

Teachers' Philosophical Perspectives and Their Curriculum Engagement: Towards Articulating a Philosophy of Teaching

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Abstract: *This study determines the relationship between the philosophical perspectives and curriculum engagement of teachers. Teachers bring myriad attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions that impact the totality of their teaching experience. Their philosophy of teaching is at the heart of their profession as they interact with diverse stakeholders in the educational milieu. Teachers throughout their school experience have engaged with different types of curricula such as the explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum, and null curriculum. The study utilized the descriptive-correlational survey method and the sample comprised 80 public school teachers. The salient findings of the study indicate a significant relationship between the teachers' philosophical perspectives and the null curriculum engagement but there exists no significant relationship between the teachers' philosophical perspectives and both explicit and implicit curriculum engagement. Further studies are needed to explore areas of the educational endeavor to effect improvements in the curriculum that empowers and capacitates teachers, particularly in the teacher education programs, to understand, develop, and articulate a clear and functional philosophy of teaching.*

Keywords—curriculum, philosophical perspectives, philosophy of teaching, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Teachers bring myriad attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions which impact the totality of their teaching experience. Throughout their teacher preparation and in the actual practice of their profession, teachers have been impacted by different curricula such as the explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum, and null curriculum. Interestingly, practically everything we do in education reflects the outcomes of the planned and unplanned experiences with which we have engaged. Teachers must develop and articulate their philosophy of teaching. This will empower and capacitate them since it is implicit in their work as teachers (Ebert II & Culyer II, 2011). Such a philosophy of teaching encompasses a person's beliefs about teaching and learning, disciplinary and institutional structures and cultures, and expectations of stakeholders. (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002).

Their philosophy of education is at the heart of their profession as they gain understanding through critical reflection and speculation about the 'big' abstract questions of the role of education to seemingly trivial questions in classroom management (Orchard, Heilbronn, & Winstanley, 2016). In any of these situations, teachers are challenged to articulate their teaching philosophy. In so doing, they grow personally and professionally as they continually reflect and consider their individual goals, actions, and vision in carrying out their teaching mission.

Throughout their teacher preparation and the actual practice of their profession, teachers have been impacted by different curricula. Interestingly, practically everything we do in education reflects the engagement that teachers have with (a) the explicit curriculum which consists of the actual subjects taught in school and the announced character traits to be nurtured in students, (b) the implicit curriculum that encompasses unspoken lessons and values supported by the school supports, and (c) the null curriculum that reflects topics and issues the school has deliberately excluded from teaching students (Ebert II & Culyer II, 2011).

OBJECTIVES

This research paper examines the relevance of curriculum engagement to the philosophical perspectives of teachers. Specifically, the research focuses on (a) identifying the philosophical perspectives of the teacher-respondents, (b) determining the relevance of the curriculum engagement of the teacher-respondents, and (c) exploring the relationship between the teachers' philosophical perspectives and the three types of curriculum that teachers have engaged throughout their academic experience.

METHOD

The study utilized the descriptive-correlational survey method and the sample comprised 80 public school teachers. Data were gathered using two sets of questionnaires that were adapted from self-assessment activities regarding philosophical perspectives and types of curriculum (Ebert II & Culyer III, 2012). Data analysis was undertaken using a chi-square test of independence at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**On the Philosophical Perspectives of Teachers**

Table 1. Philosophical Perspectives of Teachers

Philosophical Perspectives	Frequency	Percentage
Progressivism	26	32.50
Essentialism	20	25
Perennialism	7	8.75
Social Reconstructionism	9	11.25
Eclecticism	18	22.50
Total	80	100

The first objective of the study was to identify the philosophical perspectives of teacher-respondents. Table 1 presents the teacher respondents' philosophical perspectives. It shows that Essentialism is advocated by a majority of the respondents while progressivism and social reconstruction have an equal number of advocates. There were a few believers in social reconstructionism and perennialism with the latter having the lowest number of advocates.

This implies that teachers have varied philosophical perspectives from which they seek an understanding of the purpose and process of education, in general, and teaching, in particular. These different schools of philosophy enable the teacher to have a holistic view of the educational task and how it relates to other aspects and concerns of life, particularly, in the educational setting. These philosophical perspectives are guiding insights to clarify and criticize concepts and theories to yield progressively coherent schemes of interpretation.

On the Relevance of the Curriculum Engagement

The study's second objective determines the relevance of the teacher respondents' curriculum engagement based on their philosophical perspectives.

Table 2. Relevance of the Explicit Curriculum Engagement

Philosophical Perspectives	Explicit Curriculum			
	Very Relevant	Relevant	Least Relevant	Not Relevant
Progressivism	67 (83.75%)	10 (12.50%)	2 (2.50%)	1 (1.25%)
Essentialism	68 (85%)	8 (10%)	3 (3.75%)	1 (1.25%)
Perennialism	59 (73.75%)	19 (23.75%)	1 (1.25%)	1 (1.25%)
Social Reconstructionism	61 (76.25%)	16 (20%)	1 (1.25%)	2 (2.50%)
Eclecticism	53 (66.25%)	25 (31.25%)	1 (1.25%)	1 (1.25%)
Average	77%	19.5%	2%	1.5%

Presented in Table 2 are the different assessments on the relevance of the explicit curriculum engagement vis-à-vis the philosophical perspectives of the teacher-respondents. The greater majority of the teacher-respondents (77%) expressed that the Explicit Curriculum is very relevant to their philosophical perspectives. However, 19.50% of respondents considered the explicit curriculum as relevant, 2% of respondents claimed it is least relevant, and 1.5% of respondents expressed not relevant. This recognizes the emphasis on the prescribed curricular contents that are specified in curriculum guides and syllabi which mandate the subject matter of the discipline. Currently, this is best exemplified by the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC) of the Department of Education that teachers are required to teach as the educational system adapts to the demands of the new normal due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3. Relevance of the Implicit Curriculum Engagement

Philosophical Perspectives	Implicit Curriculum			
	Very Relevant	Relevant	Least Relevant	Not Relevant

Progressivism	49 (61.25%)	20 (25.00%)	8 (10%)	3 (3.75%)
Essentialism	46 (57.50%)	23 (28.75%)	9 (11.25%)	2 (2.50%)
Perennialism	49 (61.25%)	18 (22.50%)	10 (12.50%)	3 (3.75%)
Social Reconstructionism	58 (72.50%)	10 (12.50%)	9 (11.25%)	3 (3.75%)
Eclecticism	49 (61.25%)	22 (27.50%)	8 (10%)	1 (1.25%)
	62.75%	23.25%	11%	3%

Table 3 presents the different assessments of the teacher-respondents on the relevance of the implicit curriculum engagement vis-à-vis their philosophical perspectives. The greater majority of the teacher-respondents (62.75%) expressed that Implicit Curriculum is very relevant to their philosophical perspectives. There 23.25% of respondents considered the implicit curriculum relevant. There 11% of respondents manifested that the implicit curriculum is least relevant. However, 3% of respondents said the curriculum engagement is not relevant.

As reflected in Table 4, the different assessments of the teacher-respondents on the relevance of the null curriculum engagement vis-à-vis their philosophical perspectives are very relevant (32.50%), relevant (23.75%), least relevant (17.50%), and not relevant (26.25%). These varied assessments reflect that a null curriculum has vital significance and an educational function even though several respondents (26.25%) consider it not relevant to one’s philosophical perspective.

Table 4. Relevance of the Null Curriculum Engagement

Philosophical Perspectives	Null Curriculum			
	Very Relevant	Relevant	Least Relevant	Not Relevant
Progressivism	33 (41.25%)	18 (22.50%)	16 (20%)	13 (16.25%)
Essentialism	12 (15%)	15 (18.75%)	16 (20%)	37 (46.25%)
Perennialism	5 (6.25%)	5 (6.25%)	26 (32.50%)	44 (55%)
Social Reconstructionism	29 (36.25%)	31 (38.75%)	10 (12.50%)	10 (12.50%)
Eclecticism	51 (63.75%)	26 (32.50%)	2 (2.50%)	1 (1.25%)
	32.5%	23.75%	17.5%	26.25%

These results highlight how this diversity in assessments concurs with the widely accepted impression that people have different philosophical positions on knowledge, activities, values, and experiences that are carried through the curriculum. Also, this recognizes the engagement of the teachers in the various curricula that are available in the formal setting such as school. The aims and purposes of education, curriculum content, teaching methods, and many other areas of educational endeavor are essential considerations that define every facet of the teachers’ professional and personal life.

Although only the null curriculum engagement indicated a direct influence in articulating the philosophical perspective, there is a need to look closely at the substantiality of the explicit curriculum, particularly, concerning the breadth and depth of discussion and integration that the philosophy of education plays in teacher education programs (Winch, 2012) and its indirect influence of implicit curriculum to foster intelligent understanding of the educational milieu in which the teacher functions. Further studies may be undertaken on various concerns such as curriculum models and pedagogical approaches (Di Masi, Diego & Santi, 2016; Kieser, 2016; Brownlee, et al.,2014), the critical evaluation of assumptions about teaching and learning (Reber, 2011), the role of extra-curriculum or co-curriculum, and the wisdom of content exclusions in the curriculum as well as the influence of other contemporary social and technological factors in nurturing and articulating a personal philosophy of teaching.

Relationship between Philosophical Perspectives and Curriculum Engagement

Table 5. Relationship between Philosophical Perspectives and Curriculum Engagement

Variables	X ²	p-value	Decision
Philosophical Perspective and Explicit Curriculum	17.2492	p-value = .140453	Not significant at p < .05
Philosophical Perspective and Implicit Curriculum	9.0644	p-value = .697424	Not significant at p < .05
Philosophical Perspective and Null Curriculum	159.6615	p-value < 0.00001	Significant at p < .05

These results indicated that there is no relationship between philosophical perspectives and engagement in both explicit and implicit curricula but there is a relationship between philosophical perspective and the null curriculum. This finding was unexpected and suggests a need to re-evaluate the curricular content since the null curriculum is often intentionally excluded from the awareness of learners in the school setting. However, it has an impact that has to be considered. Although it poses a challenge to discuss how these curriculum orientations influence the choices of teachers in educational policy practices (Jenkins, 2009), this indicates a practical implication of the findings showing a greater need to explore other factors that influence the developing and articulating of one's teaching philosophy.

CONCLUSION

This study established that articulating a teacher's philosophy of teaching is not influenced by their philosophical perspectives and engagement in the explicit and implicit curriculum. However, their philosophical perspectives and the null curriculum have a mutual influence in developing and articulating a teacher's philosophy of teaching. Further studies are needed to explore areas of the educational endeavor to effect improvements in the curriculum that empowers and capacitates teachers, particularly in the teacher education programs, to understand, develop, and articulate a clear and functional philosophy of teaching.

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