In a matrix (chart), compare the following theoretical camps regarding curriculum design:

1. Traditionalists

2. Conceptual Empiricists

3. Reconceptualists (critical theorists)

Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical camp and determine a personal position regarding curriculum theory.

Use the Topic 2 readings and GCU Library to research a minimum of three peer-reviewed articles in support of your analysis.

While APA format is not required for the body of this assignment, solid academic writing is expected and in-text citations and references should be presented using APA documentation guidelines, which can be found in the APA Style Guide, located in the Student Success Center.

Clarifying Content Priorities

Grand Canyon University: SED 455

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|  | Summary | Strengths | Weakness |
| Traditionalists  Famous theorists include Franklin Bobbitt, Henry Harap, Werrett Charters, John Dewey, and Edward Thorndike  Focuses on objectives,  Activities. Curriculum can be created before the teacher ever enters the classroom | Plans and curriculum are seen as one and the same in this method. There is protocol for developing curriculum.  Traditionalists believe curriculum can be created without ever stepping foot inside of a classroom. (Core Knowledge schools)(Lecture 2, 2010). | Information is organized and structured. Standards are ensured to be met by guidelines that are used. Standards are the basis for the creation of all curriculum. | Information is created without ever setting foot inside of the classroom, the takes away the feedback aspect of curriculum formation.  Due to the heavily standards-based nature of this curriculum, and the reliance on standardized testing and assessments, there is a tendency to “teach to the test” and provide information that will help the students to pass the test but may not be relevant or useful in life. |
| Conceptual Empiricists  Famous theorists include Benjamin Bloom*,* Jerome Bruner*,* David Berliner*,* George Posner*,* Robert Stake*,* and Herb Walberg.  Do not typically work with teachers and schools; instead, impose curriculum design upon them  Evaluate current situations and suggest alternatives to improve curricula and instruction | Conceptual Empiricists are strong in theory. This groups sees education as a living process. The curriculum is often outside of the box activities that don’t fit the normal pattern for curriculum. Believers in this method take a systematic approach. (Backward design) (Lecture 2, 2010). | Admits education is a changing thing, this allows for adaptations to occur. It expects for adaptation to occur during the formation and use of the curriculum. Curriculum is formed from the end to the beginning, allowing for questions to be addressed that would otherwise be missed. | Too much theory is not always a good thing. This method may be difficult to apply in some content areas due to the nature of the content. This could be a major problem due to perspective. A different perspective many cause one set of teachers to interpret the standards differently than intended.  curriculum developers are less likely to work with teachers in order to develop curriculum. This lack of utilization of a valuable resource leads to less effective curriculum and may result in a curriculum that teachers are less inclined to use as they do not believe that their opinions were taken into account during its creation. |
| Reconceptualists (Critical Theorists)  James Macdonald*,* Michael Apple, John Mann, Dwayne Huebner  Transform society via critical awareness, empowerment, and knowledge  Teach students to question and critically analyze literature and curriculum content | Reconceptualists are beyond the outside of the box thinkers. They believe that schools are holding children back and are old-fashioned. They think schools should be centered around the children who guide the way the curriculum goes. Encourages free choice. (Magnet school-International Baccalaurate)(Lecture 2, 2010). | Reconceptualists encourage freedom of choice, thus encouraging the imagination. Curriculum is centered around community and world problems, giving students a realistic view on how to solve actual problems (Gurmet, 1989 & Jupp, 2007). Creating students that are part of the solution rather than just an informed student. (Barnes, 2015 & Gurmet, 1989). | Since this is a new approach, there is very little written about it. (Barnes, 2015 & Gurmet, 1989). Since there are very few articles even written about Reconceptualists, there are even fewer written about the disadvantages. Of all that I found, none discussed the disadvantages but rather discussed only why it should be used. Since students run the educational show, state and national standards are often not met while other areas are thoroughly covered.  By determining lesson plans based on knowledge of students and classrooms only after getting to know them, instructors are unable to plan lessons far in advance.  Integration of many methods, ideas, and perspectives into a singular curriculum may cause confusion |

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Of the three theoretical camps; traditionalist, conceptual empiricists and reconceptualists, I believe I identify most with conceptual empiricists. However, I think a perfect curriculum design concept would include bits and pieces from all three theoretical camps. The particular pieces pulled from each camp would depend greatly on the content area and the lesson being created. Some lessons would be better learned if they were student led, while others may completely miss the mark with this method. A traditionalist stand point believes in a structured plan for curriculum that is created using a proven protocol. I like this method because it follows a guideline, I prefer the EEI template, which makes it difficult to forget any important parts of the lesson. What I do not like about the traditionalist method is that this camp believes that successful curriculum can be written without ever setting foot inside of a classroom. I find it difficult to agree with this because curriculum is a living document, that should adapt with the students in the classroom from class to class and year to year. This reason is why I more strongly relate to the conceptual empiricists. The curriculum is also formed from the end backwards to the beginning. This is yet another aspect that I agree with. If we begin with what our students are to know, then we can plan curriculum accordingly and make sure they get there. Even the reconceptualists have a few ideas that I would like to include in my curriculum planning. Curriculum planning that is student directed involves students by studying something they are already interested in. Also, by studying real world events, students are connecting curriculum to their world in far greater ways than just inside of a classroom using made-up scenarios. However, letting students guide the curriculum at all times is going to ensure that those state and local standards are not met. There is not a single theoretical camp that has all the answers, but when used together and at the proper times, a brilliant curriculum plan can be created for long term use.

References

Barnes, C. (2015). Curriculum Approaches. SED 455: Curriculum Development and Assessment. Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, AZ.

Gurmet, M. (1989). Generations: Reconceptualist Curriculum Theory and Teacher Education. Journal of Teacher Education. ERIC EJ394442. V 40 n1 pg 13-17.

Jupp, J. (Feb. 2007). Toward doing Reconceptualist Work in K-12. Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies

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