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Final Exam Writing Assignment

While reflecting on different forms of educational inquiry I am choosing to focus on the inquiry of the content and organization of the curriculum. Although I do believe that all of the forms of educational inquiry are valuable I find the ways that individuals search for knowledge of the content and organization of the curriculum the most interesting. Searching and questioning what is important for educators, administrators, or educational psychologists to teach is an essential task when considering education for America's youth. The selection of the content that we are exposing our students to and the manner in which we do it is one of the most important responsibilities of an educator as well as a school district. In other words, discussing what is worth knowing is a fruitful approach to studying education.

There are so many varying opinions regarding what is important when selecting what should be part of a set curriculum. It is such an interesting debate because there are individuals that are very passionate about what is important to teach. I seem to be always in the 'gray' area. I can never quite side with one perspective, like Gardner vs. Hirsch for example. I tend to agree with points that both arguments make, but looking at both viewpoints does make for a good learning experience.

One distinct feature to the inquiry of curriculum is the importance of having conflict of ideas or having a counterplayer. It is important to look into differing views of curriculum inquiry when trying to discover what is most needed to improve American schools. We learn by inviting in competing ideas as well as the arguments that support the ideas. It makes us responsible for understanding each side of the argument. Having a counterplayer can cause "a heightened sense of responsibility for one's

ideas” and one “is not an enemy but a resource for the better understanding of ideas and practices”. (4-2) Looking at competing ideas is a valuable tool when trying to understand why you believe what you believe in the field of education. It is a helpful resource when looking at the content and organization of the curriculum. When discussing education the numerous problems or issues in education always seem to come up. When taking part in curriculum inquiry it is important to probe into the ‘problems’ in education (things like motivation, achievement, and culture). Looking at different viewpoints of a problem can help to come to a middle ground. Curriculum inquiry allows us to discuss what is important to teach today’s students and learn from others opinions.

Another distinct feature in curriculum inquiry is how the grade level of the curriculum being discussed can affect the way that people search for knowledge of teaching curriculum. There are numerous competing ideas regarding curriculum inquiry. The viewpoints that I researched all had one basic foundation fairly similar; the idea that early grades (K-2) should have a “core curriculum” that provides a basic foundation was agreed upon between the counterplayers. They all seemed to have similar opinions about the organization and content of the curriculum for early education. The disagreements came into play when looking into later grades and what should be taught during those years. One side of the argument believed that less is more when talking about curriculum and providing a deeper understanding is most important. The other side of the argument discussed the importance of critical knowledge and teaching essential facts and ideas. By looking at both counterplayer’s viewpoints and their research that supported them, I was able to gain a better understanding of the debate of the inquiry of the content and organization of curriculum.

There are many challenges or issues that come with curriculum inquiry. When talking about curriculum and what is important to teach you have to take numerous factors into account. It is important to think about varying opinions about the importance of cultural influence when selecting a curriculum. Some argue that culture should impact what we teach different groups of students while others argue for a set curriculum for all. You also have to consider “the many goals and activities of education and the nature of the mind and workings of intelligence in the circumstances of public education today (with the controversial Federal standards movement associated with the *No Child Left Behind Act*)” (4.3). Considering all of these influences while considering the selection of the ‘appropriate’ curriculum can be a controversial task. One feature of curriculum inquiry is considering what is worth knowing for different groups of people. There has to be a balance between the internal (or strictly cognitive) interacting with what is external (or culture). Looking at the counterplayers arguments can provided a wealth of knowledge.

When building a curriculum there is a question of what is most important. Is it more important to teach for deep understand of a fewer disciplines or providing a broad knowledge base of facts to prepare students for the future? These are two distinct approaches to curriculum inquiry and what we should focus on when teaching our students. Another important feature of curriculum inquiry is the idea of prior knowledge and the effect it can have on the learning that our students experience. Associating content to other content taught can improve higher order thinking skills. This is something to consider when inquiring into different forms or kinds of curriculum.

Another distinct feature of curriculum inquiry is that, to some extent, the person inquiring into the curriculum always brings their perspectives into play. There has to be a balance when taking part in curriculum inquiry. It

has to reflect human differences while keeping in mind the important content and subject matter of the disciplines being taught. Curriculum inquiry is a very personal experience. The inquirer always brings their experiences into their understanding. That is why it can be a rich experience to look at the “polarization of ideas” to gain a better understanding.

The accessibility of the results of curriculum inquiry seems to be readily available for teachers, administrators, and other interested in education. Although, I should make note, that when I say readily available I say that with caution. Typically what is readily available is one opinion or viewpoint on what should be part of our curriculum. There is always a new debate or professional development about the next big initiative in curriculum development. We are always told what to teach from people ‘higher up’. I do not see the “polarization of ideas” or the views from the counterplayers. We do not get to look at two opposing ideas and meet somewhere in the middle. As educators, looking at competing ideas of curriculum inquiry could be extremely beneficial and maybe even provided that ‘ah-ha’ moment.

As an educator the inquiry of the content and organization of the curriculum is an extremely beneficial approach to take. It is our responsibility as educators to explore what curriculum to present to our students. We cannot forget to look at how it should be presented to our students. By doing this, an educator, can gain a wide understand of curriculum development. The younger years are crucial in building an essential foundation that can be built upon for years to come. We need to inquire into what we are going to provided our students in terms of curriculum and most importantly why. Taking a look at the argument of what is worth knowing while provided a fruitful experience for an educator. Looking at disagreements in the inquiry of the content and organization of the curriculum will provided us with a rich knowledge base to make decisions

or form opinions from. Looking into the discussions and arguments of the inquiry of the content and organization of the curriculum opened my eyes to the competing ideas and how important it is to get a good understanding of why we are teaching the curriculum that we are teaching. It highlighted the importance of my responsibility.