CHAPTER ONE

The Function of Curriculum in Schools

School is about learning the values, norms, rituals, symbols, and designated knowledge of the dominant groups in power in any particular society. There are always many histories that exist in any given nation, and all of them are not always recognized or taught in the schools. So school learning is both written and unwritten. For example, schools teach an approved form of history, but they also teach students how to receive that history and what to think of it. Students may learn that in the naval bombardment of Fort McHenry in September of 1814 off Baltimore Harbor, Maryland, Francis Scott Key was aboard a British ship and observed the attack throughout the night. In the morning, the American flag was still flying over the fort, and when he was released, he wrote some verses that when put to an old English drinking song became the Star Spangled Banner. Over a hundred years later, the song was adopted by the U.S. Congress as the national anthem. This historical event could hardly be taught without a full range of values being involved, such as patriotism, allegiance, loyalty, reverence, awe, and pride, as well as an attitude that individuals that refuse to sing the national anthem are anti-American, despite the fact that such a refusal on religious grounds is also part of being an American and guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.

The content of schooling in all of its forms (written and unwritten) is called the *curriculum*. This ancient Latin noun meant

"a running, course" as in "conjiccere se in curriculum" or "a quick course at full speed, swiftly, hastily" (Andrews, 1854, p. 405). The importance of understanding the Latin roots of the concept of *curriculum* is that it was a *designed* experience. Someone or somebody had to give thought to the course to be run before the actual running, and just as importantly, it had to be run speedily. Because schooling represents only a portion of a human being's life, the curriculum is not the entire life but the designed life for the students in the school. The limitations of time itself comprise a kind of necessity to be "quick" about its use in schools.

There are different audiences for the curriculum in the schools: students, teachers, parents, taxpayers, accreditation agencies, government bureaus, other political bodies, and even society as a whole. The selection of the written content comprising the curriculum involves determining of all the things that could be included that are the most important. It is clear there is more to be taught than time is available (Rutter, Maughlan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). The designation of the content of curriculum—whether that content consists of facts, figures, or in the terminology of Alfred North Whitehead (1959), "inert knowledge" that he claimed was "the central problem of all education" p. 7)—or the idea that knowledge should be learned in a problem solving active mode, or even that knowledge should be selected by the student and not the state, curriculum designation is a political decision and not a scientific one. The selection of the "stuff" that comprises curriculum content is about purposes and values, and it is about *power*.

Power is the catalyst that forges the selection of curriculum content in the schools. Somebody has to decide what is to be taught and ultimately what is to be learned. And since there is no scientific way to determine such things, the selection of the content involves framing an argument for what is most important to be learned in the brief time students have in schools. And since in the United States and most societies the public schools are agents of the state, and the state is run by those in power, the definition of the state, whether it is secular or sacred, becomes the screening framework for what is eventually included and excluded in school curriculum. Curriculum content is part and parcel of the political-socioeconomic system, especially in capitalistic countries, and its congruence to the values and perspectives of capitalism with an emphasis on the individual, competitiveness, and personal initiative become paramount cultural

norms and form the cradle in which the curriculum is rocked (see Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Cole, 1988).

What is important to understand is that there is no "natural" curriculum in existence. School curriculum is a cultural artifact, and as an artifact, it is a socio-political-economic construct. It is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong, moral nor immoral unless such a discussion is anchored in a values perspective, or what Bourdieu (1984) has called "systems of dispositions" (p. 6).

One example of the politics of curriculum content is provided in the continuing protests in China and Korea over Japan's World War Two atrocities committed in their countries that were erased or soft-pedaled in Japanese school textbooks in 2005 (Lind, 2009). School curriculum represents the interests of the ruling class, and as Parenti (1978) observes, the ruling classes represent their interests and wrap them in the *sacranda,* which are the basic sacred symbols of a nation's identity. "The interests in an economically dominant class never stand naked. They are enshrouded in the flag, fortified by the law, protected by the police, nurtured by the media, taught by the schools, and blessed by the church" (p. 84). But Japan is not the only example of issues with a nation's *sacranda.* Lind (2009) reports that in France political rightests and socialists protested when President Jacques Chirac apologized for French participation in the Holocaust, which resulted in the expulsion of 75,000 Jews. Similar protests occurred in the United Kingdom when the archbishop of York proposed a national apology for the nation's participation in the slave trade or in the United States when a 1994 exhibit at the Smithsonian on the use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima suggested it was unnecessary drew a U.S. Senate rebuke.

These examples show that a discussion about curriculum content involves the full range of values and perspectives that hinge on such questions as the nature of society and the kind of society a social system wants to become or remain. The nature of the educated person, the nature of the good life, the nature of human learning, and when capitalistic values become regnant, debate about cost and benefits and international global competitiveness—a perspective that sees a nation's fate connected to its share of a defined global market place with an abundance of material goods forming the core of its *quality of life* (see Horton, 2003; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)—are also questioned.

What we know about human constructs is that they are never neutral; they fit into existing systems of power (see Bell, 1988; Bourdieu, 1998; Kerbo, 1983), and power is distributed unevenly in nearly every society in the world. Likewise, there is no such thing as "neutral knowledge." All knowledge is a source of leverage for those in power, and it is pursued to gain and to keep political advantage— a concept called "power-knowledge" by Foucault (1980). Debates about curriculum content are examples of politics and about whose values will prevail in a society where they can be disputed and contested (see Bates, 1993; Hirsch, 1988; Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997; Ravitch, 1974; Shor, 1986; Tyack & Hansot, 1990). For this reason Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) have called the power to impose meanings, as in the designation of curriculum content, as "the cultural arbitrary" (p. 5); the authority to engage in that imposition, "pedagogic authority"; the development of curriculum for teachers to follow as "pedagogic work"; and the main function of institutionalized educational systems is "to produce and reproduce the institutional conditions whose existence and persistence (self-reproduction of the system) . . . necessary . . . to the fulfillment . . . of reproducing a cultural arbitrary" (p. 54). In short, and despite political rhetoric to the contrary, the political function of curriculum is to reproduce the socioeconomic status quo. To do this, one must examine not only what the curriculum states and includes but also what it doesn't include and what remains silent.

It is against this montage of conflicting values and a continuing canvas of imposition and disposition that the topic of teaching and testing is discussed in this book. Former President Bush's education plan "No Child Left Behind" and President Obama's "Race to the Top" are simply examples of a failure to understand the full dimensions of the issues and problems of using the schools to confront socioeconomic inequities without recognizing the crucial role that teaching and testing play in perpetuating the very conditions they sought to ameliorate (see Ingersoll, 2003). It is also a form of what Mohawk (2000) has called "a revitalization movement" that is characterized as "generating a high level of enthusiasm around unrealistic expectations, often with tragic results" (p. 5).

Both of those plans and many that have come before seem to not recognize that the internal operations of schools and doing things better inside of them are (1) not culturally neutral practices no matter how much they embrace "best practices" because curriculum content

itself is laced with ideologies in which they are defined and assessed, and (2) children from subcultures other than that approved by the elites who define the curriculum will always be at a disadvantage (see Solomon, 1992). Unfortunately, such children are often believed to be if not genetically inferior then culturally inferior.

For this reason the hinge of teaching and testing must always be examined closely and within the context of the times, or as Mohawk (2000) observed, "History is not simply a record waiting to be unpacked and examined but a series of emerging texts subject to revision and reinterpretation, each built on previous work" (p. 260).

1.1 What Is Curriculum?

Among the many functions curriculum plays in the schools beyond a representation of the approved culture and perspectives adopted by the state and the groups that are in power within the state is that it is the sanctified content to be taught and as such, becomes the platform for subsequent testing. But as we shall see, testing does not isomorphically simply follow the designation of curriculum content. Often, tests have content of their own apart from what may be in the curriculum. So tests are never neutral tools, as the examples and content in them are loaded with forms of sanctified cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984) has noted that, "There is no way out of the game of culture" and what he reminds us is that the objectification of the approved and sanctioned culture embodied in curriculum and tests is that "the objectification is always bound to remain partial, and therefore, false so long as it fails to include the point of view from which it speaks and also fails to construct the game as a whole" (p.12). Even as this book speaks to teaching and testing, or testing and teaching, the perspective is not to assume that the content of either remains above serious questioning, nor does matching them in an effort to improve achievement on the tests relieve us of the responsibility of ultimately asking "who benefits from gains on these instruments?" The designation of curriculum content and the practices of increased testing as a form of measurement are more than the concern of educators or school boards. The Business Roundtable has been a powerful advocate for more testing in the schools. The interconnectedness of what Emery and Ohanian (2004) have identified as "an interlocking corporate-government-foundation-nonprofits

network" (p. 59) show a tilt towards for-profit educational models and the privatization of public education, hardly a neutral political action agenda (see also Anderson & Pini, 2005).

When most school administrators think about "curriculum," they think about "curriculum guides." The word *curriculum* didn't come into widespread use in education until textbooks were used in preparing teachers in normal schools. That didn't occur until 1900 (Schubert, 1980). For a very long time, school textbooks took the place of curriculum in the nation's public schools. It was textbooks that established the content to be taught and delineated the methods used to teach them as well. To a very large extent, the domination of the textbook in curricular affairs continues into current times (see Fitzgerald, 1979; Nietz, 1966; Price-Baugh, 1997; Svobodny, 1987). The use of textbooks has been a standardizing effort to impose order on curricular anarchy over a long period of time (see Perkinson, 1985, p. x).

There are many different definitions of curriculum. Parkay, Hass, and Anctil (2010) identify at least five. Three of those definitions revolve around a designation of content, one regarding outcomes, and one includes virtually all of the experiences a student might have in school (p. 2). The focus of this book is about the linkage between teaching and testing, and while it is acknowledged that there are many unplanned occasions a student may encounter in school, unless they are anticipated, there is not much school personnel can do about improving test performance. Planning and anticipating what is to be taught and/or learned is central to controlling as much of the variance that may be the cause of poor or disappointing test performance as possible. Control is central to accountability. Most notions of accountability, especially those embodied in legislation that are punitive or remunerative, assume that school personnel are *in control* or *can control* those factors that will lead to improved test performance. For this reason, the definition of curriculum is that it consists of any document or plan that exists in a school or school system that defines the work of teachers, at least to the extent of identifying the content to be taught children and the possible methods to be used in the process.

Most schools have a variety of such *work plans* in place or available for teachers to use. Such materials may be textbooks, curriculum guides, scope and sequence charts, computer programs, accreditation guidelines, state department of education or state

board guidelines, local board policies, or their specifications. All of these "plans" compete for the attention and loyalty of the classroom teacher. In many cases, these documents do not "match" one another, may contain contradictory advice or information, or may be so open to interpretation that contradiction arises when they are implemented. The definition of curriculum is that it is a document of some kind, and its purpose is to *focus* teaching within some sort of common boundary and *connect* the work of classroom teachers across boundaries because learning occurs across many years (English, 1987). By boundary is meant a grade level (as most schools are graded) within or across grades or within or across schools. Teaching in schools is too complicated to have teachers deciding at the last minute what to teach or just abandoning any systematic effort to think in advance about what they will be teaching on a day-to-day basis. The reality is that a variety of documents *compete* for the attention and loyalty of teachers to become the content that is actually taught, not the least of which may be the teacher as the sole determiner employing an eclectic mixture of sources and materials. Teachers remain at least semi-autonomous providers within schools and such autonomy, while at times a great barrier to the implementation of very flawed curriculum (see Freire, 2005; Giroux, 1988), is at other times a blockage to the kind of systematic, consistent instruction necessary to improve assessed learning on tests. The resistance of teachers to tightening the linkage between curriculum and testing is well known for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the issue of the autonomy of the teacher to make such determinations as a professional provider according to his or her own judgment and the ability to downplay or negate the intrusion of testing in the life of the classroom (see Bidwell, 1965). Pay for performance schemes advanced by the Obama administration are a direct challenge to this long-standing recognition (Viadero, 2009).

1.2 CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Curriculum *design* refers to the physical act of creating the curriculum for use in the schools. This may involve the purchase of textbooks (one kind of work plan and curriculum) and/or the writing of curriculum guides (another kind of work plan), and neither may be

well connected to the other. This presents a real problem in considering the *alignment of curriculum* to the tests in use. School officials like to believe that teachers follow curriculum guides when in fact the research reveals they are much more likely to be dependent upon the textbook as the actual day-to-day work plan or "real" curriculum (see Apple, 1988; Venezky, 1992).

Curriculum *delivery* refers to any act of implementing, supervising, monitoring, or using feedback to improve the curriculum once it has been created and put into place in schools.
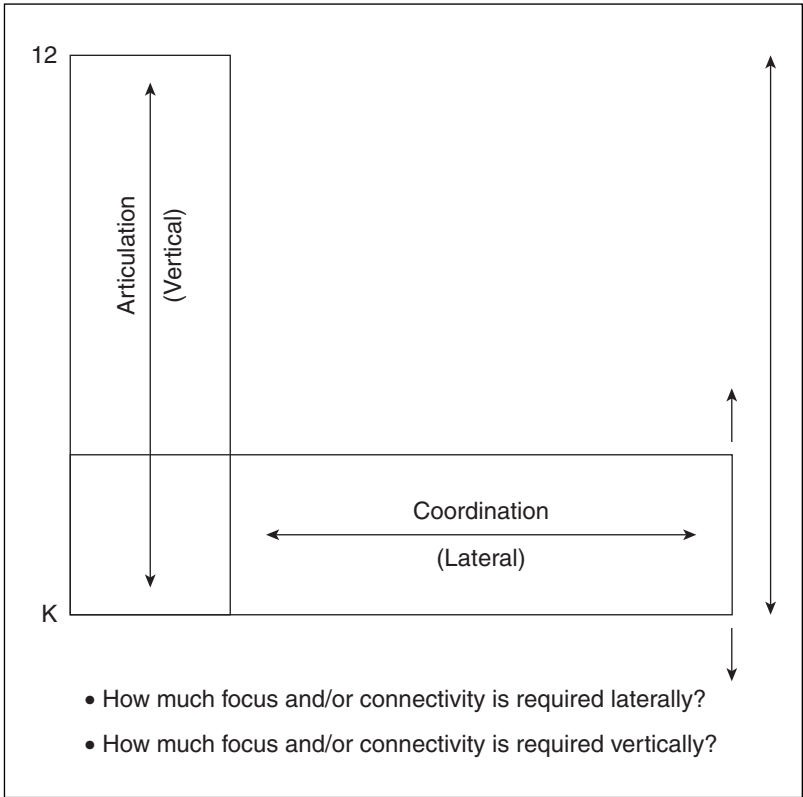
1.3 CURRICULUM COORDINATION AND ARTICULATION

Common in the vocabulary of most curricularists working in schools are the concepts of curriculum coordination and curriculum articulation.

Curriculum coordination refers to the extent of the *focus* and *connectivity* present laterally within a school or a school district. For example, if one were to ask, "What do four teachers of U.S. History I have in common at high school 'X'?" This would pertain to the extent that there was some expected focus and connectivity between these four teachers and their classes in a common curricular area. For *curriculum coordination* to exist, the four teachers do not have to be doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. The extent of similarity—that is, focus and connectivity—would be expected to vary some as the teachers adapted the content to be taught to the differences in the learners in their classes (see Figure 1.1).

Curriculum articulation refers to the focus and vertical connectivity in a school or school system. For example, if one were to ask what the level of focus and connectivity were from those four teachers of U.S. History I to any class of U.S. History II, one would be questioning the extent of curriculum articulation present. It would be possible to secure a coordinated curriculum without necessarily dealing with issues of articulation. One could have all the teachers in one grade or subject focused and connected without dealing with the teachers at the next grade or level. The same problem can exist between schools within the same school district. Table 1.1 illustrates the commonality and difference between curriculum coordination and articulation.

Figure 1.1   Curriculum Focus and Connectivity Issues

- How much focus and/or connectivity is required laterally?
- How much focus and/or connectivity is required vertically?

Table 1.1   Design and Delivery Issues Relating to Curriculum Coordination and Articulation in Schools

Issues	*Coordination*	*Articulation*
Design issues	Define in the work plan the required levels of focus and connectivity desired to optimize student performance laterally.	Define in the work plan the required levels of focus and connectivity desired to optimize student performance vertically.
Delivery issues	Monitor program to ensure design integrity laterally.	Monitor program to ensure design integrity vertically.

1.4 COMBINING DESIGN
AND DELIVERY ISSUES IN SCHOOLS

The several dimensions of dealing with curriculum in schools are shown in Table 1.1, which illustrates the possibilities and concerns of design and delivery issues relating to coordination and articulation in schools. On paper, these issues look reasonably simple. In the actual operations of schools and school districts, they become very complex.

Part of the problem in attaining design coordination and articulation is that teachers involved in curriculum construction may not agree on what the desired level of focus and connectivity should be. In part, this concern has been forced upon them by state or local testing programs that resolve these issues by testing students at a given level of focus and specificity. Then, as schools begin to engage in curriculum alignment with tests (a practice called "back-loading"), the definition of the test focus and connectivity becomes that of the curriculum.

Of course, teachers are loath to define their work any more precisely than is necessary because to do so invites a concomitant type of supervision on the part of administrators and supervisors that changes the autonomy they currently enjoy and hence the *control* of their work (see Ingersoll, 2003; Lortie, 1975). Supervision involves monitoring the fidelity of the delivery of the curriculum compared with its design. This can occur even without interfering with the classroom teachers' usual prerogatives of deciding what kind of methods to use to teach with any given curriculum design.

At the root of this issue is the concept that once the curriculum content is adequately defined (a design issue), the teacher is obligated to teach it (a delivery issue) in some reasonably competent manner. Supervision involves an estimate of the adherence or fidelity of what is taught (not necessarily how it is taught) to what was supposed to be taught. This is the process of content design to content delivery.

Curriculum articulation is often lost within the structure of schools in which an egg-crate-type physical environment invites and encourages teacher individuality, isolation, and idiosyncratic responses. The issue is accentuated by school building to building autonomy and isolation involving authority within and across school sites (Bidwell, 1965).

Many a nice curriculum design, which was designed to enhance focus and connectivity within and across school sites, disappears in the reality of the chasms and gaps in the respective spheres of teacher and administrative autonomy that exist within school districts. This is why school organization has been labeled "loosely coupled" (Weick, 1978).

This organizational "fact of life" is perhaps the greatest barrier to the improvement of test performance because all testing scenarios implicitly assume that some focus and connectivity are present in the school system, otherwise, all commonality would be lost, and with it the basis for the comparison of individuals and groups assessed.

The presence of a minimum of commonality is a requirement for a test to provide important information about what is going on in school systems. What tests usually explain is *what isn't going on* in schools and school districts, which is why socioeconomic level remains the single largest predictor of pupil achievement as opposed to the actual curriculum in schools. The minute that curriculum becomes focused on and connected to, as well as aligned with tests, the influence of socioeconomic level on test performance begins to decline. This phenomenon is one of the most important correlates of the "effective schools" movement. These "effective school" procedures, once employed, decrease the predictability of socioeconomic determinism from test performance, which means poor kids can do better on tests if they are taught properly and well. Whether or not the actual *achievement gap* can be erased remains to be seen because curriculum content is not neutral with regards to the cultural differences that exist across any given society (see Solomon, 1992; Solomon, Booker, & Goldhaber, 2009). Some preliminary evidence does indicate that the gap can be reduced (Moss-Mitchell, 1998).

1.5 FORMAL, INFORMAL, AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

There are at least three different types of curriculum in schools. One is the *formal curriculum*. That is the one that usually appears in curriculum guides, state regulations, or officially sanctioned scope and sequence charts. This is the one that is debated in public.

The second type of curriculum is the *informal curriculum.* This curriculum represents the unrecognized and unofficial aspects of designing or delivering the curriculum. For example, in *design,* the informal curriculum would represent the "values" at work in selecting curriculum content that is only tangentially "public." Such a value base is always at work when it comes to selecting the content to be included in schools.

The informal curriculum may be the one in *delivery* that is epitomized in various "tracking plans" that group children by ability and then differentiate among them by delivering a very different curriculum. The informal curriculum also involves the subtle but important personality variables of the teacher and the way these interact with students positively or negatively to encourage improved pupil learning.

The informal curriculum also includes learning how to take tests and coming to understand what tests mean to engaging in judgments about students and their potential success in schools. The student becomes increasingly aware that the judgment made about him or her by a teacher represents one that is total and often *socially deterministic.* Many come to accept the teacher's definition of their potential as that of society. If the students represent a group at odds with the more dominant group in society that teachers represent, they may come to feel of "less value" as persons (see Bernstein, 1990, p. 171).

Then there is a *hidden curriculum.* This curriculum is the one rarely discussed in schools. It is not even recognized by many educators who work in them. The hidden curriculum is the one that is taught without formal recognition. For example, American children are taught to be "neat and clean," "on time," and "respectful" to teachers. These "lessons" are rarely contained within formal curricula. But they are powerful conventions and norms that are at work in schools nonetheless.

The hidden curriculum contains "structured silences" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985) that embody expectations and presuppositions about social conduct that often place disadvantaged students "at risk" in schools and work against them by being ignorant of the inherent cultural biases that are embedded in school rules.

For example, a teacher of Native Americans complained about the lack of respect Indians seem to have for her because they would not look her in the eye. Indians were "shifty" and deceitful in her

view, and this was an observable behavior that manifested this trait. This teacher was culturally unaware that in Indian life, *one does not look directly at* a person respected as being in authority, for to do so would be a sure sign of disrespect. This same characteristic is present in a variety of Asian cultures as well.

Other examples of the hidden curriculum that are distinctly cultural are learning the "correct" speaking distance in relationship to how loudly one talks and how closely one stands to another person in verbal discourse (see Hall, 1977). These "lessons" are all taught in school without being in any "curriculum guide" or textbook. Bourdieu (1977) has called this aspect of curriculum a *habitus*. A *habitus* is a "system of transposable dispositions," and it governs how one engages in "bodily comportment, say, to act or to hold oneself or to gesture in a certain way," and such bodily dispositions "encodes a certain cultural understanding" (see Taylor, 1999, p. 42). As children enter the school, many from different cultures who have learned how to comport themselves in a different *habitus* are immediately at odds with that embraced by the school in which the formal curriculum is structured. In this sense, a *habitus* represents the rules, and these "rules" undergird the development of curriculum, how we think about what is in and what is out of it. Bernstein (1990) has called these types of learning "tacit," meaning that their acquisition is part of the culture but not taught directly, and they form part of a coding system in use in schools that he has called "pedagogic grammars" (p. 3).

Too often, curriculum developers are not even aware of the *habitus* in which their work is founded. We shall return to this point later in a discussion of testing. There are three *other* curricula as well. They are the *written curriculum,* the *taught curriculum,* and the *tested curriculum.* These three curricula deal with content and express the absolute possibility that there could be in schools three unrelated "contents" floating around, unconnected to one another.

Table 1.2 illustrates a 3 × 3 curriculum matrix that contains all six dimensions previously discussed.

Most school administrators only consider the formal written, taught, and tested curricula in their work. This book will attempt to integrate all these versions of the "curriculum" to help school administrators use the power of a fused approach in improving pupil learning in schools.

Table 1.2   The 3 × 3 Curriculum Matrix at Work in Schools

Curriculum	Formal	Informal	Hidden
Written	Curriculum guides Textbooks	Tracking plans	Lived rules
Taught	Content taught (Instruction)	Personality variables of the teacher	Authority role of the teacher
Tested	Standardized tests Teacher tests	Test behavior	Cultural norms Socioeconomic status

1.6 CURRICULUM AND THE *CULTURAL ARBITRARY*

Most curriculum developers in schools recognize that the selection of the content that is included in a curriculum is arbitrary because both culture and curriculum are human artifacts. There is nothing in the "natural world" that contains curriculum or the culture in which it is defined and then taught in the schools. The selection of curriculum content represents narrow choices among many. And those choices are embedded in sets of values. The same is true for the tests that assess the curriculum. While the tests may be "objective" in the sense that they are not biased in one way or another within the curriculum and/or test dyad, the actual content of both curriculum and test are very much indeed biased, that is, they represent a value-based choice that includes and excludes a great many potential subjects or perspectives that could be taught and/or tested in school classrooms.

The French sociologists Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) have called the adopted and sanctioned government approved curriculum "the cultural arbitrary." It is so designated because human culture and its premises and rules are socially constructed. As social constructions, they are then imposed on all the children in schools irrespective of their particular cultural *habitus*. In this near universal process, one *habitus* is selected and presumed to be the "best" of all possible choices for all children. That such a choice represents the combined political power of the state and of

the elites that control the state is rarely thoroughly examined or even discussed. Every now and then, something surfaces that points to how school curriculum is mostly determined by power relationships. For example, in parts of South America, there is a resurgence of people speaking *Quechua* (pronounced *kichwa*), which is the language of the ancient Incas. Across parts of Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and Ecuador, there are perhaps up to 13 million people who still use *Quechua.* This language was banned by Spanish colonial authorities after an Indian uprising in 1781. And even after this event, native peoples learned that to use *Quechua* was a sign of low social status, so when census takers inquired about which language was spoken, many native peoples would not admit their usage of it. Today, *Quechua* has come out from the cultural shadows with the election of the first *Quechua*-speaking President in Bolivia and the founding of the first *Quechan*-speaking university. The first television station for *Quechan* viewers has also been established near Quito (Simon, 2009). The emergence of the ancient language that is intimately connected to the Inca culture is a clear indication of how language and culture are linked to political power. First and foremost, curriculum content is defined and extended by the use of the power of the state. It is therefore very appropriate to label it as Bourdieu did (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000) "the cultural arbitrary" (p. 16)

Bourdieu (1977) also characterized the acquisition of the dominant curriculum content as a form of cultural capital, akin to fiduciary value, and because it was determined by political power, such acquisition represented a form of wealth (pp.183–184). The schools were one of the primary social institutions where such capital was acquired and by which those who excelled, as well as those who were left behind, internalized it (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 63–64). Those who were not successful, or as successful as those who were, came to believe it was "their fault" in their failure and not the curriculum content or school routines that were to blame. So, even if those students who were least successful came to despise the institution that relegated them to a tertiary social place and space in the larger social-economic spheres, the system that held them in their place was not directly challenged. This struggle also represents a contested sociopolitical space in society. While it could be a location for social change for whole groups of people, it is rarely such a place. The exceptions are pointed to by the dominant elites as

"proof" that it is not the system that is wrong but those of the individuals in it who "don't work hard enough" or otherwise lack other characteristics or values that hold them down. In short, the victim is blamed instead of the perpetuators. From this perspective, the so-called "achievement gap" will be a constant presence in schooling in that it is a consequence of the social sorting that schools perform in every society. Schools are the place where the winners and losers are identified.

The infrequent battles over public school curriculum almost always represent struggles for supremacy in the values arena and sometimes spill over into the courts such as (see Bates, 1993; Delfattore, 1992).

1.7 Conventional Practices and Complaints About Curriculum

Conventional practices concerning curriculum include that it is "developed" or created by teachers to assist them in identifying commonalities to teach within local and state policies. School curriculum is supposed to be independent of textbook adoption so that in theory, the textbook does not come to replace curriculum but is instead a means of implementing it.

Conventional ideas about curriculum include that it is the epitome of local control of the "content" of teaching, is responsive to local demands and priorities, and optimizes the peculiar interests and strengths of the teaching staff. It is supposed to have been created by writing a philosophy first and then filtering goals and other priorities through a tripartite data base of social needs, knowledge requirements, and the tenets of learning psychology. This approach has been called the "Tyler Rationale" (Tyler, 1949).

A. Problem 1: Curriculum Clutter

There isn't a veteran teacher or administrator who hasn't at some point in his or her career come to the conclusion that there is simply "too much" in the curriculum to teach, and a whole lot of it doesn't seem to be related.

The U.S. public school curriculum is replete with fragmentation, "itsy-bitsy" desiderata that, taken together, represent a kind

of "crazy quilt" of topics and subjects. Such a curriculum lacks coherence and focus. It is extremely difficult to set priorities because each "piece" has a priority all its own. Furthermore, each segment has vested political interests behind it to ensure it remains "in" the curriculum.

The lack of a "grand design" in the U.S. school is the result of the extreme decentralization of curriculum practice over a long period of time (see Kliebard, 1986). Curriculum is "developed" at the national level in the form of textbook publishing and test use, at the state level with state guidelines and tests, and at the local level with local board priorities mixed in with local teacher autonomy.

Weaving in and out of these three levels are various movements and "reform cycles" that bring in new ideas and "subjects" and when dead, leave a bit of residue in the overall curriculum quilt (see Tanner & Tanner, 1990). These movements are often antithetical to one another, which reinforces the tendency to fragment and segment them inside schools. It's the only way they can be "contained" and extended without inviting chaos.

The only way curriculum reformers can work in refocusing the U.S. curriculum is to step outside of it because there is no sense in searching for a rationale that is internal to it to serve as a philosophy or theoretical umbrella to bring it together.

Examples of this type of approach would be Mortimer Adler's (1982) *The Paideia Proposal* or William Bennett's (1988) *American Education: Making It Work.* The problem with using an external rationale is that the values that support it are often not revealed or even stated. For example, Adler's rationale would eliminate all vocational education from the curriculum because he believes that it does not represent something of "timeless" value that would provide a "liberal" education. Adler does not envision vocational education as "liberal," a view that in some cases contrasts with historical facts; Plato himself in *The Republic* described an ideal curriculum as one comprising academics, aesthetics, and athletics.

In Plato's curriculum, there are no electives or cocurricular subjects. All three constitute a tripod of a whole curriculum that was based on the idea that the development of a human being had to involve the mind, the body, and the soul. Plato's elementary school curriculum comprised music and gymnastics. The secondary curriculum was centered on the military. Only in higher education were the academics finally pursued (see Pounds, 1968, pp. 40–41).

The lack of a coherent, rational approach to the conception of curriculum in U.S. education is foremost political; second, economic; and third, educational. The political divisions of federalism and the lack of a central ministry of education have meant that neither the government nor its political agents and agencies could define or enforce anybody's curriculum as overt policy. The economic issues relate to class and race divisions interspersed with socioeconomic position. Poor people historically have had very few options to select their schools or their curriculum.

Finally, as an educational issue, the education profession itself has been unable to come to terms with what ought to be taught or learned in U.S. schools for any length of time. The void has largely been filled by the textbook publishers.

The solution to curriculum clutter is to engage in the development of an overall rationale or philosophy that helps develop the boundaries to examine the age-old question, "What is worth putting in a school's curriculum?" This issue will be dealt with in Chapter 2.

B. Problem 2: The Influence of Testing

The phenomenon of testing has continued to expand in recent times. Indeed, the testing industry is a billion dollar a year business in the United States with an estimate that between 114 and 320 million tests are administered each year (Madaus & Kellaghan, 1992, p. 126). As the individual states have adopted various types of statewide measures and the scores on these instruments are made public, the impact of testing has become more pervasive in identifying what is of most worth to teach or learn. The answer has become, almost by default in the absence of any larger rationale, *whatever the test is assessing.* So tests and test makers have come to occupy a primary role in defining curriculum content because it is quite natural to want to do "well" on the tests by making sure students have been taught what they need to know on them.

Thus "teaching to the test" is not only logical but also impossible not to do because it is the test that has come to sanctify the nature of "successful teaching" and "successful schools." Pedagogically, there is nothing wrong with teaching to the test as long as it does not mean cheating, that is, giving the students the correct answers ahead of time in some unethical way so that inferences about the learning

the tests measures are compromised. But such practices have to be contextually situated in much larger issues that usually involve measurement, validity, and the base from which a whole range of political issues must be resolved. The phrase "teaching to the test" is widely misunderstood by the public and many professionals who work in the schools. We shall try and deconstruct it in this book.

C. Problem 3: Site-Based Management and Decentralization of Curriculum Development

U.S. education has swung from localized centralization to decentralization and back over a long time period (see Kliebard, 1985). We are just now emerging from a long period of immersion when site-based management was enshrined as the "one best way" to administer educational programs. What we have discovered is that when testing is centralized in top-down state managed accountability systems, it makes little sense to site-base a curricular response and risk the loss of alignment, and that includes textbook adoption and the use of other instructional resources.

If curriculum development is site based, then testing should also be site based because in that manner schools can be held accountable for the "match" between the two. If this is not the case, then curriculum development creates content not a part of any testing scenario. Test scores may decline due to lost alignment.

To improve pupil test performance, it is necessary to improve the match between curriculum content and test content. This means "tightening" the relationship between what becomes the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and its "alignment" to the tested curricula.

That relationship has been called "quality control" (English, 1978). It is shown in Figure 1.2.

Quality control means that with specific actions, a target or goal (the written curriculum) becomes the basis for defining the work to be done (teaching), and both of these in turn are part of (aligned to) the tested curriculum. An administrator can "tighten" in any one of three ways. But "tightening" does not work unless all three are correlated (aligned).

Site-based management is a workable solution as a way to optimize the selection of methods or means at the local school level to optimize the "match" in quality control because it is at this level where "teaching" is actually delivered.

Figure 1.2   Quality Control in Curriculum Development
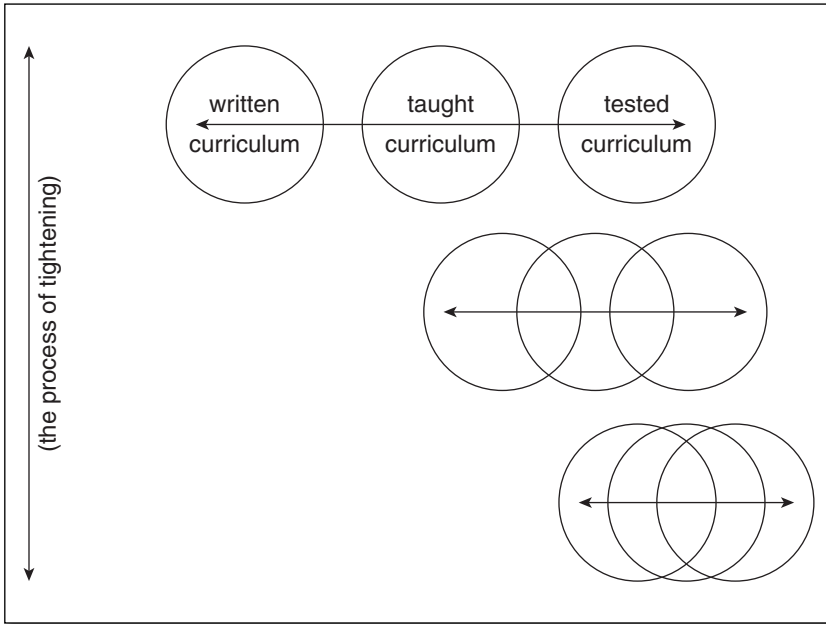
D. Problem 4: Loosely Coupled Systems and Teacher Isolation

Educational systems and the schools within them are not tightly interconnected. There is a great deal of "slack" between individual schools and the larger school system (English, 2008). Many contemporary critics propose cutting the individual schools "loose" from the system itself for all but the most perfunctory of duties (Maxcy, 1991). Whether or not this strategy is successful in improving pupil achievement, however, is in part a function of how success is measured.

If tests are used that presuppose a cumulative curriculum taught systematically over the years and across school buildings, then site-based management will not improve scores on these instruments because the "cumulative" impact of focused teaching is jeopardized. If each school becomes a school district, curricula sequence is often sacrificed. What is gained as a short-term benefit from being "liberated" from a highly bureaucratic and centralized system is lost as test scores fall.

Even if one takes steps to tighten the relationships between schools (curriculum articulation), the simple fact that schools in most school districts now are only minimally related one to the other presents barriers of geographic and physical dimensions of considerable magnitude. Much tradition has to be overcome in improving the correlation between the written, taught, and tested curricula due to the tradition of "loosely coupling."

The major avenue open to school districts regarding "tightening" (or quality control) is to tighten only in areas where it is required and not in every curricular area. These steps will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

We differentiate here between teacher autonomy and teacher isolation. There really is no way to observe teachers and adjust the curriculum in a direct one-on-one manner because teachers only have a small "piece" of the total curriculum, observation is always obtrusive and changes the classroom environment, and principals can't be present for a very long time given the excessive spans of control most must live with in the day-to-day operations of their schools.

For these reasons, modern supervision and monitoring depend to a large extent on getting teachers to monitor themselves and "training" teachers to follow the curricular materials published by the local or state agencies involved. The more difficult the testing scenario is, the more district officials may resort to the publication of materials that become more detailed and often more routinized.

Such practices may have the unhappy effect of "deskilling" teachers (Apple, 1979). The simple fact is that the more tests are used to calibrate the success of learning in schools (and by inference of teaching), the more curricular materials are developed to focus (and thus limit) the viable options teachers may select in curricular delivery. The use of any materials, however, ultimately has a similar impact.

The important question is this: Are the limitations consciously imposed after deliberate decision making, or are they imposed by system requirements? If the intervention is by system requirements, school districts have a special obligation to fully explore the hidden issues at work in the development of curricula that focus the work of teachers in classrooms. The real question is then, "Focusing by whom to obtain what for whom?" The heart of that question involves considering who the real clients of the schools are (children or society) and who is working for whom (teachers for administrators,

for society, for children, or for themselves; see Courts, 1991). There is a difference between providing space for teachers to customize the curriculum and permitting teacher isolation that may compromise the strength of a curriculum to adequately prepare students for high-stakes testing.

E. Problem 5: The Deadening Impact of Textbooks

Textbooks are big business in education. In fact, it is estimated that "thirty percent of all books sold are purchased by the educational system, and the elementary school and high school market accounts for approximately 16% of total annual sales." (Keith, 1991, p. 45)

"The writing in most textbooks, particularly in the elementary textbooks, is choppy and stilted," notes Harriet Bernstein (1985, p. 464). She blames "states and cities that have mandated the use of readability formulas to determine the level of difficulty of a text." The use of such formulas makes the books harder rather than easier to read because it robs them of "connective tissue" that makes comprehension possible (see also Shannon, 1988).

Textbooks became a "fact of life" for U.S. schools after the Revolutionary War. Noah Webster sold his "spellers" from horseback and was perhaps the first to become wealthy from the sale of schoolbooks. His spellers were popular because they provided a curriculum to follow. U.S. schools in the nineteenth century were called a kind of organized anarchy, and the only thing that held them together was the textbooks used in them (Perkinson, 1985, p. x). But the domination of textbooks led to materials that appealed to the lowest common denominator among tastes and resulted in a "watered-down curriculum" and progressively easier and more bland content (Perkinson, 1985, p. xi).

The stranglehold of textbooks in U.S. schools continues. Goldstein (1978) has estimated that at least 75% of a pupil's classroom time involves the use of a textbook. These data suggest that the most important curriculum decision a district's officials may make is not which curriculum to "develop" but which textbooks to adopt. No other work plan in a school exercises the dominant and profound influence of school textbooks.

A large issue with textbooks is that they cannot just tell the truth and they cannot really teach children how to think critically. An example was the social textbooks of T. C. Columbia professor

Harold Rugg. At the height of its popularity, it is estimated that Rugg's books sold approximately 289,000 copies per year (Spring, 1991, p. 193). Because Rugg advocated that children learn how to "assume intelligent control of their institutions and environment," they came under attack from Hearst newspapers and from B.C. Forbes founder of *Forbes* magazine who tried to get the books banned from his own schools in New Jersey. Forbes believed Rugg's books were "viciously un-American" and they tried to convince "the oncoming generation that America's private-enterprise system is wholly inferior and nefarious" (Rugg, 1941, p.25). These attacks led to pressure from the Advertising Federation of America, the American Legion, and the Sons of the American Revolution that resulted in book burnings in school systems across the country and the Rugg books were reduced to annual sales of only 21,000 copies. Book publishers took note. Controversy ruins book sales. So much for the truth and so much for trying to help children learn critical thinking.

And the result of complaints and controversy also surrounds not only textbooks but the tests themselves. When test makers devise test questions, there are new guidelines about what is acceptable and what is not. According to Kronholz (2002), test item writers may not develop items which refer to marital status; grandmothers in rocking chairs; men as doctors women as nurses; teenage rebellion or hamburgers, birthday cakes, or sodas. Instead, there should be references to one-parent homes and grandmothers going jogging, occupations must be gender neutral, children must be obedient, and sodas are replaced with more healthful fruit juice and vegetables (p. B1). Ravitch (2004) has written a provocative book called *The Language Police* in which she avers that censorship by both the political right and left in curriculum, textbooks, and testing is unduly restricting what students can learn.

F. Problem 6: Simplistic Management Models

Unlike factories making standardized products that can impose rigid requirements for constructing machines where motions of production can be robotized for efficiency and precision, schools deal with a pliable humanity infinitely more complex and with a larger range of variance at every step of the process of education than the most demanding technical tasks that are known to exist in the rest of

society. The human being is not only more elastic and variable than any other object to be processed, but he or she can also push back, resist, and reject the processes imposed. A human being is a restless and active coparticipant in education. The challenges of this situation are not understood well by policy makers, critics, and planners. They are almost always understood better by teachers and administrators who deal with the enormous psychic energy it takes to maintain a semblance of order and harmony in their classrooms and schools, even if they do not always understand the source of the tensions within their workplaces.

The elasticity of the human being to become interactive with a wide range of so-called "reforms" and defy them is due to the fact that reformers and policy makers assume a view that students and the schools they attend are static, that is, they can hold them constant while they manipulate the "changes" in them or on them. Groopman (2010) indicates that standardizing medical "best practices" made the same false assumption. What the policy designers and their legislative assistants took for granted was that patients would all respond the same to a putative "best practice." The reality is that in many cases, the success of the "treatment" is greatly dependent on an interaction with the patient and is therefore patient dependent as opposed to patient independent. Groopman (2010) summarizes the situation deftly when he says, "There is growing awareness among researchers, including advocates of quality measures, that past efforts to standardize and broadly mandate 'best practices' were scientifically misconceived" (p. 13). It is more than likely that many of the mandated school reforms that work in one place and not another are equally dependent in the same way. Students and schools are never static.

Another reason schools are difficult to change is that there is little energy left to change them as they are running because the tasks of maintenance are so "in your face" every moment of the day. Compulsory attendance in almost every activity means that there will always be tension and resistance. While learning can be conceptualized as "natural," schools are not "natural" places. They are deliberate social constructions with their own set of paradoxes and contradictions within them, and sociologists such as Bernstein (1996) have revealed the elaborate coding and classifications that mark them internally. Rhetorically, they may be there "to set people free," but they are "not free to do as they please" in them. Freedom

pursued is not freedom lived. This paradox has been one of the constant criticisms of schools as being antidemocratic places and at odds with contemporary notions of governance and accountability (see Woods, 2005).

G. Problem 7: Cultural Capital and the Achievement Gap

There has been much hand-wringing and consternation about the achievement gap in American schools. In the United States, this has meant that certain racial groups consistently score below that of the dominant majority (see Tomsho, 2009). There are at least four explanations for this chronic underperformance phenomenon. They are biological, motivational, technical, and sociopolitical. All of them assume that the tests in use are not the causative agents themselves, that is, that they are neutral. This assumption must also be challenged despite evidence that the tests are not culturally neutral (English, 2002; Young, 2003), though much depends on how that neutrality or bias, as the case may be, is defined (see Jencks & Phillips, 1998). They are briefly presented here.

Explanation 1: The gap is biological, genetically established, and fixed.

This explanation has a long history in education and the schools. It can be traced to the ideas of genetic inheritance of Francis Galton (1822–1911). Galton wrote a book in 1869 titled *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry Into Its Laws and Consequences* in which he studied men in various families in Britain who had attained recognized fame and social status.

He attributed their distinction to so-called "natural ability" and believed that it was general, that is, no matter what venue fame had been acquired, it was due to a general, inherited, and fixed element established at birth. White (2006) has criticized this idea of "natural ability" or what we would call "intelligence" today as lacking in evidentiary support and rooted in religious ideas of predestination in Lutheranism and Calvinism. This view believed that heaven was only for the select few and that entrance was established by birth. As White (2006) notes, "Some are predestined to salvation, the others to damnation. There is no middle ground. The saved, moreover, are few in number, and the many are damned" (p. 36). White (2006) also

points out that those who make such claims must have some assurance that they are among those who can attain salvation. In a secular world, the answer was supplied by the notion that the IQ, inherited at birth and unchangeable, guaranteed that the writer was among those to be selected.

From this perspective the *achievement gap* is immediately explainable as the genetic difference between peoples and races in the world, and that trying to eliminate it is really folly. This is the view proffered by Hernstein and Murray (2004) in their book *The Bell Curve,* which accepted the view proffered by White (2006) that every person's role was predetermined at birth by a genetic code (see Conason, 2003, p. 138). The Hernstein and Murray (2004) book was excoriated as racist and elitist, ignored a huge part of the research evidence that linked school achievement to socioeconomic conditions, and used extensive literature funded by the Pioneer Fund that has sponsored and promoted white supremacist writings and authors and other racial eugenics perspectives over many years (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, pp. 38–41; see also Kevles, 1999). And Murray has extensive and long-time connections to right wing think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute (see Brock, 2004, pp. 47, 351).

If one actually believes in this perspective as Britain's Cyril Burt did, then the schools employ tracking to push the less bright (or the damned) out to their allotted stations in life. In a chilling summary of the trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann after he was captured in Argentina and brought to trial in Israel, Hannah Arendt (2006) commented on the mass murder of the Jews by saying, "This sort of killing can be directed against any given group, that is, that the principle of selection is dependent only upon circumstantial factors. It is quite conceivable that in the automated economy of a not-too-distant future, men may be tempted to exterminate all those whose intelligence quotient is below a certain level" (pp. 288–289).

Explanation 2: The gap is due to leadership personality traits such as timidity, incompetence, and the lack of motivation (i.e., competition in the larger system).

The second explanation for the *achievement gap* is that the schools lack able leaders and are not run like businesses. This is the perspective proffered by writers such as the American Enterprise Institute's Frederick Hess (2004) and the Broad Foundation (2003). Those advancing this agenda see school boards, teacher unions, and

schools of education as obstacles to be overcome or eliminated (see Gerstner, 2008; Riley, 2009). The motivation that unites them is a common agreement that schools need competition as incentives to become better, that educational leaders should employ the same procedures and models used in the "for profit" sectors of the economy, that educational leaders should be paid bonuses for improved test scores, and that teacher salaries ought to be linked to test score improvement. School superintendents don't need to be educators at all. They just need to be hard-nosed about attaining test score improvements. For this reason, the Broad people offer their own homegrown "training" program and sponsor their graduates with a variety of other incentives (Weinberg, 2003; Riley, 2009). Their superintendents have acquired the name of "gun slingers," and some openly show disdain for making a career in education (see Eisinger & Hula, 2008).).

The record of these non-educator superintendents shows some gains in system efficiencies and other cost-cutting measures, such as school closings and privatizing system services, but the record for significant and sustained student achievement gains is marginal at best. The fact that schools are not businesses and that the "for-profit" mindset that has dominated the private sector and led to severe excesses, scandal, and criminal behavior with prison time for business executives of some of the biggest corporations seems not to have been understood (see Cuban, 2004).

Explanation 3: Schools and school systems fail to adopt the kind of organizational and technical changes the situation requires.

This view of the *achievement gap* is that it is at least partially the result of the lack of rational and/or technical responses to specific organizational challenges. The principle challenge is that higher outcome responses, as embodied in such legislative mandates as Public Law 107–110 or *No Child Left Behind*, require tighter linkages within school systems than currently exist (English, 2008). This approach is the one that is supported by a large slice of the management literature of the last 40 years (see Thompson, 1967). It is the one that supports curriculum alignment as one of the major changes that will bring results, and there are data to support such assertions (see Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2009; English & Steffy, 2005; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Squires, 2005).

**Explanation 4: Schools are controlled by the
political elites who use them to reinforce their
control of social order and their own position in it.**

This view of the *achievement gap* is neither biological, per-
sonality defined, nor technical; it is rather political, economic,
and social. The idea that the schools are the instruments of the
reproduction of the existing social order is not new. Beginning
with classical Marxism (see Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and the
views proffered by Durkheim (1956) and Weber (Gerth & Mills,
1970) but more recently by Bourdieu and Passeron (2000),
schools are seen as potentially transformative places where whole
groups of people could be lifted from their social position to a
different one, but whose role in the perpetuation of the social
status quo goes largely unchallenged. Government programs
designed to be transformative are shaped to "fit" into the status
quo, and while they are superficially proffered by reformers to be
of benefit to the more nonprivileged or marginalized groups, they
rarely do so.

The research of Solomon, Booker, and Goldhaber (2009) offer
some support for this claim. These researchers examined the effects
of federally funded comprehensive school reform in Texas funded
largely through Title 1 from the 1990s through the early 2000s.
Comprehensive School Reforms funded a large number of external
"reforms," including *Success for All,* and the *El Paso Collaborative
for Academic Excellence* in 231 elementary schools. Only 16
schools created their own models for reform. When schools adopt-
ing comprehensive reforms were compared with similar noncompre-
hensive reforms, the researchers found no significant gains for the
schools implementing reforms in reading but some for math. The
gain in math was "slightly more than 2.5% of a standard deviation"
(Solomon, Booker, & Goldhaber, 2009, p. 121). However, African
American and Hispanic students "showed lower gains than this base-
line group" and "at times negative gains" (p. 122). This research
conclusion indicated that "only student background characteristics
drive differences in student outcomes" (p. 119). The observation is
consistent with Bourdieu's (1984) research on class distinctions and
how they are reproduced in educational systems as well as that of
Bernstein (1996).

In summary, the achievement gap is the result of many factors
at work in school systems. The perspective offered in this book is

that those that are controllable by educators should be employed in order to take the problem on *within* the existing set of socio-cultural-political constraints in which they exist. The controllable variables lie largely within the realm of rational and/or technical adjustments. The ultimate solution to the achievement gap dilemma that are due to cultural differences are much more difficult to tackle because they would involve approaching the mechanisms and role of the dominant cultural elites and their control of the content and nature of the school's curriculum. The nature of the resistance to this examination and possible change would be intense, in part due to the fact that culture itself is rarely perceived as a social construct but as "natural" in the eyes of those living within it. Those who do not adhere to the same cultural values are often viewed as "deviant" and are usually subject to censure, ridicule, rejection, or outright ostracism. This is not a struggle that educators are likely to win without a broader form of social consensus being developed for change. Until that happens, it is quite likely that those at odds with the cultural values and approved curriculum content in schools will be blamed for their "lack" of success in school, and much of their failure will not be seen as cultural difference but inherited, genetic capacity. This is the continuing tragedy of not recognizing the achievement gap as an artiface. Bernstein (1996) observed that the school unequally distributed knowledge, potentials, and its resources to students, and "It is highly likely that the students who do not receive these rights in the school come from social groups who do not receive these rights in society" (p. 8).

1.8 THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS OF AN IMPERFECT CURRICULUM

To be effective in schools, and especially in a relationship with high-stakes accountability tests, a curriculum must have at least three essential characteristics. As a work plan, a curriculum must provide for *consistency* (or coordination). It must provide for *continuity* (or articulation). A curriculum must also provide for *flexibility* in adaptation as teachers interact with students. *Flexibility* means that the curriculum must be open to some interpretations in terms of how and under what classroom circumstances the content is most optimally taught. This means that the curriculum must be capable of being

changed by altering the sequencing and pacing of its delivery *without* fundamentally altering its design fidelity.

The reason is that with a work plan, the teacher is confronted with a range of differences in learners that eludes one of the most critical variables in planning any work activity, that is, *the absolute differences in the inputs* going into the work design itself.

From this perspective, the use of any manufacturing model in schools ultimately fails because nearly all operate on the assumption that somehow inputs can be *standardized.* With human beings, such an idea is absurd. Education cannot only not standardize people, but if education is effective, it leads to greater differences between students, not less. Thus, effective education quickly becomes destandardized in practice. Much of school ideology is aimed at "controlling" students by minimizing the differences between them, even as instruction is accentuating those same differences.

Effective school curriculum never attempts to standardize students but must, as a work plan, provide for focus and connectivity (coordination and articulation) *without* leading to mindless conformity where every teacher has exactly the same lesson on the same day from the same page in the same textbook. Such a situation would be profoundly unproductive and ineffective.

Curriculum in schools will always be in a state of tension between those requirements that are aimed at ensuring some sort of common content for all and those requirements that demand differences in approach, methods, and materials to attain the common outcomes. This phenomenon has been called "the paradox of administration" (Thompson, 1967, p. 150). It refers to a relationship known as "loose-tight" in organizational studies. When higher standards are imposed on a human organization, the usual response is to reduce slack, that is space between key functions. In schools, that would be the relationship between the written, taught, and tested curricula. This is true up to the point where in the delivery of the curriculum, the system must provide sufficient flexibility for the teacher to improvise and adapt the curriculum to the variance within the learner cadre. So the usual response of tightening functions and thereby loosening slack is effective only if it also simultaneously permits slack to exist in teaching that curriculum.

If common outcomes are required, the curriculum must enable teachers within schools to mix methods and materials very differently

to come anywhere near close to ensuring the learning of those desired commonalities. Differences have to be allowed in order to consider what is an expectation for all. What that means for curriculum development is that, *as a process,* it must define the necessary levels of focus and connectivity without leading to standardization.

Human variability defies the use of manufacturing and/or production models in schools. Yet schools exist to create some sort of social consensus about the perpetuation of a common life mode for everyone. Schools cannot let everyone "do their own thing," or there would be no school. On the other hand, schools cannot force everyone to do the same thing without jeopardizing their function in a society that contains, sustains, and protects those very same differences among its peoples. That is the challenge that faces educators involved in designing and delivering curriculum in the nation's schools, now and in the foreseeable future.

Nowhere is this fact more apparent than in population projections for the United States and its racial and ethnic composition. It is now estimated that by 2050, whites will no longer be the majority. By that date, it is anticipated that the total U.S. population will be 399 million of which whites will comprise only 49.9%. While the black population will remain the same as it is today with 12.2%, Hispanics will comprise 28%, a gain of 13% from today. Asians will increase their presence to 6%, up from 4.4%. The point at which minority children become the majority is anticipated to be 2031 (Yen, 2009). With this projection in mind, it is clear that curriculum content will continue to evolve and become representative of larger social and cultural changes as the nation becomes more and more multicultural. The key point here is that the designation of what is the appropriate curriculum to be learned in the schools is not a scientific one but a political one. And in a democracy, politics is determined by a plebiscite. While educators may write the curriculum, the content of that curriculum is defined by the presence of much larger sociopolitical authorities. In short, we live in an imperfect world, and this will always be reflected in an imperfect curriculum. Any curriculum in a democracy where the content is determined by larger socioeconomic-cultural forces will necessarily contain paradoxes and contradictions. Only in a static society run by a ruthless and all powerful tyrant could the curriculum approach perfection. It would not be a world most of us would choose to inhabit.
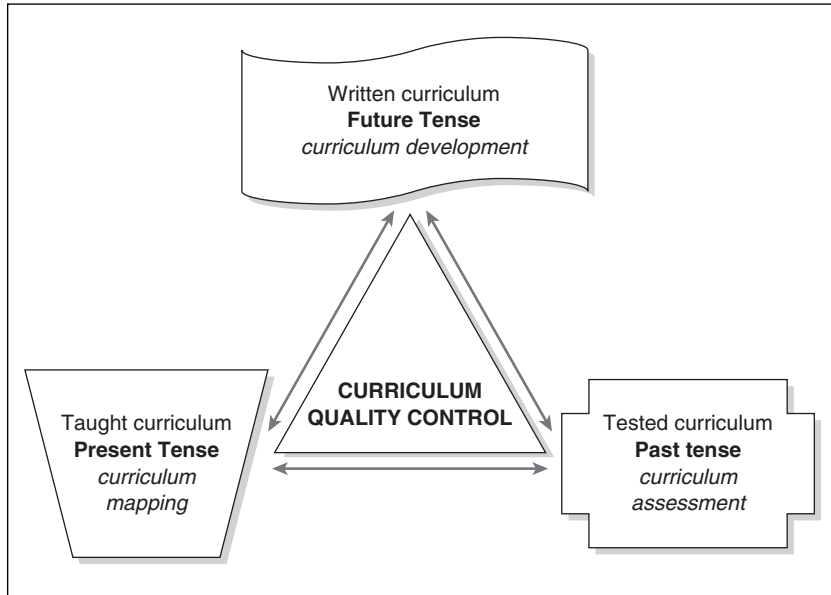
1.9 A Clarifying Model of the Critical Curricular Relationships and Terms

Since the publication of the first edition of *Deciding What to Teach and Test* in 1992, there have been changes and modifications in curriculum practices nationwide. There have also been some essential confusions as well. Among the most prevalent obfuscation is the term *curriculum mapping*, which when I first used it in the 1980s (see English, 1980) referred to the *taught curriculum* and not the *written curriculum.* The idea was to find a conceptual way to indicate that the actual curriculum being delivered in the classroom could be quite different than the one put to paper by curriculum developers or designers external to the teaching process. The idea of discovering the actual curriculum in use as opposed to believing that one on paper was in use was to "map" that curriculum, the same as a surveyor would chart a new geographical territory by actually going there. I worked with many school systems in doing this kind of mapping and described it in some detail in English (1980), English and Steffy (1983), and English and Larson (1996).

Figure 1.3 shows this relationship as a clarifying model. To try and regain a foothold with the original use of *curriculum mapping*, I have resorted to showing the written, taught, and tested curriculum below by verb tense. The written curriculum is *the developed curriculum,* that is, the desired or intended curriculum to be taught in the schools. This is the future tense. The taught curriculum is the actual curriculum being delivered in the classroom, and the term for its content is a *curriculum map.* A curriculum map takes place in the present tense. I have also called this classroom content "the real curriculum" because it may be the only one students ever really know. It is also critical in assessment as the relationship between teaching and testing becomes the vital linkage via *curriculum alignment.* Finally, the assessed or tested curriculum occurs in the past tense, that is, it is representative of what the student has retained from the linkage between the future curriculum and the present curriculum, or the desired and actual curriculum designed and delivered. This important distinction has gotten lost in the confusion about *curriculum mapping* as advanced by Heidi Hayes Jacobs (1997) and others (see also Squires, 2005, p. 157) who never made such differentiations clear. In their approach, a curriculum map is the desired curriculum or the one teachers thought they might teach but not the

Figure 1.3   A Clarifying Model of Curricular Relationships and Terms

Written curriculum
Future Tense
curriculum development

**CURRICULUM
QUALITY CONTROL**

Taught curriculum
Present Tense
*curriculum
mapping*

Tested curriculum
Past tense
*curriculum
assessment*

actual curriculum that was taught. Thus, it seems to me that the pre-tention of assuming that the desired curriculum becomes the actual curriculum is continued as before. This omission eliminates the important role of the classroom teacher in personalizing and individualizing the curriculum in its delivery. It is not sufficiently captured at all with the term *backward mapping*, which while perhaps defining what should be in the present tense is not actually what is being taught in the present tense.