Curriculum negotiation

Voice, democratic citizenship and 21st century skills
Jeroen Bron (j.bron@slo.nl)
Dutch national institute for curriculum development (SLO)
- Independent but with formal (legal) task to develop national curricula frameworks and guidelines; advice government; do research to improve quality

Position
- Dept for research and advice
- cross curricular themes
- Coordinator for citizenship education
Introduction (2)

- PhD at University for Humanistic Studies, Utrecht
- Supervisors: Veugelers and Bovill (Glasgow)
- Published in Journals:
  - Educational Research (NFER)(2011);
  - Teaching Citizenship Education (2012)(ACT);
  - Pedagogiek (2014);
  - Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue (2014);
Dissertation

- What can be the role of secondary education students in curriculum development?
  - What do students contribute to the curriculum?
  - Does the process of involvement contribute to the development of certain democratic citizenship and 21 century skills?

- Theoretical framework (literature review)
  - Student voice, student participation
  - Citizenship ed., HRE & 21st century skills
  - Curriculum development, curriculum negotiation

- Explorative Case Studies on curriculum development at class level (geography, sustainability, sexual diversity, health ed., religion and world views)
Point of departure (1): Democratic Citizenship Education

• Worldwide on agenda / in curriculum
• providing opportunities for students to experiment with and experience participation within school
  – Citizenship-as-practice (Lawy & Biesta, 2006)
  – Active citizenship (Nelson & Kerr, 2006)
  – Democratic Citizenship (Wesheimer & Kahne, 2004; Veugelers, 2004/9)
• Opportunities related to the curriculum are scarce
In addition: 21st century skills

• Focus on citizen (and employee) of future
  – Critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication (Trilling & Fadel, 2009)
  – + Imagination, curiosity, taking risks, overcoming failure (Goyal, 2012)
  – Knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and ethics (KSAVE)(Binkley et al, 2010)
Point of departure (2): Student voice

• Growing movement. Engagement and voice element in recent curriculum renewals (Sinnema, 2013)

• "Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling; their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education" (Cook-Sather, 2006)

• Essence: space, voice, audience, influence (Lundy, 2007)
Motives for student voice

• Normative: youth people are entitled to a voice in matter that affect them (Children's rights).
• Educational: participation in negotiating and decision-making process has educational benefits: it contributes to the development of skills.
• Developmental: children and young people are developmentally ready to participate, they are often used to more responsibility and autonomy outside school.
• Emancipatory: inviting students into the curriculum design changes the power relations and provides opportunity to hear voices that are often marginalized.
• Curricular: involving students in curriculum design improves the relevance of curricula.
Essence of curriculum negotiation

• A. Education can contribute to a more just society by modelling "the formation of a collaborative democracy which values inquiry and negotiation" (Boomer, 1992b: 277). This implies the development of citizens with democratic abilities to collaborate, negotiate and enquire.

• B. "Curriculum(ing) implies action and should not be seen as a product consisting of content, activities, methods and outcomes, but as a process" (Boomer, 1992c: 32).
Essences (2)

- C. "Curriculum intentions should be made explicit to students, students should be 'actors', curriculum (...) must involve collaboration between teacher and student" (Curriculum Perspectives, 2012: 13-14). The curriculum is "a jointly enacted composition that grows and changes as it proceeds" (Boomer, 1982: 150).
Student voice in the curriculum

• Pleas for / examples of student participation in curriculum development
  – Early reformists (Dewey, 1938; Freinet, 1946): teacher student interaction
  – Curriculum theorists (Pinar, 1974; Stenhouse, 1975; Goodlad, 1979; Eisner, 1979): the curriculum as a process
  – Student voice movement (Fielding, Mitra, Rudduck, Cook-Sather)
  – Democratic education (Apple, 2004; Beane, 1997; Grady et al, 2014)
  – Constructivistic learning (Boomer, 1982, Breen & Littlejohn, 2000; Rothstein & Santana, 1911)
  – School improvement (Levin, 20000; Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; König et all, 2010)
Prerequisite: curriculum as process i.s.o. product


• Critique on Tyler rationale
  – knowledge is presented as unquestionable truth.
  – Teachers follow instructions and students are recipients with absent identities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Role of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The structure and content of a unit</td>
<td>Product that can be defined and put on paper.</td>
<td>Those with power construct learning outcomes. Once designed, the curriculum becomes external to the designer and has an authority of its own.</td>
<td>Student is consumer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is being taught by a teacher, how and in what depth.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The students' experience of learning</td>
<td>A process and structure that enables student learning.</td>
<td>Content takes a secondary role.</td>
<td>Students are able to explore with their teachers areas that suit their needs and motivations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All that is intended and unintended in the transaction between learner and teacher.</td>
<td>The teacher defines the process, ensuring it is structured. Requires an environment based on open communication, trust and mutual respect.</td>
<td>The learning of students is the central concern of the teacher, not the teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. A dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning</td>
<td>A dynamic and collaborative process of learning for student and teacher. A &quot;community of scholars&quot;</td>
<td>Teacher and student acting as co-constructors of knowledge. The overarching goal of the curriculum is to empower students.</td>
<td>Co-constructors, members of a learning community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum as a process: examples

- Pinar (74): the curriculum is a process, a lived experience
- Stenhouse (75) makes a distinction between the curriculum as an aspiration with intentions and prescriptions; and curriculum as an achievement
- Goodlad (79): the curriculum is determined by interpretations, transactions between different curricular domains (societal, institutional, instructional, personal) and levels (state, school/teacher/student)
- Eisner (79): the curriculum is what actually happens in the class between teacher and students.
Stenhouse (1975:UK)

• "A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice".
Elliot Eisner (US, 79)

• The rationality of teaching is more dynamic, more interactive, and less mechanistic.

• Not all ends cannot be planned and predicted in the development of the child and his/her curiosity and inventiveness.
Kelly (2009, UK)

- a top-down, prescribed curriculum is fundamentally totalitarian and far from democratic;
- in a democratic society pupils have the rights to comment on and contribute to the curriculum;
- to impose one body of knowledge, one culture, one set of values on all pupils regardless of their origins, their social class, race or creed is to risk at best, offering them a curriculum that is irrelevant, meaningless and alienating (Kelly, 2009)
Beane & Apple (1995)

• Students must be encouraged to ask questions about curriculum content like: Who decides what should be taught to which groups of students and for what purposes?"

• A democratic curriculum invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of "meaning makers"
A method for the case studies: worksheet

• Based on Boomer, Cook and Beane (1982, 92, 97)

• Worksheet consists of five phases:
  – Individual: listing prior knowledge; raise questions
  – Small groups: *word web* on prior knowledge;
  – *negotiating* questions
  – Whole class: teacher – groups *negotiate* questions, status and sequence
  – Small groups: *plan* forthcoming lessons: who, how and when do we answer the questions
A method: Principles for curriculum negotiation

I. Education has a responsibility to further democratic qualities [as part of aims for citizenship education].

II. Student voice is a set of practices that contributes to the development of democratic qualities based on rights [democratic practices].

III. Democratic qualities are developed by interpersonal practices such as discussion, social interaction and decision making [educational benefit].

IV. Students are entitled to have a voice in their education [right to participate].

V. Students can offer unique perspectives and within a class these perspectives can be an example of diversity [student voice].
A method: Aims, based on curriculum framework for C.E. and 21ct skills (1)

1. Taking learning into one's own hand in relation to ones identity.

*Students have a positive appreciation of learning as a life-enriching activity and a sense of initiative to learn. They feel and show respect for one's own development as well as the development of others.*

To do so students can:
- Reflect critically on their own identity and learning experiences.
- Identify gaps in knowledge.
- Ask meaningful questions.
- Go beyond basic mastery to expand ones own learning.
- have the ability to reflect critically on the object and purpose of learning.
Aims (2)

2. Cooperate in divers teams

Students want to stand up for a social climate in which everybody feels free and safe to express themselves. They show respect for cultural differences and be prepared to work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds.

To do so students can:
- Express, explain and communicate their views, opinions and ideas.
- be flexible, open and responsive to new and divers perspectives.
Aims (3)

3. Participate in democratic decision making.

*Students are willing to participate in democratic decision-making at different levels. They can negotiate and balance diverse views and believes to reach workable solutions.*

To do so students have:
- the ability to negotiate and the disposition to compromise.
- the ability to cope with conflicting interests and manage possible tensions when reaching and carrying out majority decisions.
- the ability to accept and deal with the possibility that their views will not be shared by others.
- have insight in different and shared roles, tasks, positions and responsibilities of people in schools.