

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

TEACHER-CENTRED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

TECHNOLOGY PROJECT: A STUDY OF CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING
AND THE PARTICIPATING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Education

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

SPRING, 1980

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express his sincere appreciation to his thesis advisor, Dr. Dennis King, who provided the guidance throughout the developmental and final stages of the thesis. Thanks are also extended to the committee members, Dr. John Seymour and Dr. Alexander Gregor. Their advice and encouragement were invaluable.

A sincere thanks is extended to my wife, Stephanie, for her understanding, patience and the many hours which she devoted to typing this thesis.

The writer also wishes to express the most sincere words of appreciation to his family - wife, Stephanie, sons, Dale and Kevin and daughter, Nancy, who provided the most encouragement of all and who sacrificed so much during the time this thesis was in progress.

ABSTRACT

The fundamental purpose of this study was to investigate and to analyze a teacher-centred curriculum development project - the Technology Project. This Project was sponsored by the Canada Studies Foundation. Fifty teachers from many regions of Canada participated in this curriculum project. The study had two sub-purposes. The first of these was to investigate the manner in which the project's participants made decisions about curriculum matters. The second sub-purpose was to analyze the participants' perceptions of this type of teacher-centred curriculum development.

The study included a literature review of two alternative approaches to curriculum design as well as some positive and negative teachers' perceptions from previous teacher-centred curriculum projects.

In order to place the study of the Technology Project into proper perspective, it was necessary to include some historical background on two main areas. The first area of importance was the historical development of "pan"-Canadian curriculum prior to the 1970s. The second area which was essential to the study was the role of Canada Studies Foundation, over the last ten years, in the promotion of "pan"-Canadian curriculum projects. These two areas are briefly summarized in the main body of the study.

The data for the first sub-purpose on curriculum decisions was collected from original project documents. Some of the main sources were minutes of each meeting, the Director's memos and letters, the project's original proposals, meeting agendas and case studies. The study included a brief description of the developmental stages of the Project as well as original documents. The original documents which illustrate the decision-making processes were included in Appendix "A".

The data for the second sub-purpose on participants' perceptions

was obtained from written and oral evaluations. The data was collected from the following original sources: a written summary by each team on their curriculum development experiences, a transcribed taped critique of the project at the final meeting, a written and transcribed taped critique of the project as perceived by one team within the Technology Project and a written and transcribed taped critique of three projects, as perceived by the Director of each project. These four major evaluations rather than a questionnaire were used to analyze the participants' perceptions.

The major findings of the study suggested that the decision-making procedures must be clearly identified at the outset of the project. The Steering Committee meetings of the Technology Project used the "consensus model" to arrive at all decisions concerning curriculum matters. The study also revealed, from the participants' perceptions, that some basic components are essential in order to achieve a functional teacher-centred curriculum development project. These components or principles were listed under the findings of study.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last decade teachers in Canada have played an important role in the development of curriculum. Many teacher-centred curriculum projects have been established at the local, provincial and national level. Most projects have had a high degree of success in curriculum development, material production and teacher professional growth. Perhaps the most challenging and unique curriculum development by the teachers in Canada has been under the sponsorship of the Canada Studies Foundation. In Phase II of its program, the Foundation established national projects which brought teachers together from different regions of Canada to work on curriculum materials for classroom use, in order to promote greater understanding of Canada among Canadian students. These projects have enabled many teachers to gain expertise and knowledge on curriculum development. However, presently across Canada there is a serious threat that many teacher-initiated or teacher-centred curriculum projects or programs will be terminated with the general shift toward a more centrally controlled curriculum. The general teacher freedom to develop curriculum in order to meet the needs of individual students is being circumvented in order to stress the needs of society.

II. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The centralists claim that the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are being neglected by the teachers. Critics of the present system charge, without concrete evidence, that there has been a general decline in educational standards. Many provincial Departments of Education are endeavouring to define basic education, demanding proficiency tests at all grades, especially high school, and insisting on closer supervision

of curriculum implementation. The significance of this shift will mean less stress on the development of self-realization and individual talents and a greater stress on the societal needs. This general shift in curriculum emphasis, along with the introduction of departmental examinations, could reduce many professional teachers to mere "technicians of schooling". In order to counterbalance the trend toward centrally controlled curriculum, teachers must endeavour to demonstrate to the officials and critics that the present system of teacher-centred curriculum has many positive benefits to the community, school, students and teachers. Teachers must take more pride in the promotion of their curriculum accomplishments if they are to retain the freedom of choice of what to teach. This statement by Wiseman and Pidgeon (1970:9) on British education best summarized the views on this issue:

Teachers and headteachers value the freedom of choice of what to teach. It is a freedom that we cherish, and we tend to regard other systems with some degree of compassion surveying them with no little element of self-esteem and national pride. And yet perhaps we sometimes tend to forget that the price of freedom is a heavy increase in responsibility and a concomitant duty to demonstrate and defend the efficiency of our actions.

The proposed study is designed to provide a detailed descriptive analysis of how one case study - Technology Project - developed a curriculum model which enabled a teacher-centred curriculum project to become a feasible and a realistic venture for regular classroom teachers. The analysis of the research material revealed that very few practical curriculum models are available, especially in Canada, which could be used as a guide by practising teachers. Teachers require sound curricular guides on programs if they are to survive professionally in the face of increasing demands for accountability, economy and excellence. Hopefully, this study will be of some assistance to meet this end.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to investigate and to analyze, through an intensive study of one case - a National Project on Technology, how a teacher-centred curriculum project made decisions about curriculum matters and how participating teachers perceived this type of curriculum development. More specifically this research should answer the following major questions:

1. How did the Project team reach a common understanding of the purpose and direction of their work? (Did they rely on objectives for this? If not, what sort of statements did they use for this purpose? How was agreement secured and maintained?)
2. How did the Project team organize its work? (What tasks did they undertake, in what order, and in what manner?)
3. How did the Project team use its understanding of the purpose and direction of the work to produce plans and materials? What procedures, formal or informal, were used to develop plans and materials? What information and assumptions or presuppositions did these procedures require?
4. How did the participants perceive the teacher-centred curriculum project? What were the benefits to teachers who participated in teacher-centred curriculum? What did they gain as individuals and as professionals? What did they learn about curriculum development? How important is curriculum theory to this type of project? Did the teachers develop curriculum or classroom materials?

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This section is intended to outline briefly the investigative procedure as well as show how the major areas of the study are related to

the main purpose of this investigation. The study is organized in the following manner:

1. The main purpose of the study, as stated earlier, is to investigate and to analyze the Technology Project. The two central questions of this study are as follows:
 - a) How were the main decisions on curriculum matters made?
 - b) How did the participants perceive this type of teacher-centred curriculum development?
2. In the second section of the study, several assumptions are made about the Technology Project and the participating teachers.
3. In the literature review, the two main questions of the study are used as the focal point of the review. The reviewed literature summarizes two alternative approaches to curriculum design - the "theoretic" and the "practical". The review also includes the positive and negative outcomes of previous teacher-centred curriculum projects.
4. Some of the findings of projects similar to the Technology Project are included in a brief comparison of curriculum projects in Canada, Great Britain and United States.
5. To place the investigation of the Technology Project into perspective, it was necessary to include some historical background on the following areas:
 - a) A brief history on the development of 'pan'-Canadian curriculum.
 - b) The role of the Canada Studies Foundation in the promotion of 'pan'-Canadian curriculum. The Technology Project was one of several curriculum projects which was directly funded by the Foundation.
6. The procedure for collecting data is described in Chapter IV.

7. The developmental stages of the Technology Project and the manner in which decisions were made about curriculum are discussed in Chapter V. These are supplemented by the Appendix A.
8. The participants' perceptions of the Technology Project are summarized in Chapter VI.
9. The last chapter is devoted to the discussion of the findings, conclusions and implications of this study.

V. STATEMENT OF THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Three prior assumptions are being made about this investigation.

These are as follows:

1. That any curriculum project which is being established must have a clearly stated purpose or reason for its existence, as well as demonstrate its value to the people for whom it is intended.
2. That any teacher-centred curriculum endeavour which is attempted at the national level in Canada will be difficult to implement without the co-operation of the provincial governments.
3. That the participating teachers' abilities, attitudes and personal commitments to a project are crucial to consider when establishing teacher-centred curriculum projects.

In initiating curriculum projects it is vital to understand the purpose or reasons for establishing these and secondly, to show the value of these projects to the people whom these will affect - students, teachers and society. In Canada the need for revision of the history curriculum became clear in 1968 after Hodgetts' report, What Culture? What Heritage? which was a survey of history teaching across Canada. In his report he condemned, in no uncertain terms, the teaching of Canadian Studies in every part of the country. He stated in his report:

most Canadian studies as currently prescribed and taught, do not nurture advanced intellectual skills, they do not transfer knowledge that is useful to the individual as a citizen and to his society, and they do not encourage an understanding and appreciation of a great many aspects of our cultural heritage. (Hodgetts, 1968:75)

Hodgetts also found that the schools were lacking Canadian materials and using teaching methods almost universally condemned by reflective educators. He also reported that he was appalled by the lack of interest and knowledge about things Canadian shown by the nation's school children. It was this report that led to the formation of the Canada Studies Foundation in 1970. The Foundation launched a series of teacher-centred curriculum projects in order to produce materials and to involve teachers in curriculum development with the hope that this could improve Canadian studies in schools.

In support of Hodgetts' findings the Symons' Report in 1975 claimed:

the most valid and compelling argument for Canadian Studies is the importance of self-knowledge, the need to know and to understand ourselves, who we are; where we are in time and space; where we have been; where we are going; what we possess; what our responsibilities are to ourselves and to others. (Symons, 1975:12)

These two major studies point directly to the need for curriculum revision in order to provide better materials and teaching techniques for the future generations of Canadians.

In attempting to promote change in Canadian education it is important to remember that the control of education is at the provincial level, thus, any implementation of educational programs at the national level will be slow or none at all. There is no centralized system such as exists in France nor the depth of experience such as has enabled local initiative to flourish in curriculum work of the Schools Council in England. Prior to the formation of the Canada Studies Foundation in 1970, there was no national organization to promote Canadian Studies across the

vast regions of Canada. Canadians are only beginning to develop some framework for the promotion of Canadian Studies. In 1978 Hodgetts and Gallagher published the first resource guide for Canada Studies. The aim of the guide, Teaching Canada for the '80s, is to offer proposals for content of a Canada Studies curriculum for all provinces:

a common framework for studies of Canada . . . consistently 'pan'-Canadian in objectives and designed in truly pan-Canadian fashion, touching all curriculum areas and spanning full range of school years in a co-ordinated manner. (Hodgetts & Gallagher, 1978:VI)

In light of the weak national structure for education, it would be erroneous to think that a few teacher-centred curriculum projects established at the national level, with a handful of teachers, could have any major impact on Canada Studies. In spite of this, some progress is presently being made at the national level. This will be discussed within the framework of this study.

VI. LIMITATIONS

The following limitations are recognized in this study:

1. Not all of the participating teachers were involved in the taped critique of the project.
2. The project was in operation over a two year period. Teacher commitment changed with job reassignments.
3. Some teachers withdrew from the project before it was completed.
4. The project suffered a reduction in the budget during the development stage.

VII. DELIMITATIONS

The following delimitations are considered:

1. The study is based on only one national project.

2. The project did not have the representation from all regions of Canada. eg. Quebec, Saskatchewan.
3. Strict time limits were imposed for each stage of development. eg. approximately two months.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

To provide a wider range of the meaning of curriculum, the following definitions are included:

A curriculum usually contains a statement of aims and of specific objectives; it indicates some selection and organization of content; it either implies or manifests certain patterns of learning and teaching, whether because the objectives demand them or because the content organization requires them. Finally, it includes a program of evaluation of the outcomes. (Taba 1962:10)

A curriculum consists of all those learnings intended for a student or group of students. (Goodlad 1966:71)

Curriculum is a set of activities involving teachers, learners, and materials, and that these activities are provided through permanent institutions. (Reid 1975:247)

Phase I describes a time period (1970-75) during which the Canada Studies Foundation sponsored its first set of curriculum projects.

Phase II describes a time period (1975-77) during which the Canada Studies Foundation sponsored its second set of curriculum projects.

Teacher-centred curriculum - can be defined as programs that are totally planned, developed and implemented by classroom or student teachers.

Canada Studies are:

programs which deal with our society as a totality, in country-wide, interlocking perspectives that can be shared by all Canadians wherever they may live. (Hodgetts & Gallagher 1978:2)

Canadian Studies - are programs which investigate any event or operation or phenomenon occurring in Canada. These are usually more regional and ethnic rather than country-wide in nature.

National Projects - refers to curriculum projects which were established on a country-wide basis. This included teachers from many different regions of Canada.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

I. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The literature reviewed in this chapter relates to two basic areas which are essential to the study. These are the two alternatives to curriculum design - the "theoretic" and the "practical", and the positive and negative outcomes of teacher-centred curriculum.

II. TWO ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

"THEORETIC" AND "PRACTICAL"

In determining how to develop curriculum it appeared to be fairly simple at the outset. The theories of curriculum development would provide a logical starting point. However, research revealed that this whole field is in a state of confusion and the theorists are in disagreement.

Since the early 1950s there have been several educational theorists who have advocated the process of defining educational objectives as a fundamental step in curriculum development. They developed models and practices which have been described as efficient and scientific.

Walker (1971-72:51) defined the formal elements of the "Classical model" (Tyler 1950) as the objectives and the learning experience.

He elaborated:

its logical operations are determining objectives, stating them in proper form, devising learning experiences, selecting and organizing learning experiences to attain given outcomes, and evaluating the outcomes of those experiences.

Some of the views of behavioristic theorists of the 1950s [Tyler (1950), Bloom (1956) and Johnson (1956)] have some indirect conflict with those who advocate a more humanistic and ethical ideology. Theorists such as Eisner (1971), MacDonald (1956), and Schwab (1970), expressed the need for curriculum specialists to address themselves to the more practical worlds of real life.

At this point it might be worthwhile to explore the two differing views on curriculum development. Two prominent theorists who have developed specific models for curriculum development are Tyler (1950) and Goodlad (1969). Tyler in "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction" raised four fundamental questions on curriculum. These were:

1. What should be the educational objectives of curriculum?
2. What learning experience should be developed to enable students to achieve the objectives?
3. How should the learning experiences be organized to increase their cumulative effect?
4. How should the effectiveness to the curriculum be evaluated?

Tyler claimed that these are basic and their importance has been reaffirmed. (Tyler 1976:62)

Since the book was published, Tyler has revised some of his early thinking about curriculum. Tyler (1976:62) expressed that two areas require more emphasis. These are:

the active role of the student in the learning process and the implications student involvement has for curriculum development and secondly, the need for a comprehensive examination of the non-school areas of student learning as they relate to curriculum development.

Tyler is also referred to as the pioneer of behavioral objectives. Tyler has been criticized that his behavioral objective concept is too structured and inhibiting. His reply to this is:

that many current uses of the term behavioral objectives, imply procedures that are too specific. Behavioral objectives should be set at considerably higher or more general level than the extremely specific things I find in many current efforts to write them.
(Shane 1973:42)

Goodlad emphasized that curriculum planning involved at least two different kinds of processes:

First, there are political and legal considerations. Controlling

agencies set forth guidelines which sometimes take on the character of law . . .

Second, curriculum planning is a substantive enterprise in that it has certain perennial foci of intellectual attention, commonly identified as considerations of ends and means. (Maclure 1967:5)

Goodlad claimed that insufficient "model or theory building" is incorporated into curriculum. To accomplish this goal Goodlad and his colleagues extended Tyler's rationale and formulated some ends and means commonplace in curriculum . . . and superimposed the political structure within which curriculum planning might be conducted in a complex society. (Maclure 1967:5)

Goodlad and his group devised a model which "posed three levels of political decision-making; societal, institutional and instructional". (Maclure 1967:5) The "societal" curricular decisions are made by the province or state. "Institutional" decisions are made by the teacher, acting in concert, to develop curriculum guides for schools and school systems. Finally, the "instructional" decisions are made by teachers for a specific group of students, usually within a given school.

These "model building", "theoretic" approaches of Tyler and Goodlad differ considerably from the more humanistic, practical approach as defined by Schwab (1970) and Reid and Walker (1975).

Schwab viewed curriculum both as a conceptual scheme and as the changing, living happening it can be and is in the school community of real people. (Saylor and Alexander 1974:2).

Schwab (1970:1) criticized the field of curriculum as being "moribund", having "reached this unhappy state by inveterate, unexamined, and mistaken reliance on theory".

Schwab (1970:5) changed the focus from theoretic to what he called the "practical, eclectic" approach: