as a consummatory experience in itself, it is also necessarily somewhat reformist. It implies a need to break bonds, to change, for the development of personal integrity and autonomy is seen as problematic in the face of broader social pressures to the contrary. It is reconstructionist in a very personalized sense.

Unlike the more strictly process-oriented approaches considered so far, the self-actualizers assign education a much grander task. They demand that schooling, through the curriculum, enter fully into the child's life. They assume that it can do so, their criticism being that it has always done so, but without acknowledging the responsibilities involved. They see education as a necessarily pervasive influence that has been handled inadequately and very stultifyingly. They demand that the curriculum become better orchestrated to fulfill its potential
as a liberating process by providing integrated experience. As content, then, the curriculum is seen as an end in itself. As a stage in the life process, education would provide both content and tools for further self-discovery.

The language of this group of writers is rich and elaborate, dealing in levels of subtlety apparently unimagined by technologists of either variety; it is broadly integrative, a language interwoven with the language of humanism, of existentialism, and of existential psychology. Phenix represents this view very clearly (also see Chapter 6):

A curriculum of transcendence provides the context of engendering, gestating, expecting, and celebrating the moments of singular awareness and inner illumination when each person comes into the consciousness of his inimitable personal being. It is not characterized so much by the objective content of study as by the atmosphere created by those who comprise the learning community. Its opposite is the engineering outlook that regards the learner as material to be formed by means of a variety of technical procedures.7

The self-actualizers share a passionate orientation to education. We have included two articles, one by Philip Phenix, quoted above, and another by Joseph Junell8 that questions the traditional, rationally oriented basis of education. The reader is referred also to the excellent work by Maxine Greene,9 to Abraham Maslow's10 work relating humanistic psychology to educational programs, and to the work by Fred Newmann and Donald Oliver11 and that by Kenneth Benne12 on the role of education in creating community. All of these writers conceive of education as an integrative, synthesizing force, as a total experience responsible to the individual's needs for growth and personal integrity.

Social reconstruction-relevance. With this orientation there is a strong emphasis on the role of education and curriculum content within the larger social context. Social reconstructionists typically stress societal needs over individual needs; the overall goals of education are dealt with in terms of total experience, rather than using the immediate processes which they imply. Social reform and responsibility to the future of society are primary.

The social reconstructionist orientation to curriculum is hardly new. The refrain runs through much of the history of educational reform, and it is a characteristic of Western society that schools, more than any other institution, are called upon to serve as an agent for social change. The social view of schooling examines education and curriculum in terms of their relation to the social issues of the day. An approach in which social values, and often political positions, are clearly stated, social reconstructionism demands that schools recognize and respond to their role as a bridge between what is and what might be, between the real and the ideal. It is the traditional view of schooling as the bootstrap by which society can change itself. Within this approach to curriculum, there are two distinct branches; it embraces both a present and a future orientation, both an adaptive and a reformist interpretation of social relevance. The psychological model underlying both versions is a social-psychological one that views individual development and the quality of the social context as interdependent. Both branches of the social reconstruction approach seek to develop a better "fit" between the individual and society. The first and basically adaptive approach views social issues and change as a crucial context for personal development. It foresees enormous changes in society and asks that curriculum provide the tools for individual survival in an unstable and changing world. This survival-oriented bias to the relevance issue defines relevance in personal terms, advocating a curriculum that would make the individual better able to keep up and function effectively in a rapidly changing world. This "adaptive" group includes educational technologists who would change curriculum to correspond more closely to technological changes in information processing, and data collection; reformists, such as those of the Parkway School in Philadelphia, who seek to have the curriculum reflect current "real-life" situations; and writers like John Mann (see Chapter 8), who demand that current issues of political power be incorporated into the curriculum so that students can learn to deal with them more effectively and creatively as such issues emerge. Mann writes: "What I envision...is a movement to design a progressive curriculum specifically for these angry, radical students, in which the study of educational policy formation and of the policies of schools would converge in and be reinforced, corrected, refined and deepened in the practical experience of actually formulating educational policy and struggling to enact it."13

The reformist wing of the relevance orientation is more vigorous and demands more of schools. This truly reconstructionist view demands that individuals be better equipped to deal with change but
also that they be educated to intervene actively to shape the changes. While all sides of the social reconstruction-relevance orientation view curriculum as the means by which students learn to deal with social issues, the adaptive group is more conservative, asking for survival instruments; the reformists are more aggressively leadership conscious. This reconstructionist group includes, then, those who advocate adaptation as one means of effecting smooth change and the more aggressively idealistic writers that are found in the “futures” research groups, in “peace education” coalitions and in recent works by people like Michael Scriven and Ivan Illich.

Academic rationalism. The most tradition-bound of the five orientations, academic rationalism is primarily concerned with enabling the young to acquire the tools to participate in the Western cultural tradition and with providing access to the greatest ideas and objects that man has created. Those embracing this orientation tend to hold that since schools cannot try to teach everything or even everything deemed worth knowing, their legitimate function is that of cultural transmission in the most specific sense: to cultivate the child’s intellect by providing him with opportunities to acquire the most powerful products of man’s intelligence. These products are found, for the most part, in the established disciplines. To become educated means to be able to read and understand those works that the great disciplines have produced, a heritage that is at least as old as the beginnings of Greek civilization. The curriculum, it is argued, should emphasize the classic disciplines through which man inquires since these disciplines, almost by definition, provide concepts and criteria through which thought acquires precision, generality, and power; such disciplines exemplify intellectual activity at its best. To construct a curriculum that includes “practical” learning such as driver training, homemaking, and vocational education dilutes the quality of education and robs students of the opportunity to study those subjects that reflect man’s enduring quest for meaning. The wise schoolmaster knows that not all subject matters are created equal, and he selects the content of his educational program with this principle in mind.

Robert Maynard Hutchins has long advocated this approach, and he offered a classic statement of academic rationalism in 1953:

Liberal education consists of training in the liberal arts and of understanding the leading ideas that have animated mankind… the great productions of the human mind are the common heritage of all mankind. They supply the framework through which we understand one another and without which all factual data and area studies and exchange of persons among countries are trivial and futile. They are the voices in the Great Conversation that constitutes the civilization of the dialogue.

Now, if ever, we need an education that is designed to bring out our common humanity rather than to indulge our individuality.

The foregoing characterization has, however, undergone a significant evolution in recent years. A glance at any high school curriculum will reveal that “the disciplines” still hold strong sway; what has changed is the nature of the argument by which they are defended. Emerging in the curriculum literature currently is a strong orientation toward “the structure of knowledge”—a significant rethinking of the traditional disciplines in an effort to determine what it is about their respective content that distinguishes them from each other. This new questioning of the disciplines still assumes the validity of the subject matter divisions, but, rather than merely identifying them, it asks why the divisions have held up for so long. Writers such as Joseph Schwab and Robert Bridgham are beginning to rephrase the traditional academic rationalist approach by examining the logical and structural bases for the division. The healthy spirit of inquiry evidenced by their writings suggests that the traditional “disciplines” approach is questionable. More significantly, however, the current controversy is adding a new dimension to this orientation. By digging to find the structural bases of the disciplines, the structure of knowledge question is bringing a new and sophisticated concern with process into a traditionally content-saturated conceptualization of education. Dewey suggested long ago that the “logical” and “psychological” structure of content might be two different things. Academic rationalism survived for centuries without recognizing this crucial distinction, but recent work in refining subject matter curricula along structural lines, such as the School Mathematics Study Group materials, indicates that this most traditional orientation to education is undergoing substantial change.

Academic rationalism is alive and well. The problem is to understand why we are so defensive about it, and many participants in educational enterprises are. The structure of knowledge orientation is a dynamic new development within a very old field. A recognition of the sources and implications of this orientation is essential in any
educational dialogue that claims to understand the boundaries of the curriculum field.

A Cautionary Word Concerning Three Curriculum Fallacies

As we review the literature concerning curriculum, it has become apparent that three fallacies frequently emerge from curricular arguments: formalism, content, and universalism.

The fallacy of formalism encourages the belief that what is really important in educational programs is how children learn, not what they learn. Those committing this fallacy frequently point out that knowledge is changing at an exceedingly rapid rate—it has doubled within the past decade, although it is never made clear how this "doubling" is measured—and that the major goal of the school should be to help children "learn how to learn."

The demand that children be taught how to learn has an attractive humanist ring. When schools are being criticized for being stiff and bookish and when the student's role is seen as simply regurgitating facts and conclusions, any criticism of formalism assumes the character of an antidote to a moribund educational practice and conveys a dynamic image centered on inquiry and self-initiated learning. Educational technologists, both hard-core "curricular technologists" and "technology of the mind" (cognitive processes) educators are particularly susceptible to this fallacy. Recognition of it as a fallacy should limit the validity of any technology or process-oriented conceptualization of schooling.

Any form of learning, including inquiry and self-initiated learning, can deal with the intellectually trivial as well as with the intellectually significant. To argue that the form of education is the most important aspect of schooling to disregard the very concepts and criteria that make inquiry possible in the first place. Indeed, it was lack of attention to the "progressive organization of subject matter" that so concerned John Dewey when he reviewed the practices of those involved in "Progressive Education." Yet today's critics of American schools are frequently so critical of the formal aspect of educational practice in their zeal to change an outdated structure that they neglect the very intellectual resources necessary for understanding.

The fallacy of content, as might be expected, complements the formalist fallacy. Those who commit this fallacy are preoccupied with the importance of what rather than with how students study. They overemphasize "solid" content, content that is believed to be intellectually rigorous and difficult and that, by its very nature, is presumed to make the necessary strenuous intellectual demands upon students. Of the five orientations we have identified, academic rationalists are perhaps most susceptible to this fallacy. It frequently is seen in the admonitions of the Council for Basic Education whose members, like others concerned with achieving quality in American education, frequently decry what they see as a trivialization of curriculum in an attempt to placate student demands for relevance. They claim that educators have, in the name of meeting individual needs, withheld the vast intellectual tradition that is every person's legacy from the past.

Like the fallacy of formalism, the fallacy of content has attractive features. All ideas are not created equal, and some concepts and generalizations, some ideas and products of past inquiry are more useful and more profound than others. To deny students access to the very best intellectual and aesthetic products that civilization has created is to deny them the core of what education can provide. But the products of science and of art do not speak of themselves. Ideas become instrumental and works of art become aesthetic only when they are approached through appropriate modes of inquiry and perception. (In the sciences, for example, conclusions have no cognitive status independent of the theory, method, and criteria against which they are developed and tested). Understanding science and appreciating the arts requires active engagement on the student's part, and emphasizing content to the exclusion of those modes of inquiry that produced it is to misconceive the nature of content itself. Furthermore, the disposition to become a creator as well as a consumer of intellectual and artistic products, a disposition that schools should try to foster, is frequently hampered by those who perpetuate the content fallacy. To avoid this fallacy requires attention to the form as well as the content of education. Both how and what students learn in school are of fundamental educational significance, and failure to appreciate their reciprocity has led many to subscribe to the fallacies of formalism and of content.

The third fallacy appearing in the literature on curriculum is an extension of the fallacy of content. It is the fallacy of universalism, which rests on the belief that some fundamental content areas or
topics are of universal significance regardless of the particular characteristics of the student whom the school is intended to serve. This fallacy leads to a perpetual hunt for the “best” curriculum as though there were one program that would be best for everyone of a particular age, regardless of other characteristics. Insofar as social reconstructionists attempt to establish global social reform values to the exclusion of considering individual differences of ability or context, this fallacy might define the useful limits of such an orientation. Academic rationalists often tend to commit the fallacy of universalism in their quest for an educational program suitable to all.

An even more important effect of this fallacy, however, is that it removes curriculum decision making from the arena of the empirical study of its context, placing it, instead, in the arena of rhetoric. The task of an advocate of a particular educational view becomes that of persuading others to accept it rather than to treat it as an opportunity to inquire into conditions necessary for adequate curriculum decision making. If the new math or science is good, so the fallacy holds, then surely it is good for everybody.

The fallacy of universalism is essentially conservative. Once the sacrosanct subject matters have been defined, further change is resisted. Tradition and the status quo usually are accepted. This fallacy is operating when we note how seldom discussions about the content of the curriculum produce suggestions of an iconoclastic nature. Most curricular recommendations accept the present array of content as given and focus on rearranging or supplementing, rather than replacing, what already exists.

In Conclusion

These five curriculum orientations and three fallacies that can be associated with curriculum have been identified to help clarify the angles from which curriculum theorists, educators outside the curriculum field, and lay people approach decisions about curriculum. Like any general scheme or set of distinctions, this approach has assets and liabilities. The categories do, however, simplify and organize a complex field and in that sense they can economize thought and function as a kind of mnemonic device that can be used to mine an extremely rich vein in education. Again, like any general scheme, the simplified version is never as detailed or as rich as the particular area where specific decisions need to be made. In that sense, it oversimplifies. We have not determined, for example, how consistently any given orientation tends to be held even by its strongest advocate, or how its applicability varies depending upon the age level of the students to be served by a program. Nor do we know how much orientations are compromised, negotiated, and combined in the actual decision-making process. We do not know the relationships between orientations that dominate at school board meetings and those that dominate in particular classrooms within a school district. And, what is more significant, we know even less about the relationship between orientations reflected in professional journals, from which the five orientations were distilled, and how they actually function in either the school board meeting or the classroom situation.

Despite these limitations, which hold for any general classification as well as for theory, the schema we have formulated enables those interested in curriculum to make distinctions that are more useful than those generated by philosophic categories such as pragmatism, realism, and idealism, and it is more refined than any suggested by student-centered, subject-centered, or society-centered approaches to curriculum. The five curriculum orientations exemplified in the articles that follow are part of a larger intellectual tradition than that of the curriculum field itself. Each approach or orientation is manifested in other fields bearing upon education: for example, the cognitive process orientation has its roots in faculty psychology; the technological orientation grows out of time-and-motion study; academic rationalism is related to rational humanism. The model provides another way of revealing the ramifications of intellectual developments in fields that at first glance seemed removed from education. The ideas propounded by any given curricular argument can usually be traced to an established, well-articulated tradition of normative inquiry. It is imperative that educators recognize the larger philosophical differences that their conflicts so systematically reflect. It would seem that a sensitivity to intellectual history, particularly as this history reflects changing conceptualizations of the possibilities and limitations of learning, is an essential ingredient in curriculum analyses.

This work makes no attempt to provide answers to questions about what schools should teach or how any curriculum should be organized. In a sense, the volume is analytical and technical. It
presents a schema, it explains why it was chosen, and it provides exemplary articles for each of the categories. We hope that readers will find these categories useful for organizing their thoughts concerning the goals, content, and organization of any curriculum.

Notes