Curriculum Design: principles and orientations

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Points of discussion to position the curriculum perspective on ESD

- Vision of the curriculum
- Curriculum frameworks
- Curricular trends
- Types of curriculum
- Challenges facing the processes of curriculum change
Vision of the curriculum
Why is curriculum important?

- Juan Manuel Moreno (2006): The educational reform throughout the world increasingly focuses on curriculum

- The relations between the curriculum’s objectives and structures, the democratization of educational opportunities (diversification of modes of learning) and the achievement of social and pedagogical inclusion

- Inclusion means that all children and young people have equivalent opportunities of learning in different types of schools (inclusive settings and provisions) independent of their cultural and social backgrounds, such as their differences in abilities and capacities
Why is curriculum important?

- Curriculum is linked to **key definitions of the roles of education in society**: as citizenship education, as sensible personal development, as a core social and economic policy, and as an irreplaceable factor for the improvement of the welfare of the poorest population.

- Curriculum should include the **demands and expectations of society**. It reflects the kind of society to which we aspire/pursue. Nexus between society - education policy - curricular vision - teacher role and profile.
A comprehensive vision of curriculum

- The curriculum is both a **technical and political issue** that is well embedded in the complex interfaces between society, politics and education. Participation of a large and diverse number of actors and institutions (multiple stakeholders).

- The interfaces are **complex, dynamic, controversial and not-linear** with a vision of curriculum development as a continuous process and results.

- Cecilia Braslavsky: curriculum can be defined “as a **dense and flexible contract** between politics/society and teachers”
A comprehensive vision of curriculum

- The **intended curriculum** – focus on the aims and content of what it is to be taught

- The **implemented curriculum** – focus on what is actually put in place for students in schools

- The **experienced curriculum** – focus on the formal learning actually experienced by students

- The **hidden curriculum** – focus on the student experiences of school beyond the formal structure of the curriculum

- The **null curriculum** – focus on the areas and dimensions of human experiences not addressed through teaching
Curriculum Framework – Key features

A single document which is supplemented by other materials to guide the implementation of specific parts of the framework. Three elements:

- an **agreed social document** which defines and expresses national priorities for education and aspirations for the future of the nation

- a **technical tool** which establish parameters for the development of other curriculum documents such as subject syllabuses

- it provides **universal criterion** that allow diversity and flexibility at the school and classroom levels
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Introduction: Current Context</th>
<th>Reflects the findings of the contextual scan. It describes the social and economic environment in which teaching and learning occur</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Educational Policy Statements</td>
<td>Describes the Government’s goals for education, such as universal literacy and numeracy, the development of skills needed for economic prosperity and the creation of a stable and tolerant society</td>
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<td>3. Statement of Broad Learning Objectives and Outcomes / standards for each level/cycle</td>
<td>Describes what students should know and be able to do when they complete their school education. Outcomes should be expressed in a range of domains, including knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies, values and attitudes</td>
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| 4. Structure of the Education System | Describes the school system within which the curriculum framework is to be applied. It should specify:  
• Number of years of schooling, including compulsory schooling  
• Stages (or cycles) of schooling and their durations  
• Number of weeks in the school years, hours or teaching periods in the school week |
| 5. Structure of curriculum content, learning areas and subjects | Describes the organization of content within the framework and the extent to which schools and students can make choices. It might describe:  
• The pattern of subjects or learning areas to be studied in each stage or cycle (such as core, elective and optional subjects)  
• A brief description of each subject or learning area outlining the rationale for its inclusion in the curriculum and the contribution it makes to the achievement of the learning outcomes defined in Section 3  
• The number of hours to be assigned to each subject or learning area in each stage or cycle |
| 6. Standards of resources required for implementation | Describes standards as they apply to:  
• Teachers – qualifications, teaching load (number of classes per week)  
• Students – number per class in each subject  
• Materials – textbooks, computers, other equipment; facilities – classrooms, furniture, fittings. |
| 7. Teaching methodology | Describes the range of teaching approaches that might be employed in the implementation of the framework |
| 8. Assessing student achievement | Describes the importance of assessing the extent to which students achieve the outcomes established for each subject, and recommends or prescribes types of assessment strategies (such as written, oral, performance and practical skills demonstration) |
Curriculum Development - Trends

- Moving away from centralized models of curriculum decision-making towards more democratic, decentralized models within universal frameworks.

- Increasingly curriculum is being structured in ways which:
  - are appropriate to the needs and circumstances of regions,
  - address more effectively the needs of students (taking care of diversity).

- Adopting curriculum frameworks as overarching curriculum documents to guide curriculum design.

- Remodeling of learning experiences of many separate subjects into a more integrated content. Learning that is integrated enables students to apply knowledge and competencies more easily to their daily lives.
### International trends in curriculum change

**Paradigm change?**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer of facts</td>
<td>Student construction of knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorizations of information</td>
<td>Analysis, synthesis, evaluation, application of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration on knowledge</td>
<td>Development of knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes</td>
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<td>Summative assessment on academic achievement</td>
<td>Authentic and formative assessment of competencies</td>
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<td>Rote learning</td>
<td>Applied learning/learning in context</td>
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<td>categorized knowledge (traditional subjects)</td>
<td>Integrated knowledge (broader learning areas)</td>
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<td>Schooling</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
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<td>Focus on inputs</td>
<td>Focus on outcomes and processes</td>
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<td>Didactic teaching</td>
<td>Participatory activity-centered approaches and “Interactive methodology”</td>
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<td>Assumption that there is one “learning style”</td>
<td>Recognition that there are “preferred learning styles”</td>
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<td>Curriculum as product</td>
<td>Curriculum as both process and product</td>
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Types of Curriculum

- **Content-based curriculum:**
  - typically focused on *traditional subject disciplines*
  - often highly directive, detailed and rigid in both structure and time allocation
  - teaching emphasizes the development of lower level cognitive skills (memorization and reproduction of factual information)

- **Outcome-based curriculum:**
  - specify *outcomes that students are expected to achieve* in specific subjects or learning areas by the end of a specific stage of schooling
  - focus on the results rather than the means to achieve them
  - development of skills or understandings than covering required content

- **Objective-based curriculum:**
  - specifies *behavioural objectives* which aim to change the observable behaviour of students
  - objectives may describe what the teacher or student is to do, what subject matter is to be covered, or the expected student learning
Types of Curriculum

- **Competency-based curriculum:**
  - avoids a subject-based approach and emphasizes the cross-connections between learning areas
  - aims to ensure that every learner reaches specific minimum levels of achievement or competency at particular stages of schooling
  - emphasis on developing and demonstrating knowledge, skills, capacities, and behaviours, required for the successful completion of particular tasks (learning situations implying the mobilization and integration of resources)

- **Integrated curriculum:**
  - skills and knowledge are developed in more than one area of study
  - acknowledges that learning and knowledge have a social dimension and that learning is not only a “school-based” activity

- **Standards-based curriculum:**
  - assessments are criterion referenced (student performance is measured against the defined standard, not against the performance of other students)
  - standards can facilitate appropriate correlations between learning outcomes and educational services from different education units to create a customized system for the benefit of the students
Challenges facing the processes of curriculum change

- Historical, ideological and political disputes and conflicts
- Disciplinary identities and boundaries
- Discussions on curricular approaches
- An in-depth look of the classroom
- Traditional forms and contents of knowledge organization
- Corporative interests
The teachers in the processes of curricular change

- To change the **boundaries between disciplines** also implies redefining teachers’ identities, profile and role.

- **Resistance** to reforms. Fears and apprehensions. The relevance of ideological, corporative and technical issues.

- Reform proposals that focus mainly on teacher training through **processes of awareness and information exchange** have a limited impact.
The teachers in the processes of curricular change

- The prescriptive ‘top-down’ vision and its limited impact on changing schools and classroom practices. It is not only about assuming a down-top approach, it is much more complex.

- The role of teachers in educational reforms is underestimated

- Indifference towards the visions and feelings of teachers on educational reforms and curriculum change
The role of teachers in the processes of curriculum change

- According to a comprehensive vision of the curriculum, the teachers engage in the processes of curriculum change as *developers of the curriculum*, and not only as implementers.

- The **professional development of teachers** sustains the processes of design and implementation of curriculum change in basic education (significance of shared curriculum frameworks from childhood to teacher education).
Advancing towards a “Glocal” Inclusive Curriculum

- Objectives and scope of citizenship education: the development of core life-competencies through learning situations

- The school as the main engine of change, as co-developing the curriculum

- New approaches to teaching to be more inclusive of the diversities of students

- The emergence of multicultural education as much as a right as a context for learning
Advancing towards a “Glocal” Inclusive Curriculum

- There is no “successful” international model to follow but many experiences to share and to learn from

- The achievement of a delicate balance between the global, national and local expectations, realities and needs

- Universalisation of the concerns and curricular issues: cross-cutting themes such as education for sustainable development, inclusive education, peace education and HIV-AIDS
Two questions to address in group discussion (30 – 45 minutes)

Reports in plenary
(five minutes per group)

- Do you think a curricular perspective can help you in moving forward the ESD agenda in your country and/or region? Why?

- Which type of concrete actions will you propose to implement a curricular perspective towards the incorporation of ESD in teachers education curricula and/or at the provincial/district, school and classroom levels?
Thank you!
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