

Interrogating the Dialectical Relationship between Society and the School Curriculum: An Educational Sociology Perspective

Edmore Mutekwe

North West University, Faculty of Education and Training, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa
E-mail: edmore.mutekwe@nwu.ac.za, emutekwe@yahoo.com

KEYWORDS School Curriculum. Hidden Curriculum. Received Curriculum. Overt. Typology

ABSTRACT In this paper the researcher explores the discourse of the dialectical or mutual relationship between society and the curriculum. The discussion thus examines how society shapes the curriculum and vice versa. In the discourse, the contexts of social reproduction, transformation, decolonisation of the societal curriculum and their implications for what to teach (curriculum) and how to teach (pedagogy) form the basis of the arguments. These arguments draw largely on views on reconstructing the curriculum debate and on views on the curriculum in and out of context. Other views that are also used are those of Durkheim on pedagogy and sociology. For the latter part of the paper, the aforementioned concepts are explored in detail using examples from notions of curriculum as a document; process; a concept that describes that which is taught in schools; a set of subjects; the content of education; a program of studies; a sequence of courses; a set of performance objectives; a course of study or everything that goes on within the school, including extra-class activities, guidance and interpersonal relationships between educators, educators and learners as well as learners amongst themselves. Other conceptualisations of the term curriculum presented in this paper include perception of curriculum as everything that is planned by school personnel including a series of experiences undergone by learners or what the learners experience as a result of attending a school, an educational institution. The discussion thus unfolds by unpacking the different conceptions of the curriculum as a contextualised and contested social process that impacts heavily on school and society.