3

MAKING CURRICULA

Why Do States Make Curricula, and How?

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That education should be regulated by law and should be an affair of state is not to be denied, but what should be the character of this public education, and how young persons should be educated, are questions which remain to be considered. . . . The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed—should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training; all three opinions have been entertained. Again, about the means there is no agreement: for different persons, starting with different ideas about the nature of virtue, naturally disagree about the practice of it. There can be no doubt that children should be taught those useful things that are really necessary, but not all useful things.

—Aristotle, trans. 1941, VIII, 2, p. 1337b

Politics is the authoritative allocation of competing values.

—Kirst & Bird, 1997, p. 7

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Over the past two decades the practice and instrument of curriculum making by national or state governments or boards of education has diffused across jurisdictions to become a core component of an expanded set of instruments for the steering of school systems.[1] The British Education Reform Act of 1988 with its National Curriculum signaled a radical departure in the trajectory of curriculum making in schools in England and in Wales. In the 1990s, virtually all American states developed curriculum standards, in many cases as their first ever state curricula. And in societies, like Norway, where state-based curriculum making has been a long-standing institution, new curricula are appearing more frequently. The form of such curricula can vary and can change over time—they may be content specifications, achievement standards, and so on; they may be highly prescriptive or presented as frameworks—but everywhere they have similar roles within their educational systems. They spell out what the schools they address should be doing, and—as they are linked with programs of in-service education, textbook approval and adoption, inspection and assessment, and so on—they constitute the heart of the formal educational leadership of departments of education.[2]

Table 3.1, adapted from the Web site of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, exemplifies the scope of such state-based educational leadership—just one of these courses of study, for example, the course Atlantic Canada in the Global Community, contains 115 pages (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, 1998). The development of such documents together with the related inservice and so on involves significant numbers of people; Sivesind (2002), for example, reports that 229 people were engaged in the writing of the 343-page Norwegian compulsory school curriculum of 1997, and a further 1000 people had other roles in the work around the new curriculum.

Why do states develop curricula, and why is this policy instrument being discovered, or rediscovered, in so many places? It is widely accepted that the direct influence of formal curricula on teaching practice is at best uncertain. Even when seen as only one component of the larger ensemble of policy instruments aimed at leading practice, the direct outcomes of state- or center-based curriculum making are often difficult to trace. Inevitably the messages from such texts and activity become recontextualized in response to local cultures, capacities, and understandings (Bernstein, 1990). Cohen and Hill (2001), O'Day (2002), Price and Ball (1997), and Spillane (2004), for example, demonstrate how clouded the reform goals and curriculum prescriptions of American state and local curriculum makers of the 1990s became when they reached districts and schools—and even other units of states' departments of education.

While one cluster of puzzles surfaces around the ambiguous outcomes of center-based curriculum making, another cluster of puzzles emerges when the work becomes controversial. In 2005, for example, the State Board of Education of the American state of Kansas placed itself at the center of a nationwide controversy with its decision to reconsider the place of evolution in the state's science standards. However, amid the sound and fury that accompanied this decision, there is the question of what the debate was about. School districts in Kansas are under no obligation to teach what the state's standards set out.[3] In this very visible case, seemingly authoritative decision making had in fact no formal authority to direct practice.

However, curriculum documents with no formal authority over school practice are taken seriously by many commentators. At the height of the American debate in 2005 about the revision of the Kansas science standards, *The Economist* reported critically that "in 2000 . . . only ten states *taught* [italics added] evolution fully, six did so skimpily and in 13 the treatment was considered useless or absent" ("Intelligent Design," 2005, p. 31). But as the Kansas case makes clear, such a finding must be understood as a statement about state curricular *documents,* not about what is being taught in schools and classrooms.[4]

How do we come to terms with the significance of state curricula without regard to their impact on what schools teach and what teachers do? This question frames the themes of this chapter. Drawing on international research, I will explore the institution of state-based curriculum making to ask how the work that this institution performs, or developed, within school systems can be characterized. In undertaking this exploration, I will be examining a widely used instrument of educational governance, but one that has received little sustained attention in English language curriculum research. When state-based curriculum making has received attention, the

TABLE 3.1 Nova Scotia Department of Education: Provincial Curriculum Documents

Subject categories	*Curriculum documents for mathematics*	*Curriculum documents for social studies*
Arts	Mathematics 11/Advanced Mathematics 11	African Canadian Studies 11
Business Education	Mathematics 12/Advanced Mathematics 12	Atlantic Canada in the Global Community: Grade 9
English Language Arts	Mathematics Curriculum Grade 8	Community Economic Development
Entrepreneurship	Mathematics Curriculum Grade 9	Social Studies Curriculum: Grade 7
French Immersion	Mathematics Curriculum Grade 7	Social Studies Curriculum: Grades Primary–2
French, Core	Mathematics Curriculum Grades 4–6	Canadian History 11
General	Mathematics Curriculum Grades Primary–3	Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum
Health Education	Mathematics Curriculum, Pre-calculus 12	Gaelic Studies 11
Languages	Mathematics Curriculum: Mathematics 10	Geography 10
Mathematics	Mathematics Foundations 10	Global Geography 12
Personal Development and Career Education	Mathematics Foundations 11	Global History 12
Physical Education	Mathematics Foundations 12	Mi'kmaw Studies 10
Science	Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Mathematics Curriculum	
Social Studies	Mathematics Grade 7: A Teaching Resource	
Student Services	Mathematics Grade 8: A Teaching Resource	
Technology Education	Mathematics Grade 9: A Teaching Resource	

Source: Adapted from Nova Scotia Department of Education (2006).

focus has typically been a local case, not on the case as an instantiation of a larger institutional and organizational process.[5] But as Placier, Walker, and Foster (2002) note in their study of standards making in one American state, "Although our findings are particular to one setting, literature from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom suggests that the patterns we identified are not entirely context-specific" (p. 282). This is the insight I will pursue across the pages of this chapter.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Whatever their format or intention, state-mandated programs of study present authoritative statements about the social distribution of the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies seen as appropriate to populations of students. In addition, they can mandate or recommend programs of study and/or methods of teaching that reflect, for example, an understanding of science as inquiry, effective, or best practices. As such, we can see curriculum documents spelling out standards for the work of schools, teachers, and students.

Needless to say, all such standard-setting presupposes answers to the classical educational question set out by Aristotle in the epigraph to this chapter: What ideas, representations, values, norms and judgments about childhood and youth, learning and teaching, life and culture, and so on should be represented in the standards set out for schools? As Hutmacher (2001)

has observed, answers to this question are invariably framed in terms of "knowledge-heritages," which, as he notes, are largely normative and prescriptive, driven by values and standards of excellence, and are in large part tacit, "truth[s] reproduced from generation to generation and legitimated [for those who hold these truths] through the . . . *experience* [italics added] of children within schools" (p. 1).

These "truths" are understood within an implicit theory of action, which holds that

- the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies needed as part of education and upbringing are known, and can be specified;
- what can be specified can be taught; and
- what can be learned from teaching—that is, its outputs—corresponds to the outcomes that are sought. (Hopmann, 1999)

Hopmann (1999) terms these assumptions the planning, learning, and effect premises[6] of curriculum making and contends that none of these premises can be warranted in the light of the historical experience of schooling. Nevertheless, it is this theory of action that provides the framework both for one or another account of the meanings of schooling and for the legitimation of curricula.

Given the ever present potential for argument around educational standards, the question is, "Who decides?" The perceived legitimacy of knowledge-heritages is at stake in such decision making, and any decision to mandate one or another set of standards for schooling can be (and often is) contested. This observation highlights an additional premise framing standard-setting for public schooling. In democracies, elected political authorities have the prerogative to make final determinations about the nature and provision of public services—the *democracy premise.* This premise elevates public and therefore political authority over standards above professional authority. This in turn leads to tensions between the notions of public control of standards and the curriculum and their professional control.

How are these tensions managed in order to acknowledge the primacy of the political, the place of public and professional interests in curriculum making, and the capacity of the schools to address and embrace (multiple) public, political, and educational interests and agendas? This is a problem that has been seen only uncertainly in the research literature around curriculum making, and it is all too rarely acknowledged.

Research on Curriculum Making

Of course, conflict and contestation between educational, public, and political interests in curriculum decision making have been widely recognized (see Apple, Chapter 2). But educational research and practice has tended to find a starting point for the resolution of these conflicts by way of a codification of starting points and procedures that might systematize a search for its (professional) understanding of best practice.

Tyler's (1950) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction,* the canonical starting point for much prescriptive thinking about standard-setting and curriculum making in the United States, can serve as a symbol of such approaches. It sets out the following questions as fundamental to the work of curriculum making:

1. What educational purposes does the educational institution seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences are provided to attain these purposes?
3. How are these educational experiences organized?
4. How is the attainment of these purposes or the value of these experiences to be evaluated?

The implication is that deliberative procedures that sustain a focus on these questions will yield curricula and courses of study better directed at educational ends.

Tyler's (1950) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* was a pragmatic effort to find a way to engage the changing American secondary schools of the 1930s and 1940s in deliberations around their tasks and structures. It was developed as a tool to a practical end of a time. Nevertheless, the priority that Tyler's rationale gives to educational purposes does serve as a symbol of the way in which much discussion of curriculum making as an activity or undertaking is framed within curriculum theory and research. An educational principle is invoked as a starting point, and usually only one

view of educational purposes is privileged—for example, multiculturalism, constructivist learning, and so on. The result has been approaches to understanding and prescribing for curriculum making that are idealistic and hortatory rather than realistic. The complexities of schooling are swept away in the name of a single vision of learning or education.

There are few alternative, realistic analyses of curriculum making in the literature of the American curriculum field. One approach to such an account is found in Goodlad and Associates' (1979) *Curriculum Inquiry*: *The Study of Curriculum Practice.* The yield of the study was the identification of a set of contexts in which curricula are made: a societal context, which Goodlad and Associates associate with a school system's controlling agency; a (local) institutional context and setting—that is, a particular school, college, or university; a classroom instructional context, where the curriculum is given form by teachers; and the worlds of the students who transform the curriculum into their own personal and/or experiential frames.

Although *Curriculum Inquiry* (Goodlad & Associates, 1979) presents these contexts as loosely coupled, more often than not the set of decision-making contexts it sets out has been reinterpreted as a hierarchy of decision-making levels—for example, ideally a curriculum reflecting an educational idea; intended, the curriculum as developed at an institutional level; implemented, the curriculum as developed at the school, classroom, and teacher levels; and attained or experienced, the curriculum as it emerges at the student level—with one of these levels presented as privileged. It is acknowledged that curricula are made at each of these levels, but rarely in ways in which they should be, consistently across levels. The resulting inconsistency is seen as slippage between, for example, the (privileged) ideal or intended curriculum and the enacted and experienced curriculum.

In offering a reinterpretation of Goodlad and Associates' (1979) framework, Doyle (1992) presents a reimaging of their abstracted scheme and a compelling critique of the privileging of a hierarchical rationality found in many of the derivatives of their model. He points out that what Goodlad and Associates interpret as loosely-coupled settings for curriculum decision making are in fact contexts associated with very different activities. In what he terms the societal context, the issues, discourses, and decisions center on the symbolic intersection between schooling, culture, and society. In the institutional context the issues, discourses, and decision making center on the formal specification of programs of study for schools, school types, and tracks, and the construction of plans—for example, courses of study, and so on—for these programs. In the instructional context, the issues, discourses, and decision making center on the pedagogical interpretation of such plans—with actual teachers, students, and communities with their biographies and histories, intentions, meanings, and preferences as the central participants in the process.

To elaborate, in the societal context the discourse—for example, the importance of math and science as an educational goal, the place of social justice as an integrating theme across the curriculum, and so on—rests on an imagined community and an imagined institution, and more often than not the improvement of the community by way of an enhanced schooling. The hope may be addressed to a specific social problem, such as youth unemployment, intercultural relations, and so on, or to more generalized problems such as economic, technological, political or cultural change (Rosenmund, 2006). But the arguments, with their claims and counterclaims, center on idealizing narratives whose weft and warp are threads drawn from knowledge-heritages that accept without question Hopmann's (1999) planning, learning, and effect premises. Inevitably, the referent of such discourse is not the realities of schooling, and, as such, the discourse has little immediate significance for practice. Instead the debates themselves and their resolutions yield frameworks for narratives about the role education and schooling as ideas play in a social and cultural order.

In the programmatic context the activity of curriculum making has a very different focus. It seeks to precipitate societal and cultural symbols and narratives into workable organizational frameworks for the delivery of schooling. A societal resolution around the idea of, for example, excellence becomes, for example, the introduction of (elective) Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs in a state or district's high schools. However, as Doyle (1992) emphasizes, such frameworks are only indirectly linked to actual classroom work. In programmatic discourse and decision making, teaching, classrooms, and students are

necessarily imaged as passive agents who will implement the abstraction of an organizationally sanctioned program and its legitimating ideology.

Decisions made in the programmatic context do not direct the work of schools or teachers in any straightforward way. At the classroom level, courses of study—for example, World Geography, American History, Biology—are clusters of activities, jointly developed by students and teachers, with their significance and legitimacy derived from their immediate communities. Activity in the classroom context reflects a local interpretation of the programmatic framework, which in its turn reflects the match between what a local school is doing and is seen to be doing and the understandings of its community about what their schools are and should be.

In other words, the idea of curriculum making captures a wide-ranging set of activities and processes emerging within webs of societal and cultural ideologies and symbols, politics and organized interest groups, organizational and administrative structures and processes, and local understandings, beliefs, and practices. In those school systems that practice center-based curriculum making, the curriculum-as-document assumes a privileged place in this web. It provides an authoritative object that brings into public focus the idea of the inner work of a system of schools subject to public control. The central actors in this work are the curriculum makers in politically governed ministries and boards of education.

Understanding Formal Curriculum Making

As I noted above, despite its central place in many educational systems, state- or center-based curriculum making has not been a core topic for research within English language curriculum studies. However, as a result of the recent international emergence of curriculum reform as a state project over the last two decades, the possibilities and problems around state-based curriculum making have been actively engaged within educational policy studies. But more often than not this interest has been expressed in studies or evaluations of discrete, local projects. It has not seen the cases as instantiations of what, from a broader perspective, can be seen as a long-standing and widespread institution.

Two related but complementary bodies of work have explored the consequences in school practice of the state-based curriculum reforms of the past two decades. In what can be termed the *impact-of-reform* tradition, reforms are mapped from the policy advocacy that is their starting point to the all-too-typical problems and/or failures of realization in school practice (see Cohen & Hill, 2001; Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1999; Spillane, 2004). In the *school-practice-under-reform* tradition, the problem is the character and quality of realization of seemingly authoritative policies or mandates in the enacted curriculum (see Ball, 1994; Drake & Sherin, 2006; Drake, Spillane, & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001; Roberts, 1995; Sloan, 2006; see also Walker, 1992). A common insight has emerged from both bodies of work, one that must frame any understanding of formal curricula.

Thus Ball (1990, 1994), working within the school-practice-under-reform tradition, accounts for school and teacher variation in responses to the seemingly fixed starting point of, in his case, the English National Curriculum, by pointing to the character of the National Curriculum as a document. A curriculum is a text that must be, and is, interpreted by its users and even its official interpreters in the light of their situated presuppositions and understandings. The same text can be read and understood in very different ways. Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2002, 2003) invoke a different metaphor to account for the responses of schools and teachers to policy initiatives. They highlight the notion of a curriculum or policy as a *resource* that totally depends for its effects on the capabilities of those who use the resource. To invoke yet another metaphor, the same curriculum-as-text can have different appearances on the landscapes represented by one or another community of practice. It is viewed in ways that bring it into harmony with personal and professional identities (see Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Craig, 2003).

As I have suggested, the renewal and expansion of state-based curriculum making has also been associated with a widespread interest in the issues underlying the making of the resulting curricula-as-documents. Many analyses have been offered of these curricula and have often sought to explain their character in terms of the interest groups and/or the social and cultural forces that have seemed to surround the curriculum making (see Apple, Chapter 2). However, as

Carlgren (1995) writes of her experience in the secretariat that supported the development of the Swedish National Curriculum of 1993, outsider accounts of curriculum making "sometimes have the tendency to create a mystical 'being' who is rationally planning and implementing changes" (p. 412). As she noted, in much of the discussion of the curriculum making in the 1980s and 1990s, this new being was the new Right. For Carlgren (1995), however, curriculum-making is a problem-solving enterprise:

> The curriculum proposals [that were considered within the 1993 curriculum commission] did not come about as compromises in relation to substantive and ideological discussions, but from an interaction between the factors framing the process, incidental events and practical considerations. *Part of understanding curriculum change is therefore to understand what problems there are to solve* [italics added]. (p. 412)

We can secure some insight into what this means from Hart's (2002; see also Hart, 2001) account of her insider experience developing a physics syllabus for an Australian state examining authority. Hart began her work as a project officer within the authority as a reformer seeking to introduce a progressive, applications-based course, but this effort was frustrating. Following Goodson (1987) and Fensham (1993), she initially sought to understand the defeat of the reform group in terms on the influence of conservative academic physicists on the decision making. However, she came to realize that while "the academics wielded considerably more power than I had anticipated . . . the mechanisms that enabled them to do so were more subtle than suggested by the naive conceptions of power that I initially held" (Hart, 2002, p. 1068). As she came to see it, the primary agents of the reformers' defeat were the authority's managers. They intervened to reverse the direction of the emergent, reforming physics curriculum out of a concern for the implications of the reformed syllabus for fair, system-wide assessment and certification and their understanding of the learning that defined physics. For Hart, the entry into her thinking and discourse of the considerations around fair large-scale assessment was new insight.

Hart (2002) interprets her account of curriculum making in terms of the significance and power of unexamined knowledge-heritages that frame discourse and understandings. She acknowledges implicitly that the reform discourse did not embrace the problems of large-scale assessment and that her understanding of valuable learning did not meet the understandings of her colleagues in the examination authority. Her narrative is an account of the development of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) physics curriculum is an account of incommensurable discourses in a frame dominated by practical considerations. To quote Carlgren (1995) again, "Part of understanding curriculum change is therefore to understand what problems there are to solve" (p. 412). The characters in Hart's account, reformers and bureaucrats, were seemingly engaged in the same task, but they were seeking to solve very different problems.

Formalized Curriculum Making as Institutional Problem Solving

As I have indicated at several points in this chapter, state-based curriculum making and the organizations that manage this activity are found within many public education systems and often have long histories as institutions. Viewed across time and settings, the successes and/or failings of particular instances of curriculum making are simply cases within a larger institution. Is there a way of understanding the work of formal curriculum making that both illuminates individual cases and provides a framework for seeing the role and function of this institution within school systems?

Hopmann (1991) pointed out that between 1949 and the early 1990s more than 7000 separate curricula were developed by the states of the then Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). He went on to observe that the development of these curricula had long been undertaken by way of a process stretched over a set of common steps: (1) preliminary deliberations as a ministry sought public input; (2) the creation of clusters of curriculum-making committees, largely made up of experienced teachers, to prepare drafts of the proposed curricula; (3) public comment on the drafts; and (4) formal adoption and then implementation via inservice training.

In the 1970s many advocates of reform of the tracked school system of the FRG agitated for a major change in this structure of curriculum

making. They saw the state curriculum-making agencies and their procedures as conservative barriers to progressive educational reform—in large part because of their domination by what they saw as tradition-bound teachers. They advocated a rational, modernist interpretation of Tyler's (1950) approach to curriculum making with its starting point in education, along with explicitly public decision making.

Nothing came from this effort at reform. In seeking to account for this failure, Hopmann (1988) highlights the reformers' belief that curriculum making was an educational project—that is, an activity and process directed at the improvement or enhancement of schooling—as a significant element in their failure. The reformers believed that if the schools could be directed by education- and community-centered processes rather than by what they saw as tradition-bound and teacher-centered processes, significant educational change could come about. Hopmann (1988) described this as an "ideological" perspective on the activity of curriculum making that failed because it did not understand curricula, curriculum making, and curriculum policy making realistically.

A Realistic View of Curriculum Making

Schooling as an institution is replete with tensions and ambiguity. Schools have people-processing as well as culture-processing tasks and functions (see Table 3.2) and, as Hutmacher (2002) puts it, "The school and education systems cannot be understood without considering *all* of their functions together" (p. 340). To put this in another way, the tasks and work of the school are ill-defined in terms of their missions, processes, and products (Hopmann, 2003). However, this ill-definition is mystified in and by the knowledge-heritages, theories of action and story lines that frame and penetrate the institution of schooling. Indeed the notion that schools are there to educate—a concept that is itself contested—is an assumption to be set alongside the other assumptions in terms of which schools are imagined and explained.

Public schooling is further framed by the additional assumption that democratically selected governing authorities discern and articulate public needs. But while schooling might have public purposes, these purposes are much less significant for the individuals who use the schools than their private purposes and goods or the narratives that instantiate private purposes and goods. Narratives, policies, and programs that might be seen to serve public, collective goods are all too often in conflict with the narratives and policies that are seen to serve private and/or subgroup goods.[7]

In other words, as an ill-defined institution schooling has no unambiguous purpose(s) that can serve as a basis for, as Meyer (1992) puts it, a "controlled and unified mapping of [its] activity around purpose, and the corresponding segregation of this activity from the more irrational, chaotic, or corrupt aspects of social life and activity" (p. 261). We cannot characterize policy

Table 3.2 Functions of the School

People Processing	*Cultural Homogenization and Differentiation Social Integration and Segmentation*	*Culture Processing*
Transmission and inculcation		Collection of contents
Selection and special placement		Valuation
Certification		Selection
(Custody)		Canonization
		Shaping
		Implementing
		Transmission learning

Source: From "Some Concluding Remarks: Changing Perspectives" in *Comparing Curriculum-Making Processes* by Hutmacher, W., copyright © 2002, 340. Reprinted with permission from Peter Lang AG.

making for schooling, including of course curriculum making, as an activity framed within common understandings of ends and means. Instead, schooling is best characterized as a site of struggle and negotiation and of constant translation of perspectives.

These negotiations, framed as they often are by storylines of hope, are further complicated by the problems that flow from the organizational task of routinely deploying and managing schooling. The legitimacy of schools—for our children, for my child—requires the acceptance that *our* schools are good, genuine schools. This requires conformity to wider societal definitions of what a good, genuine school is (Meyer, 1980; Reid, 1990, 1999), which in its turn requires the agencies that operate school systems to have the administrative capacity to routinely deploy real and effective—that is, legitimate—schooling: functioning structures for managing teacher recruitment and careers; for oversight of individual schools; for services to special populations; and for building maintenance and safety, finance, budgeting, payroll, and so on. School systems must create and maintain structures to routinize service delivery.

As is seen very clearly in Table 3.1, subjects and courses are the building blocks for the routinization of the delivery of the inner work of schools. They constitute the frameworks within which curricula are deployed. They are the framework within which programs of study, assessment, and certification for students and teachers are organized. Teachers come to the profession on the basis of their subject commitments and are then educated by way of programs of study that are often constructed in terms of what is needed to teach a subject in the school. The administration and management of the inner work of school systems is organized around the management and supervision of subjects; and many, if not most, ideologies of education emerge for and within institutionalized subject-based communities.

In other words, institutionalized subjects create the structures and professional communities that stabilize the delivery of schooling (Goodson, 1987; Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994). But these bounded systems and bounded rationalities limit what a curriculum can be. Despite advocacy of applications in math and science, the preparation and commitments of teachers of math and science give them, all too typically, no background in or knowledge of the applications of their subjects in, for example, engineering, industrial chemistry, and so on.

In short, curriculum making for a school system cannot assume a tabula rasa that can respond to the mandates of authoritative public decision making and/or the rationality of planning that is all focused on what the schools and curricula should or might be in the best of all worlds. Mechanisms for issue management are required. Thus Haft and Hopmann (1991) see the structures and long-standing practices that the German reformers of the 1970s sought to change as in fact core elements in a set of well-honed mechanisms for issue management in an ill-defined field. With this analysis, they were turning away from a view of curriculum making as based in a search for best practices. Instead, they look to the ground of organizational practice for their understanding of how schools and school systems as organizations in fact work, and need to work. While they locate their analysis in the history of German education, they contend that the set of tools for the issue management that they identify is widely used. In order to unpack their framework and outline the curriculum-making tools they identify, I will outline, as a case study, the American project of the late 1980s and early 1990s thrusting at systemic educational reform.

Analyzing Systemic Reform

> Systemic reform embodies three integral components: the promotion of ambitious outcomes for all students; alignment of policy approaches and the action of various policy institutions to promote such outcomes; and restructuring of the public education governance system to support improved achievement.
>
> —Goertz, Floden, and O'Day, 1996, p. 1

> What complex systems do is break down complex tasks into simple ones, deal with them as simple problems, and then aggregate these solutions back together.
>
> —Meier and Hill, 2005, p. 63

As they worked at their agenda setting in federal political and policymaking settings, the policy entrepreneurs advocating systemic reform highlighted the difficulties experienced by earlier federal reforms seeking significant changes in the inner work of schools. They contended that these reforms had been dogged by policy fragmentation, with different programs pulling in different directions. They urged that this fragmentation be replaced by structures that could articulate a common purpose across the ensemble of state and federal policy instruments that steer schooling. The federal government should take the lead in this endeavor by outlining templates for ambitious and coherent, but voluntary, content frameworks—that is, curricula—and then encourage states to develop statewide mandatory content standards based on the national templates. These standards should be the starting points for the development of statewide assessments, for revisions of the codes governing teacher education and licensing, for the approval of instructional materials, for the monitoring of instruction, for local school and curriculum development, and so on (Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Fuhrman, 2001).

With the public emergence of systemic reform as a policy project, other policy entrepreneurs predictably entered the fray in order to advocate for the inclusion of their projects as part of the reform package. Such advocacy had the effect of expanding the scope of the initial systemic-reform platform, thus mobilizing political and professional support but also extending the range of interests that would oppose aspects of the reform agenda. In particular, the idea of federally certified school delivery or opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards[8] became, as Porter (1995) noted, "One of the most contentious issues to come on the education scene for some time" (p. 21).

The Clinton Administration's major educational initiative, the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," became the stage for the political debate about the idea of systemic reform. The legislation was passed in 1994 and included the ideas of national content and OTL standards to be adopted voluntarily by states. However, these aspects of Goals 2000 were to disappear quickly in the face of opposition in the new Republican-dominated Congress elected later in that year. However, the 1994 reauthorization of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the major vehicle making federal monies available to states and local districts, did include a key requirement derived from the platform of systemic reform—that states develop state-level curricula, that is, content and performance standards.

Authoritative action is required to institutionalize any policy agenda. American practice requires that a legislative authorization of a federal program be supplemented by a separate appropriation of funds, an action which is part of the overall annual federal budget-making process. As the reauthorization of Title 1 moved through the legislative and budget process and then into the federal administrative machinery, it was inevitably simplified to become a suite of discrete, categorical programs offering incentives to states to undertake a set of (sometimes) new initiatives: standards development, statewide assessment, professional development for teachers, and so on.

Individuals and elites within each state then had to make their decisions about how they might use these new federal resources for their development of their specific programs—decisions that were, of course, framed within varying degrees of understanding of and commitment to the original systemic-reform platform. In other words, the vision of reform that was operationalized in the federal programs had to be given programmatic form within the resources that were at hand in each state.

Once each state determined its scope of work, each program became, as Carlgren (1995) highlighted, a set of problems and tasks to be accomplished by state-level managers, for example, by the work of creating a task force to develop curricula-as-documents under deadlines and within the available resources. Repackaging of the widely accepted content frameworks outlined in, for example, the Standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989, 1991), became one cost-effective way of completing this practical project; and consultancies quickly emerged to offer ready-made templates for such repackaging. But while states did use their federal monies to develop and disseminate the required documents spelling out curriculum standards, they did not (in the main) undertake parallel modification of their, for example, high school graduation requirements or create coordinated demanding assessments (see Spillane, 2004)—an articulation that was not specified and thus was not required by the

federal programs. In other words, the new curriculum policies and documents were set on top of old documents, old policies and standing practices. The difficult issues of reconciling old and new, with all their consequences for students and communities, were delegated to local decision makers.

This summary of the systemic-reform project can be restated in the following way. An opening for a political initiative around education stimulated advocates to urge a complex educational reform. The interest their ideas spawned sparked abstracted public, political, and professional discourse about the ideas of school and the school system. The discussion and bargaining that followed had the consequence of both amplifying the original reform platform and creating political opposition. The political back and forth between proponents and opponents inevitably bounded the scope of what had been initially presented as a major, nonincremental educational reform.

As the reform agenda moved into the arenas of federal legislation, appropriation and administration—and confronted the electoral cycle—it became further bounded and further transformed. It became a set of incentives offered to states to encourage them to redevelop, and in places extend, the administrative instruments they used steer the work of their schools. As states processed how they would respond to these incentives within their political cultures and their administrative systems and capabilities, further political bargaining, boundary making and administrative simplification took place as each state determined its programmatic ambitions. And then those ambitions had to be instantiated in the activity of the working groups charged with developing the new curriculum frameworks. In the math and science working groups, ambitious standards for all students could be formulated by transferring the templates offered by the national science or math standards to their curriculum documents; for working groups in art or foreign language, and so on, there were no such consensual standards; and thus there was no template for routinizing what they had to accomplish!

The outcomes of this state-level activity, the new curricula, were then passed on to school leaders and teachers in local communities—with the inevitable further recontextualization and simplification. There the ambitious student outcomes of the original systemic-reform advocates only mattered as the slogan's operationalization in state tests—more often than not only loosely-coupled to the state's curriculum standards—affected the task of achieving acceptable local performance. The river of advocacy around the platform of systemic reform had flowed into the delta of the fragmented and differentiated structure that it had sought to change.

Managing the Discourses Around Schooling

Writing from the perspective of public administration, Meier and Hill (2005) contend that the categorical simplification of complex tasks is functional in that it allows discrete, expert organizational units to deal with one or a few aspects of a larger problem. The assumption is that a hierarchical, nested organization can, and will, reassemble the simplified pieces into something resembling the original shape and spirit of the larger program. Haft and Hopmann (1990) suggest that, in the case of educational reform, such administrative simplification more often than not leads to the "taming" of reform: the simplifying dispersion of focus offers a tool that is useful for the management of the ever present differences in perspective and discourse within and around schooling. They write,

> The separation of syllabus editing [i.e., curriculum making] from decisions about structural [i.e. school types, school delivery standards, school finance, assessment] . . . relieves planners from pressures which would otherwise arise when basic structures of knowledge distribution are touched upon. (Haft & Hopmann, 1990, p. 162)

Haft and Hopmann (1990) introduce the term *compartmentalization* to capture the structural simplification and differentiation necessary for the administrative delivery of educational change and reform. But they also see this device as the most basic element in the tool kit available to managers of school systems to tame what they know or believe cannot be attained. Compartmentalization routes the implications of comprehensive change platforms that, like systemic reform, could both threaten the equilibrium

around schools and the school system and/or exceed the capacities of the school system into discrete, decoupled programs and projects. These projects work alongside (and often within) older programs and structures. The result is a dispersal of the energy that places reform on the policy agenda. Reform becomes (at best) adjustments around the margins of an established system, not a change in basic structures that might put the overall system's stability, and therefore legitimacy, at risk.

The second of Haft and Hopmann's (1990) tools for taming reform and planned change is licensing. Leaders make what seem to be unambiguous decisions, but (by law or custom) formally subordinate actors have the prerogative to decide whether and/or how they will implement these decisions, as in the case of the Kansas science standards. Leaders can champion their commitment to change; local authorities or teachers have the prerogative not to enact decisions or to enact them on their own terms. Control is exercised symbolically by way of decisions, but the responsibility for implementation of those decisions and the consequences of implementation are faced by others. With this disengagement of planning and policy from execution, policy makers can evade the responsibility for their decision making. Without such a tool in hand, responsibility for, for example, requiring ambitious outcomes for all students would rest with those who make the policy decisions. With such a tool, the claim that the problem is not with the policy but with those charged with its implementation—that is, the teachers, schools, and districts—is always available. However, seen in another way, the tool of licensing also permits teachers, schools, and districts to move on with their work without regard for the decisions and projects that emerge from the political and professional systems.

Haft and Hopmann (1990) present their tools of compartmentalization and licensing as structural devices that can be used to maintain the equilibrium of school systems in the face of political, professional, and public demands for reform and change. Thus compartmentalization channels proposals for far-reaching change into discrete and ever more bounded structures and tasks—that is, revision of curriculum standards and of assessment seen as separate, decoupled tasks.

But compartmentalization can also create problems as managers struggle to find the appropriate structures. For example, as they sought to develop a set of English language arts standards for the United States, the coalition of professional associations and communities that came together for the project faced the problem of their different ideologies and understandings of the field. As the managers of the project faced these differences, they rejected a compartmentalization that would divide the task among the different professional communities, for example, reading, writing, literature, and so on. Instead, they opted for an organization by school level that had the effect of bringing representatives of different communities into single compartments. As a result, each working party had to work hard to achieve a basis for their joint work. The inward focus that resulted led the working groups to lose sight of the public and the larger professional meaning of their work. The document they produced was "criticized, by both educators and non-educators, as lacking in content and specificity" from the moment of its release (Wixson, Dutro, & Athan, 2003, p. 90). "The standards were criticized in newspaper columns and op-ed pieces across the country as not holding 'students to any standards,' as 'gobbledygook' and mired in 'pedagogical molasses'" (Wixson et al., 2003, p. 90). Haft and Hopmann's (1990) third tool, segmentation, addresses the management of such issue complexes within curriculum-making projects. It provides a further rationale for structural compartmentalization and provides a way of thinking about the organization of compartments.

The major source of problems and difficulties within curriculum making stems from the problem of communication across discourse communities with different knowledge-heritages and theories of action. Segmentation offers managers an analytic tool for understanding problems that this can create and a mechanism for managing these different discourses, like discourse communities are involved only with like and never with unlike. A project is, for example, stretched over a series of discrete tasks (e.g., political discussion, public hearings on principles, draft development, public and professional consultation) involving different discourse communities and undertaken at different times: representatives of the stakeholders with interests in the platform of the new curriculum dominate the committees that set the stage for the curriculum making. School people with the relevant subject and grade-level backgrounds dominate the committees charged with

writing courses of study. The public, through its representatives, dominates the committees that, on the basis of feedback, recommend revision and/or formal approval of the new curriculum-as-text. By a self-conscious sleight of hand on the part of the managers of projects, self-contained worlds are constructed and/or linked only by the symbols of the project's platform. Each group believes that its form of discourse and its world is the reality of the project and that the "means and ends named by [*their*] symbols [and symbol making] are what the symbolic action is about" (Haft & Hopmann, 1990, p. 168).

Curriculum Making as the Steering of a Field

A political consensus around a policy platform, like the need for demanding curriculum standards, systemic reform, or the contemporary No Child Left Behind (NCLB) project, cannot be willed away despite the reality-based conviction of school people that it makes no sense. The democratic premise of educational governance requires that the words of a platform, policy, or form of discourse with significance and legitimacy in authoritative public, policy and/or political discourse be acknowledged by school systems. This is always the case despite the (often) very different ideological, discourse, and practice frames of frontline practitioners and their immediate constituencies—and the competing claims of other platforms and priorities on public attention. At the same time it has to be recognized that—given their resources, their routinized patterns of work and historical commitments, and their relationships with their constituencies—schools cannot respond to projects they do not know how to implement or to projects for which they lack the human, physical, or financial resources that might be needed for implementation. Political or legislative opinion or action cannot will the needed capacity for and/or give legitimacy to their mandates in schools and their communities; for students, teachers and schools legitimacy and expertise derives from their worlds and their capacities.

For school systems that have the mechanism available—and increasing numbers of systems are turning to it—state-based curriculum making offers a set of powerful tools for managing the problems that flow from such dilemmas. The process of creating curriculum documents can be used to pilot notions of reform and change, whether derived from without or within the school system, into the safe harbors of text production and text reading. By exploiting the gap between symbol and substance, school systems can reflect, and even project, change and reform while maintaining their ongoing, unreconstructed programs and activities.

How can we come to terms with such an account of curriculum making? We can begin to answer this question by recognizing the fact that far-reaching change is largely unachievable in developed educational systems over any short or middle run. Curricula cannot change the preferences of populations for forms of schools—that is, the German Gymnasium or the English selective secondary grammar school—with all of the symbolic meaning and legitimacy of their traditions and curricula. While curricula-as-texts can effect changes in the formal programmatic curriculum by, for example, introducing courses in Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language into the formal program of studies of a system, the consequences of such a change are moot if there is no body of teachers of Chinese. Curricula can direct which major topics should be taught, but if teachers do not know how to teach the topics, the prescription will also be moot. Policy makers can prescribe new classroom activities, but they cannot determine what will be done by individual teachers during such activities.

On the other hand, curriculum texts can signal priorities, and thus set agendas for administrative action. Indeed, Bähr et al. (2000) concluded after their study of the consequences of curriculum making for educational systems in Switzerland that the most significant direct implication of new curricula was in the work of educational administrations—by declaring, for example, the need to begin the widespread early introduction of English into a German-speaking canton to replace the previously taught French, one of Switzerland's national languages.

Can such a limited effective functionality serve to explain both the persistence of the institution of state-based curriculum making and the colonization of new territories by this institution? Haft and Hopmann's (1990) analysis addresses this puzzle by interpreting the activity of curriculum making as a tool designed, on the one hand, to mute the practical consequences of public and professional demands for curriculum change

while maintaining public and political control. It is an instrument with a pragmatic utility that stems from the recognition that the center does not have the power, institutional capacities, and legitimacy to command and control schooling (Pierre, 2000, p. 2; see also Lundgren, 2003). In arguing in this way, Haft and Hopmann (1990) offer an analysis developed within the frames of a traditional self-awareness of the practical limitations of government and public administration.

The contemporary notion of governance recognizes openly the limitations of the command-and-control state and invites analysis of how the state steers the networks that make up a society and what instruments can be used for such steering (Peters, 2000; Pierre, 2000). Thus, Lundgren (2003), adopting this perspective, contends that curricula and curriculum making should be seen as instruments for a milieu- and system-directed *ideological s*teering of school systems. From this viewpoint the state's curriculum making is not an activity directed at the inner, educational work of schools but is directed instead at forming and reforming both the public's and teachers' canopy of understandings about schooling. It is an instrument for the construction and reconstruction of societal narratives around schools and school systems.

An example might serve to make this claim more concrete. In 1997, Norway introduced a new curriculum, *L97,* for elementary and middle schools (Royal Ministry of Education, Research & Church Affairs, 1999; Westbury, 2003). The curriculum contained elements that were explicitly programmatic, such as the introduction of English as a foreign language in Grade 1 rather than in Grade 4. It expanded the time allocated to Norwegian language and literature and math in the formal program. It contained very detailed listings of the mandated content in many subject areas. But what was more important was the implicit and explicit ideological framing of both the curriculum-making process and the curriculum document.

For two decades, Norway's national curricular frameworks had emphasized school-based and regional curriculum development, with the national curriculum offering a framework for such teacher-led development. In contrast, *L97* was presented as an explicitly subject-based, mandatory national curriculum with an expansive and explicit content. In addition, in an extensive 55-page introduction, *L97* projected the contemporary narrative around schooling: Education focused on mathematics, science, and technology is the key both to Norway's economic and social well-being and the challenges and opportunities posed by globalization and internationalism. However, alongside this universal narrative, *L97* also highlighted the role of education as the way by which a small country can strengthen its social and cultural integration and reaffirm the place of its culture in the global community. To achieve a high quality, modern school system there was a need for a centrally developed framework for teaching both math and science and the nation's culture and traditions.

L97 was controversial. For its critics, the very idea of a centrally developed curriculum was a repudiation of the hard-won professionalism of teachers. These critics argued that the quality of schools is not determined by the national content being taught. Such criticisms also elided with ideological differences around the curricular preferences that were seen as pervading *L97*—its Norwegian chauvinism, its prominent emphasis on Western values, and its combination of expansiveness and specificity (Broadhead, 2001, 2002; Koritzinsky, 2001). Yet in spite of these criticisms, most observers of *L97* and most school people regarded it as a success (Hopmann, Afsar, Bachmann, & Sivesind, 2004).

But what is success, or otherwise, in curriculum making? We can begin to answer this question by noting that many of the issues and disputes around curriculum documents must be understood within the frame of the curriculum, and education, as metaphors (Doyle, 1992). They stem from images of schools and schooling that have no direct, immediate bearing on what most schools do. They have their meaning in the societal context, in the cultural and ideological systems, the knowledge-heritages, around schooling.

How does Lundgren's (2003) view of a curriculum and of curriculum making as state-based ideological steering of schooling fit within these understandings? What is a successful curriculum seen in this way? A shift in language provides leverage on this problem. If a curriculum document is interpreted as an instantiation of a narrative, an understanding of both the societal and cultural roles of curricula as steering instruments and a view of the task of successful state-based curriculum making emerges.

In the words of Lindblad, Johannesson, and Simola (2002), collective, national narratives

express "images, myths, and sagas that are to place people in a collective whole" (p. 241). The curriculum has played, and continues to play, a major role in forming the citizen as it institutionalizes the narratives that constitute the collective memory and shape individual's relationships with their natural and social environments (McEneaney & Meyer, 2000; Rosenmund, 2006). As many have observed—although they have valued the consequences in different ways—modernity, globalization, mass migration, and the like bring changes to both collective and individual narratives and pose very visible challenges to the very idea of a self-governing national community.

A formal curriculum can articulate through its selection and organization of school knowledge old, new, or revised narratives about the individual and the community and about both the individual's and the community's social and natural worlds. It gives an authoritative form to a narrative or set of narratives and signals their implications. Let us assume that *L97* was developed to construct and symbolize a new, public narrative of Norway and Norwegians as an instrument for the ideological steering of the networks of organizations that make up the Norwegian school system. What did the curriculum makers seek to do? The Norwegian élite is part of the European élite that is, to different degrees, embracing modernity and globalization and facing the forces that a new world is creating. As in many countries, the values of this new order do not always sit easily with those of older orders. The challenge facing Norway's political élites is the reconciliation of these different interests. The narrative and mandates of *L97* can be seen as one attempt at such a reconciliation: it highlighted the symbols of educational modernity, mathematics and science, and the state's proactive response to the issues facing Norway in a globalizing world. The programmatic decision to introduce English from Grade 1 and German and French from Grade 8 gave an explicit endorsement of a view of the cultural and linguistic world that is most salient to Norway's future, one that will be noted by all parents who have children entering the elementary school. But at the same time, the narrative of *L97* complemented its embrace of modernity with a ringing, inward-directed endorsement of the nation and its culture and its social solidarity.

In other words, the text of *L97* was successful in that it was able to construct a convincing, for its time and place, narrative of a school that balanced stability and change, old and new, and the cultures of the nation and of a new, globalizing world. It offered a basis for a political and an educational response to the challenges of the new world—promises of opportunity for the nation's children and a reassuring vision of the continuing significance of national traditions. The process around the making of *L97* provided a vehicle for steering a national dialogue (and debate) about the narratives and metaphors of the nation and school. The resulting authoritative curriculum-as-document symbolized an interim resolution of that dialogue.

Conclusion

In their review of the problems that might face American states as they developed content standards, Kirst and Bird (1997) pointed to the range of interest groups that would be necessarily engaged in the political process involved in developing authoritative, state-based sets of standards (see Table 3.3). They went on to outline eight decision points and dilemmas that would face any deliberation about the structures and patterns of work of state-based curriculum making:

1. Who must be involved in the process for it to be seen as inclusive? If every group claiming a place in the process is acknowledged, the result will be cumbersome and time-consuming.
2. If appeals from interest groups for specific changes (e.g., inclusion of phonics or exclusion of evolution) are rejected, the process will be criticized for its lack of public participation at the highest level and for leaving crucial decisions to technical panels. If all these protests are considered, the process will become bogged down in time-consuming and fractious disputes.
3. If appeals from subject-matter specialists (e.g., too much physics, not enough biology) are heard, policy makers will become involved in arbitrating the balance among fields within a subject-matter area.
4. If a curriculum is too general, it will be criticized for provided insufficient instructional guidance for teachers. If

guidelines for pedagogy or detailed specifications for topical coverage are included, the document will be criticized for being too long and complex and for seeking to control local practice.

5. If a curriculum achieves a broad consensus in a subject field, leading-edge thinkers will criticize it on the grounds that it reflects the status quo rather than what ought to be.
6. If a curriculum achieves a broad consensus in a subject field, it will inevitably include an expansive set of topics and will not satisfy the claim that less is more.
7. If a curriculum achieves a broad consensus in a subject field, it will be criticized for not stressing interdisciplinary content.
8. If a curriculum is framed using similar structures for all subject areas, it will be criticized for ignoring the significant structural differences between (e.g., mathematics, science, and social studies). (adapted from Kirst & Bird, 1997)

Kirst and Bird's (1997) monograph was addressed to state-level decision makers at the point at which the states were embarking on state-level curriculum making driven by the slogan of "ambitious outcomes for all students." As they saw it, the goal involved a "non-incremental reconceptualization" of the curriculum that had many implications for the process of curriculum making (Kirst & Bird, p. 1). Their eight decision points framed their understanding of the difficult issues that the managers of such a nonincremental goal would have to face.

TABLE 3.3 Key Players in Curriculum Making at the State Level

Insiders

- National and state-level professional associations (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, state-level associations of teachers of mathematics, science).
- Higher education policy makers and university faculty.
- Textbook publishers and/or testing agencies.
- Professional curriculum developers working with, for example, National Science Foundation support.
- Leaders in educational policy in legislatures.

Near circle

- States boards of education.
- Teacher preparation institutions and agencies concerned with teacher certification.
- Ideological interest groups.
- Professional interest groups (e.g., state school board associations, state teacher unions).
- Federal policy makers and administrators.

Far circle

- Organizations of state officials (e.g., the National Governors' Association, Education Commission of the States).
- Council of Chief State School Officers.

Sometimes players

- School accrediting agencies.
- Business organizations, teacher unions, and public interest advocacy groups.

Local level

- Local school boards.
- Parent organizations.
- Teacher unions.
- Curriculum supervisors.
- District and school-level administrators.

Source: Adapted from Kirst & Bird (1997); see also Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt (1989).

Ten years later we can evaluate the state curriculum making of the mid-1990s and see that it was more successful than many expected—the standards documents that emerged were, on the whole, well accepted by both publics and schools. The political contest that had occurred in some states around the state-level curriculum making undertakings of the 1980s and early 1990s had offered lessons that were learned well.[9] One of these lessons was fundamental. Despite the nonincremental goals that Kirst and Bird saw as the center of the systemic-reform platform, the managers of the process of putting the reform in place opted for incrementalism:

- acceptance of the broad outlines of the existing situation with only marginal changes contemplated;
- consideration of a restricted variety of policy alternatives, excluding those involving radical change;
- consideration of a restricted number of consequences for any given policy;
- adjustment of objectives to politics as well as vice versa;
- willingness to reformulate the problem as data become available; and
- serial analysis and piecemeal alteration rather than a single comprehensive overhaul. (Kirst & Bird, 1997, p. 1)

In proceeding in this way, the states' approaches to the political and professional platform of systemic reform reflected the rationality articulated by Haft and Hopmann (1990) and embraced their tool kit for taming reform: (1) The impact of the platform at the heart of the systemic-reform project was thwarted as curriculum making and assessment were placed in separate, noncommunicating administrative compartments; standards-setting was thus decoupled from any implications for the certification of schools and students. (2) By their use of the tool of licensing the state-level managers insulated the state-level process from the issues around the capacity of the schools and local school systems to implement the new curricula. Blame for failure could thus be placed on the schools and teachers, not on the policy or the policy makers. (3) They consulted widely and found room for many interest groups in their projects, but segmented these discourse communities in ways that insulated the discourse of politics and the public from the discourse of teachers, who were themselves segmented into subject-based committees. (4) Where there was actual or potential conflict within the process, it was (in the main) kept out of public view or highlighted in ways that sustained the legitimacy of the overall process. In other words, the potential issues and problems that Kirst and Bird (1997) identified were well managed. The narrative of standards was accepted and served to legitimate the emergence of other, also new state-level steering mechanisms (i.e., statewide assessment and test-based teacher certification). However, these instruments, when also well crafted, had few direct, nonincremental consequences for the social distribution of the outcomes of schools.

That a new, nationwide process of state-level curriculum making would be, overall, successful might not have been predicted. What was predictable was that systemic reform would not result in significant, nonincremental changes in schools. But this was not an outcome specific to this American adventure, with its use of the new (for the United States) policy instruments of state-based curriculum making. Curriculum making is not an effective policy instrument for steering schooling. It is a mechanism, or tool, deployed to manage the political, professional, and public fields around schooling, more often than not designed to mute rather than amplify calls for educational reform and change. Those with commitments to an idea of education might wish it were otherwise, but what might that otherwise be? As Aristotle put it in his *Politics,* "The existing practice is perplexing [and] no one knows on what principle we should proceed" (trans. 1941, VIII, 2, p. 1337b). The contemporary answer to this conundrum is that systems of public schooling should serve all principles that might be identified, with decision making about emphases being left to local sites. School *systems c*annot make such decisions; their task is limited to the steering of the fields around and within the system. Curriculum making is one tool that can be exploited for such steering.

NOTES

1. I am distinguishing the state-based curriculum making directed at leading instruction in the first instance from the long-standing British-world institutions that specify courses of study as the basis for external,

credentialing examinations. This institution is also state based in that the agencies that develop the courses of study are established, or endorsed, by state authorities. However, the mediation of the authority of the courses in credentialing systems is different from that around the curricula I will be discussing here.

2. In many educational cultures, formal curricula and the educational leadership they represent instantiate the idea of curriculum and as such are the principal objects of curriculum theory and research (see Weniger, 2000). This understanding is, of course, in sharp contrast to the more diffuse understanding of the curriculum commonly found in the United States.

3. As a columnist put it in the *Kansas City Star*, "I checked with both the legal counsel at the state school board and the official in charge of curriculum standards. Both agreed . . . *No law requires science teachers to teach what the Board wants them to teach* [italics added]" (Hendricks, 2005).

4. Even the absence of a word such as *evolution* from a curriculum can be interpreted in different ways. Illinois, for example, did not include the word in the science standards it developed in 1997. However, the decision to exclude the word evolution, but not the idea, was planful. The state's policy makers sought to remove a potentially contentious word-as-symbol from the larger process of putting in place the state's first ever statewide curriculum. They saw themselves delegating to the state's school districts the decision to use, or not use, the term evolution in their curricula. In other words, the decision in Illinois not to teach evolution was intended to mute potential controversy. The Kansas Board, on the other hand, clearly invited controversy around its science standards.

5. The principles, practices, and consequences of the American standards-making movement of the late 1980s and 1990s have, of course, received intensive discussion, but as a chronicle of a particular national or state policy development. See, for example, Cohen and Hill (2001); Hill (2001); Fuhrman (2001); Massell and Kirst (1994); O'Day, 2002; Price and Ball (1997); Spillane (2004); Wilson (2003); Wixson et al. (2003).

6. One example of such a pattern of reasoning is the following. A planning premise: a knowledge of and appreciation for the commonality and diversity of humanity is a necessary element of the culture of our time. The learning premise: an understanding of this commonality and diversity can (a) be captured by way of the routinized teaching of case studies of, for example, Buddhist communities in Nepal, Muslim communities in Pakistan or Nigeria, rural villages in China, African American communities in Chicago, and so on; and (b) students of, say, 14 years old can understand such case studies as instantiations of the idea of the commonality and diversity of human culture. Finally, the effect premise: an understanding of such cases brings with it an appreciation of the forms of humankind's commonality and diversity.

7. For example, Le Grand (2003) observes that, following the introduction of the comprehensive secondary school, parents in England were "supposed to concur" that the overriding objective was equality, "and hence to accept whatever degree of uniformity of educational provision that attaining this objective required" (p. 6). But as the subsequent history of English secondary schooling has made clear, this commitment to equality, operationalized programmatically by way of comprehensive secondary schools, could not be made legitimate by authority.

8. In the words of the congressional Conference Report (1994), "the criteria for, and the basis of, assessing the sufficiency or quality of the resource, practices, and conditions necessary at each level of the education systems (schools, local education agencies, and states) to provide all students with an opportunity to learn the material in voluntary national content standards or state content standards" (as cited in Porter, 1995).

9. See, for example, Fore's (1998) description of the conflict around curriculum making in the state of Virginia in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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