



The Meaning and Context of Curriculum

Dear Readers,

The purpose of education in the information age is to make the individual wiser through informatization. Many educational reforms have been carried out in today's world of education. Reforms are executed in many fields ranging from reflection of technological innovations into classrooms to increase in the rate of schooling. One of the important reform areas in education is curriculum reform or innovation studies. Whereas the knowledge in present areas is expanding on the one hand, new subject areas are emerging on the other as a result of explosion of scientific and technological information.

Curriculum is the most significant guide in the education process. Curriculum is developed for the purposes of establishing an education system of high quality in national or international levels, raising qualified manpower who will ensure the development of the country and supporting the maintenance and improvement of social and cultural values. Curriculum needs to be developed systematically, cooperatively and scientifically to achieve those functions (Demirel, 2015; Sönmez, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978).

One of the most important ways of explaining whether the curriculum is effective or not is the need for teachers, the implementers of curriculum, to be curriculum literate, and to examine "the meaning of curriculum" and "the context of curriculum in education process" from teachers' perspectives. It can be stated that those kinds of studies will contribute to thinking thoroughly on "the meaning of curriculum" and "the context of curriculum" in curriculum literature (Akinoglu, & Dogan, 2012). In this study, it is attempted to examine what "the meaning and context of curriculum" is and what it should be according to teachers as implementers of curriculum.

Curriculum changes create several differences for schools and teachers. Those differences sometimes bring up some innovations. It is considerably important to understand to what extent those innovations are adopted by teachers. The innovations that are not adopted may lead to loss of time, effort and money.

It is not realistic to expect all teachers to accept curriculum changes and implement them in their classes completely. Although all curricula are constructed based on theories of learning, teaching and evaluation and the same curriculum design is presented to all teachers, they put them into practice in different ways. Curricula may not be implemented as anticipated. Many factors have an effect on that situation. The most important of them can be stated as the perceptions of teachers on the meaning and context of curriculum and their decisions on implementation (Akinoglu, 2017).

Examining the curriculum implementation process is considered important in terms of presenting the effectiveness of educational innovations. The meaning and context of curriculum from teachers' perspectives explain the reasons why curriculum reforms are effective or not.

Without examining the change process and teachers' approach on curriculum understanding and implementation, and determining the implementation level of curriculum, taking decisions on learning outcomes may mean making an incomplete evaluation.

If differentiation in teachers' understanding on the meaning and context of curriculum is in high level or it is difficult to reach a consensus, the level of curriculum implementation is inevitable to be low (Demirel, 2005; Bümen, Çakar & Yıldız, 2014).

Different teacher characteristics are the important determinants of whether curriculum will be adopted or not. Teachers' open-mindedness and attitudes towards an innovative curriculum influence the context and fidelity of curriculum. Although teachers seem to be only one of the factors in the implementation process, they are considerably important and play a more determinative role than other factors in the achievement of reforms.

Many features about the structure and functions of curriculum have a potential to influence the meaning and context of curriculum. Those are related to the complexity and simplicity of curriculum. In case of the complex structure of curriculum, many skills are needed to be used. When curriculum is organized in a clear and simple way, the possibility of effective implementation increases. Other factors on the features of curriculum can be summarized as whether the curriculum is implemented properly and dedicatedly or not, whether the curriculum is sufficient and effective or not, and whether curriculum management is easy or not.

Teacher training is an important part of innovative curriculum implementation. In this context, there seems an agreement on the need for trainings about educational innovations or a new curriculum. However, what features needed to be included in the trainings have not been presented clearly, yet.

Curriculum implementation depends on openness to innovations of institution. Some of the features affecting the meaning and context of curriculum in an institutional base are listed as teachers' communication skills, school culture, possibilities and support provided by administrators, effective leadership, morale level of personnel, the extent to which an institution is active in problem solving and readiness of new program in implementation.

Teachers can implement and adapt the structure, philosophy and content of curriculum properly to context as long as they improve their professional knowledge and skills. Therefore, teachers can be stated to construct contextual effect and power by adapting curriculum according to characteristics of classroom, courses and students and giving more meaning to curriculum.

Implementation of curriculum is related to the structure of curriculum as well as teachers' views, thoughts and understandings on the meaning and context of curriculum.

Sincerely,

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