



5th Annual Multicultural Education Conference:

*University of Southern Indiana
Department of Teacher Education
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Creating Transformative Curriculum: Empowering Teachers, Administrators, and Schools as Curriculum Developers

Unexamined traditional approaches ultimately reproduce and exacerbate existing societal inequalities and reaffirm errant understandings or presumptions about the source and hence the solution to a given social ill. Traditional approaches tend to encourage students not to question, but to merely learn or “bank” certain “facts,” skills, and dispositions to accommodate and adapt to the world as it is. They do not encourage or help students to understand or consider the ways in which they are capable of acting to transform the world in ways that are more just, free, and democratic. While the traditional view minimally emphasizes the acquisition or demonstration of competencies such as literacy and numeracy, the transformative perspective views the acquisition of functional skills as inseparable from transformative skills of critical thinking that links learning to broader social problems and concerns. (Brown & Saltman, 2005, p. 6)

Issues of innovation surround multicultural education. Questions of equity, justice, recognition, power, and voice all play crucial parts in the dialogue regarding the politics of exclusion. For schools, these questions involve the development (or in many cases the purchase) of curriculum. A broad definition of curriculum in relation to the 5th Annual Multicultural Education Conference is asserted that aligns with the definition provided by James McKernan:

A curriculum is a proposal setting out an educational plan, offering students socially valued knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and abilities, which are made available to students through a variety of educational experiences, at all levels of the education system. As a proposal, the curriculum is a hypothesis inviting a research response. (McKernan, 2008, p. 12)

The evolution of curriculum within classrooms, schools, and other educational institutions has become stagnated. Innovation and transformative curricula are prevented from emerging by the hegemonic control exercised by the technical rationality-driven outcomes-based education movement. Any innovation, whether a program, course, unit, or lesson, must conform to this hegemonic paradigm (Parkison, 2009).

Community development and democratic education depend upon the space – both private and public – through which transformative experiences can emerge. Recognition of the power of local knowledge, informed by the technologies of self (Foucault, 1988; 2005), permits stakeholders in the schooling enterprise to engage in the creation of authentic curriculum. This engagement facilitates constructive dialogue across difference, based upon

the recognition of the pluralistic identity of the Other, and directed toward collaboration and mutual benefit. Curricula that emerge from these contexts or spaces are authentic educational expressions.

The Fifth Annual Multicultural Conference at the University of Southern Indiana will investigate the factors that both enhance and inhibit the development of *transformative curriculum*. The following strands are proposed:

1. Local and “private space” voices in the development of curricular content.
2. Self-critique and the language of “at-risk” and “achievement gap”.
3. Curriculum Design Models: What is appropriate for the Local Education Agency?
 - a. Subject/disciplines Design
 - b. Interdisciplinary/broad fields Design
 - c. Student/Child-centered Design
 - d. Core Curriculum Design
 - e. Integrated Designs
 - f. Process Designs
 - g. Humanistic Designs
4. Exemplars of Transformative Curricula.

Each strand will help participants engage with the process of curricular design and begin to recognize their responsibility to develop innovative programs, courses, units, and lessons.

Works Cited

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