1. Approaches to creating curriculum

There are three main approaches to creating a curriculum. These approaches are underpinned by different ideologies and align with different theories of learning and approaches to teaching. Kelly (2009) describes the three main approaches as: content-oriented, product-oriented and process-oriented.

In practice some elements of the approaches may become mixed: this does not mean they should be mixed; it is simply a recognition that as curriculum becomes translated into practice there can be differences between the *intended* curriculum and the curriculum as it is implemented (or *enacted*). Sometimes these differences are reinterpretations, but sometimes they are mismatches that lead to practices that are not consistent with the curriculum as intended.

1.1 Content-oriented (education as transmission of content/knowledge-centred)

This view of curriculum positions it as based on content to be learned through a curriculum based in school subjects that draw content from the wider disciplines associated with them. The focus is on knowledge, and on culture to be transmitted to children and young people.

Subject/disciplinary knowledge is considered valuable in itself. Education is also seen as intrinsically valuable because it leads to intellectual development. There is a focus on learning as the gaining of knowledge.

1.1.1 Key elements

Ellis (2003) and Schiro (2013) summarise the key elements of this approach as:

Emphasis	• Focus on subject matter from academic disciplines • Learning is focused on what is considered important to know in subjects/disciplines • Starting point for curriculum development is disciplinary/subject knowledge – what forms of knowledge are central? What ways of thinking, reasoning and understanding are necessary if we are to say a pupil has learned? • Organised scope and sequence of content
Teaching	• Teacher-directed curriculum • Teacher as scholar, learner as novice • Various teaching strategies • Teachers as mediators of knowledge
Learning	• Mastery of content • Learner becomes knowledgeable/scholarly • Learning are cognitive development • Knowledge gives pupils the means to understand their world.
Environment	• Academic focus • Subject/discipline centred • Progress as development of knowledge • Cognitivist
Assessment	• Formal tests/examinations • Standards-based assessment

1.2 Product-oriented (education as instrumental)

This view of curriculum focuses on the outcomes of learning and is generally based on aims and objectives (or, more currently, learning intentions). It tends to have a behaviourist orientation to learning – using, for example, taxonomies of learning outcomes such as Bloom's or SOLO to define learning outcomes (against which learning is assessed).

Education and learning are seen in instrumental terms: they are valuable because of what they lead to, and what they enable a child or young person to do. Educational purposes are framed in this approach as outcomes of teaching and learning. There is a focus on learning as attainment of outcomes.

The roots of the product-oriented curriculum approach lie in 20th century Behavioural psychology – the model was popularised by the American educator Ralf Tyler (1902-1994) who worked in the field of assessment and evaluation.

1.2.1 Key elements

Schiro (2013) summarises the key elements of this approach as:

Emphasis	• Focus on 'terminal objectives' of curriculum: working backwards from the overarching aims/outcomes and purposes to decide what is to be taught/learned • Sequencing of learning towards learning objectives: what activities knowledge, attitudes, habits need to be developed if we are to say a pupil has learned? • Learning as behavioural change
Teaching	• Teacher-directed • Teacher shapes learning behaviours • Teacher ensures pupils work through curriculum tasks
Learning	• Learning experiences give opportunities for practice • Learning experiences build sequentially and produce a cumulative effect • Learner becomes more competent and more capable
Environment	• Subjects as learning environments • Teacher manages efficient learning • Progress against learning outcomes • Behaviorist – cognitive-behaviourist
Assessment	• Assessment of learning against learning outcomes • Summative assessment evaluates meeting of objectives • 'Measuring'/tracking attainment

1.3 Process-oriented (education as development/learner focused)

Stenhouse developed the process approach to curriculum design because of his concerns about the product-oriented approach to learning. His view sees curriculum as focused on *processes of learning* and development. This approach shifts significantly from the product-oriented approach: educational purposes are no longer framed as outcomes and goals to be attained but in terms of educational processes.

These processes generally relate to the holistic development of the learner and so this can be seen as a more learner-focused curriculum approach than the product or content approaches. It

sees curriculum documents not as sets of outcomes but as statements of the principles and processes that education seeks to promote and views education as a process of development.

While Stenhouse developed thinking on the process approach, the roots of it lie in the work of John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey's influence can be seen in the Hadow Report of 1931 which captures the spirit of a process approach: 'The curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.'

1.3.1 Key elements

Ellis (2003) and Schiro (2013) summarise the following key elements of this approach as:

Emphasis	• Experiential or process focus for learning: education as a process of growth • Integrated studies approach • Focus on learner interests • More fluid courses of study • Developmentally appropriate • Real-world emphases • Intergrative approach to what is learned rather than separated subjects
Teaching	• Teacher facilitates, creates opportunities for learning • Peer-teaching/peer-mentoring • Encouraging pupil empowerment, autonomy, development of capacities relating to personal choices, decisions and judgements
Learning	• Cooperative/collaborative • Relational • Inquiry/discovery/meaningful activities • Pupil initiated/learner interests • Topic units, project learning, interdisciplinary
Environment	• Environments 'rich in possibilities… that invite the children to undertake extended exploration and problem-solving' (Edwards in Schiro, p.138) • Constructivist/social constructivist • Continuous progress: no grading; individualised • Emphasis on affect • More fluid approach to learning • Cognitive and affective aspects of development cannot be separated: holistic approach
Assessment	• Formative • Student-initiated • Authentic • Reflective

2. References

A.K. Ellis (2003) *Exemplars of Curriculum Theory*. Taylor & Francis Group

A.V. Kelly (2009) *The Curriculum: Theory and Process*. SAGE publications

M. Schiro (2013) *Curriculum Theory*. SAGE publication