

Curriculum: A Theoretical Exploration

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Abstract

The curriculum represents much more than a program of study, a classroom text, or a course syllabus. Rather, it represents the introduction to a particular form of life; it serves in part to prepare students from dominant or subordinate positions in the existing society. The curriculum favors certain forms of knowledge over others and affirms the dreams, desires and values of select groups of students over other groups, often discriminatorily on the basis of race, class and gender. In general, critical educational theorists are concerned with how descriptions, discussion, and representations in textbook, curriculum materials, course content and social relations embodied in classroom practices benefit dominant groups and exclude subordinate ones.

According to the Oxford English dictionary , the word syllabus made its debut in the English language in 1656 with reference to, in essence, a table of contents. Its more particular use in referring to an outline of lectures or a course dates to 1889. The ambiguity about the meaning of the term does not seem to have dissipated in the subsequent centuries. For example, the term has been used in some fields to refer to a course of study rather than a document outlining information about the course. Although we presume that every college professor realises the necessity of preparing a syllabus for each course taught, what is meant by “a syllabus” seems to vary greatly among individuals. This term “curriculum” refers to a “set of planned activities which are designed to implement a particular educational aim—a set of such aims—in terms of the content of what is to

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