

Author: Brian Storey

Curriculum inquiry: A language primer

Curriculum inquiry – utilizing a layering metaphor:

Figure 1 is a visually constrained and reduced adaptation of the categorizations used by Schubert which relates five contemporary zones of inquiry to create a comprehensive curriculum landscape. The zones of inquiry are 1) curriculum as experienced and embodied, 2) curriculum as taught, 3) curriculum as intended, 4) the hidden curriculum, and 5) the null curriculum. The dashed lines between the zones are permeable and represent important boundary regions. For example, influences on teaching and the taught curriculum come from the students (the center), the intended curriculum, and the hidden curriculum. The study of influence on curriculum takes place in the boundary regions involves more than one zone and is often interpersonal and transactional. Contemporary curriculum inquiry occurs across all the zones and all the boundary regions depicted. No single zone or boundary regions can be promoted as most important if our aim is comprehensive understanding of curriculum (Storey, 2008).

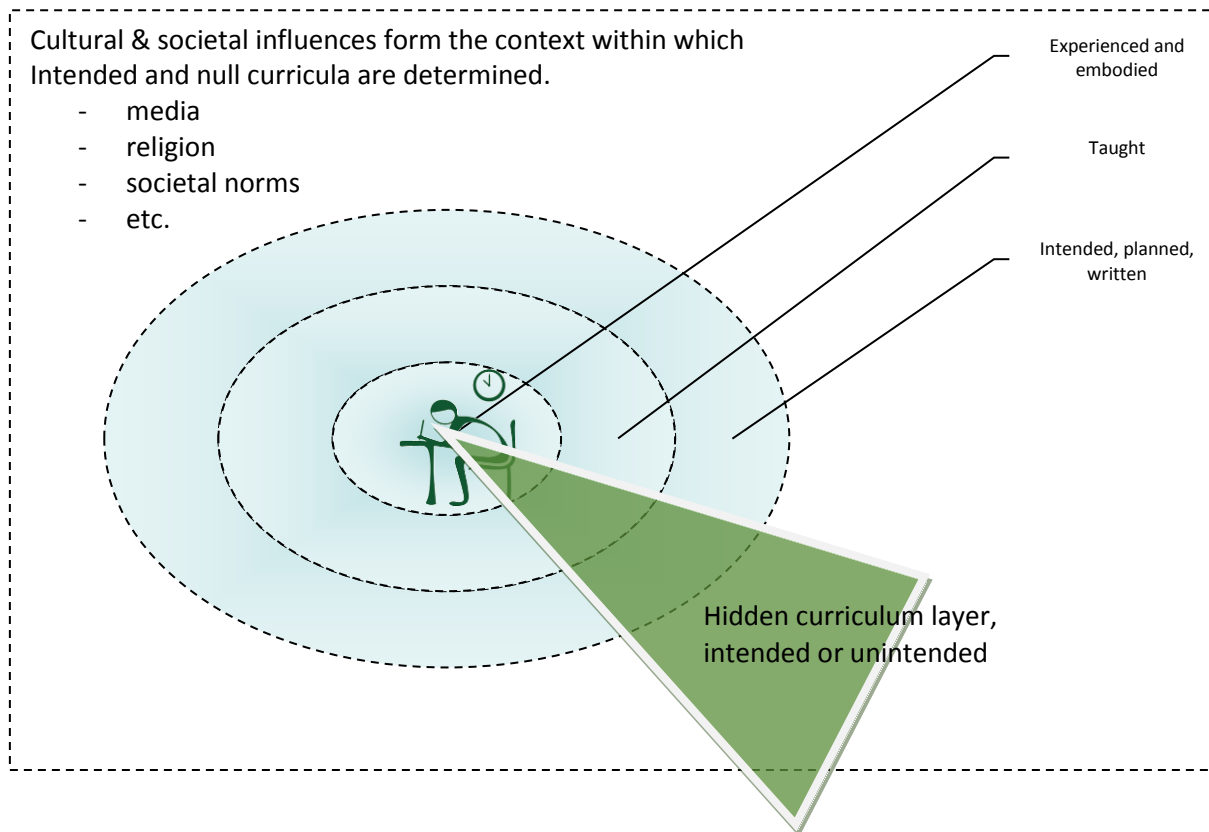


Figure 1. Curriculum landscape divided into zones of contemporary curriculum inquiry (Storey, 2010)

As a physical education example: If I teach a soccer lesson to a grade 7 mixed gender class using TGfU, with an intended curriculum of teaching tactics, but my lesson design focuses on skill, my taught and intended curriculum may not align. Furthermore, the students who are highly skilled may experience something completely different from those with little soccer skill. Therefore the way my teaching is experienced from what is intended may again be different based on individual difference. The hidden curriculum may be evident in the types of feedback I give boys versus girls. Detailed feedback for boys and general feedback for girls would signal a belief that boys have more potential (expectancy theory). This hidden curriculum shapes our students over time through self-fulfilling prophecy. The “null” curriculum or what is not taught in PE could include whole curriculum areas such as dance or gymnastics, or it can be psycho-social issues such as personal and social responsibility.

Zone of inquiry	Description
Embodied curriculum	“The zone of curriculum inquiry most closely associated with the use of the term ‘currere’; “a reading and writing of self in relation to the world” (Schubert, 2008, p.409)”
Experienced curriculum	The study of the curriculum as experienced “expands [the researcher’s] attention to thoughts, meanings, and feelings of students as they encounter it” (Schubert, 2008, p. 409).
Taught curriculum	The study of what teachers actually do and what they think they are doing rests between what is intended by curriculum designers and what is experienced by students and teachers during enactment.
Intended curriculum	The intended curriculum is the realm of curriculum designers, written curricula, and policy decisions. Recognizing the value-laden nature of who decides that which is of most worth, “how the intended curriculum is shaped through discourse, debate, politics, and by teachers, students, history, power, and ideology are all areas of critical inquiry into the intended curriculum” (Storey, 2008).
Hidden curriculum	“Inquiry into the hidden curriculum tries to identify what is taught and learned but not named in the intended curriculum. The marginalizing characteristics of curriculum are highlighted by studies and theorizing in this zone of inquiry. The discursive and physical construction of topics such as race, class, gender, culture, ethnicity, ability, religion or belief, place, sexual orientation, age, technology, and globalization are areas of study that have in-migrated and populated” the realm of inquiry into hidden curriculum (Storey, 2008, p. 11).
Null curriculum	“Inquiry into the null curriculum identifies that which is ignored or excluded in the official curriculum. Often that which is excluded, in contrast to that which is included, provides insights into the ideologies or beliefs that underlie the curriculum” (Storey, 2008, p. 12).

Unfortunately, the model depicted in Figures 1 does not capture the complexity of the current field because it omits the theoretical frameworks being used to approach the fore-grounding of the hidden curriculum. To understand the layering of theoretical positions that occurs in contemporary curriculum

thinking, we need to add more depth to the model and progress to a kaleidoscopic version that captures theoretical and topical layering in curriculum inquiry.

The work being done in the socio-theoretical areas of race, class, policy, gender, domestication, and institutionalization; and the work being done in specific topic areas, such as, defining school subjects, investigating individual disciplines, and the tested curriculum represent layers of theorizing and investigation that resides on the surface of the curriculum inquiry landscape but permeate down into teacher and student's experiences and ultimate embodiment of both intended and hidden curricula. Figure 6 shows a conceptualization of how the topical and theoretical villages that have in-migrated since the 1970s to the curriculum studies landscape can be layered and mix traditions creating a kaleidoscopic view of the zones of curriculum inquiry.

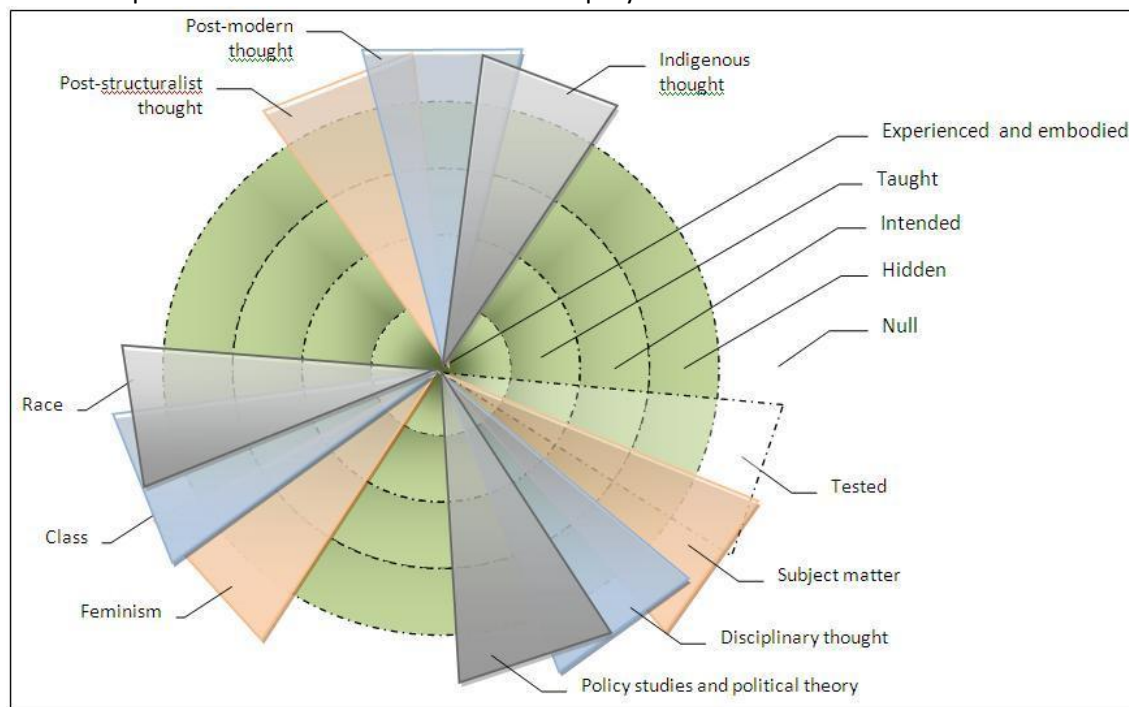


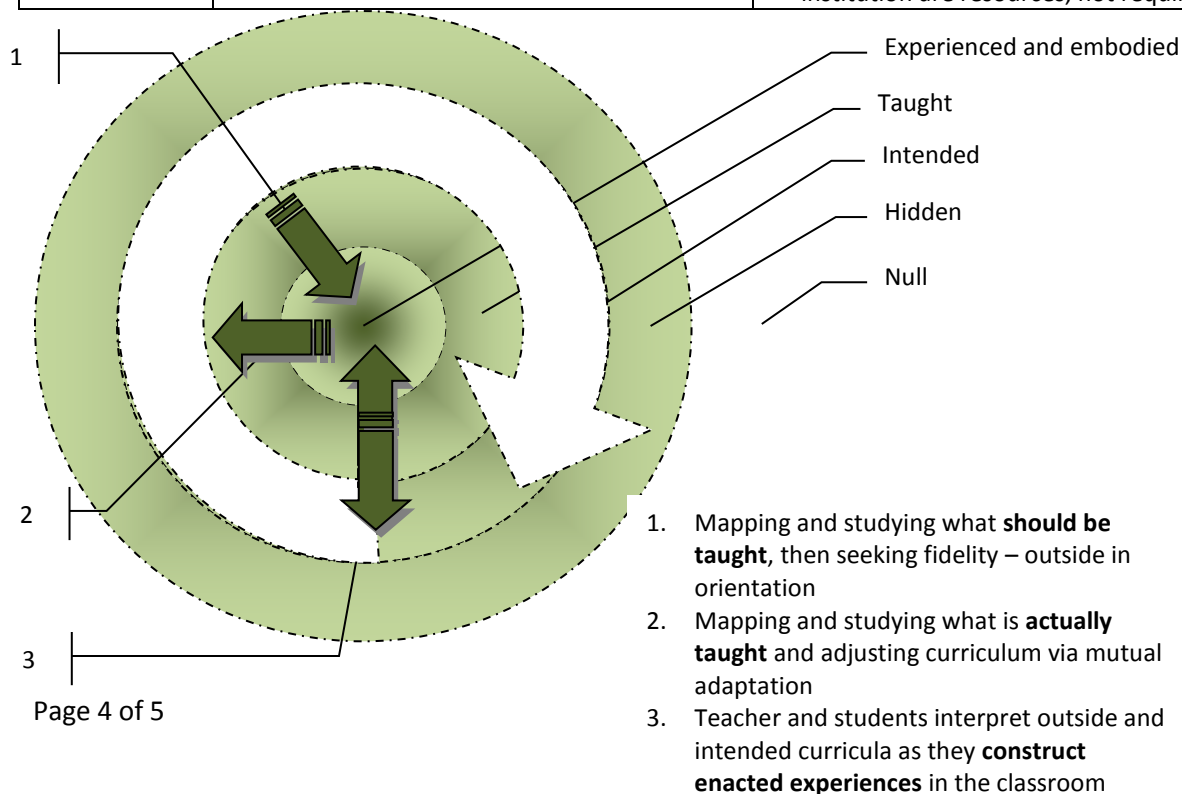
Figure 2. Theoretical and topical layering in curriculum inquiry

The example shown in Figure 2 could be configured in a multitude of ways. The boundaries of the theoretical orientations used to foreground curriculum issues overlap and bleed into one another. In keeping with the model as more enabling than constraining, the layers added on top of the zones of inquiry illustrate the fact that no curriculum implementation and design is value neutral. They are all theoretically tinted. Organizing the layers of our curriculum inquiry allows us to articulate our position for others and role-shift to other positions for reflection and deepening understanding. . We now have a model to help us locate ourselves and our inquiry as well as find and describe the locations and traditions of others sharing the curriculum inquiry journey with us.

Curriculum implementation orientations

An implementation orientation reflects your view of curriculum and learning. Whether you believe knowledge can be transferred from teacher to learner, or whether you believe knowledge has to be constructed from experience is typically reflected in one's view of curriculum implementation.

Orientation	Description	Representative institutional actions
Fidelity approach	Under this mode of thinking content modules and standardized testing are considered tools to “measure the promise” the institution has made to the public in the form of its Academic Signature and core competencies. The use of the curriculum innovation and the achievement of desired results represent high fidelity (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977).	• Development of policy requiring articulation of courses and inter-disciplinary core competencies • Creation of “canned curriculum” modules related to desired learning outcomes • Creation of performance standards and standardized testing to measure student and faculty performance
Mutual adaptation	The “approach whereby adjustments in a curriculum are made by curriculum developers and those who actually use it in the school or classroom context. This implies a certain amount of negotiation and flexibility on the part of both designers and practitioners” (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992, p. 410, in Pinar et. al., 1995, p. 700).	• Invitation for input on core competencies • Themes and competencies are heuristics in a learning community and understood, reinforced, and evolve through dialogue and re-iteration • Competencies and learning outcomes are open to negotiation
Curriculum enactment	“Externally created curricular materials and programmed instructional strategies at the heart of the fidelity and mutual adaptation perspectives are seen as tools for students and teacher to use as they construct the enacted experience of the classroom” (Synder et. al, 1992, p. 418, in Pinar et. al., 1995, p. 701).	• Professional autonomy of faculty reinforced and respected in policy • Assessment is authentic and reflects experience with curriculum, but also, relates to standards of external curriculum intention. • Curriculum documents provided by the institution are resources, not requirements



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