EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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EMPOWERMENT: THE CONCEPT
EXAMPLES OF TITLES FROM THE LITERATURE ON TEACHER/LECTURER INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- “Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning”
- “Teaching effectiveness and teacher development”
- “A teacher guide to classroom research”
- “Leading schools in times of change”
- “The new meaning of educational change”
- “Dynamic teachers: Leaders of change”
- “Understanding teacher development”
- “Curriculum Leadership”
EXAMPLES OF TITLES (Continued)

- “Teachers as **curriculum planners**: Narratives of experience”
- “The teacher as **expert**”
- “Teachers and their workplace: **Commitment, performance and productivity**”
- “Teachers’ work: **Individuals, colleagues and contexts**”
- “Teachers **who lead**: The rhetoric of reform and the realities of practice”
- “Teacher **empowerment** through curriculum development”
An analogy with music: “... teachers are in charge of live performances and, like conductors, they do not usually write the scores they interpret. ... (T)eachers are like conductors, while curriculum developers are like composers” (Martin-Kniep en Uhrmacher (1992: 261))

Danger of “... separation of conception from execution” (Apple (1986:178-179))
“CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IS NOT DONE SOMETHING TO LECTURERS, BUT THROUGH AND WITH THEM”

(Rees)
ARE LECTURERS MERE RECEIVERS OR CHANGE AGENTS?
What are the dangers of not being creatively involved in curriculum development?
THE COMPLEX WORLD OF THE
TEACHER/LECTURER

FOUR CRITICAL ELEMENTS

- Strong knowledge base
- Quality controls (assessment and evaluation)
- Resources (salaries, resources, material, etc.)
- Conditions of practice

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

- Society
- University
- State
- School
- College of Education

“In combination with the characteristics of a profession, the interaction among the spheres of influence form a dynamic, constantly changing supra-system defined here as the total context in which teachers (lecturers) operate”.

(Corrigan & Haberman, 1995)
BE CONFIDENT TO TAKE RISKS AND BECOME INVOLVED
DO WE WANT TO CONFORM (more of the same) OR BECOME INVOLVED INDEPENDENTLY IN A CREATIVE WAY?
SOME PREFER A RIGID CURRICULUM AS IT MIGHT PROVIDE SOME SECURITY, WHILST OTHERS SEE IT AS AN OBSTACLE TO CREATIVITY
“the ultimate goal of change is when people see themselves as shareholders with a stake in the success of the system as a whole, with the pursuit of meaning as the elusive key”  (M Fullan. 2001: 11)
TWO APPROACHES

**SOCRATIC approach:**
- Active participation and interaction
- Discoverers of knowledge
- Independent decision making
- Creators of knowledge

**Scholastic approach:**
- “Top-down” approach
- Transmission
- Applies exactly as received
- Design is done “elsewhere” and teachers must just apply it
BERNSTEIN’S LEVELS OF DISCOURSE

1. Production of discourse: Creation of knowledge in the disciplines

2. Reconceptualization of discourse: Giving meaning, e.g. by education departments, syllabus development

3. Reproduction of discourse: Teachers implement and apply pre-conceived ideas
WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN FOR ME AS A LECTURER WHO HAS TO TRAIN THEOLOGIANS?
• ‘Empowerment embodies a notion of power as external, power which can be given, which can be provided, power as property. Power must be something which can be controlled. It implies some kind of vision.’ (Gore, 1989:3)

• ‘... empowerment is to allow participation and give equal power in decision-making ... especially to those who have been kept out. It means giving power to the teacher to decide what will be taught and how it will be taught. Empowerment has to do with things such as sharing of power, the right to participate, the right to articulate oneself and be heard, equality and accommodation. Empowerment is seen as something external to the teacher and something that “is given to the teacher” (Singh’s 2003)

• ‘... the overcoming of workplace alienation and...
• Empowerment includes empowering strategies that capitalise on peoples’ ability to understand their own needs and that build on the energy and strengths people have (Sleeter 1991:4)

• True empowerment leads to a growth in professionalism as teachers become involved with and take responsibility for decisions taken by them (Melenyzer 1990)

• ... teachers must be allowed to make their own decisions (Zeichner 1991:365)

• .. greater professionalization and it is put most strikingly as follows: ‘... the power to exercise one's craft.’ They go further and say: ‘It is the extent to which teachers practice autonomous behaviour while maintaining collegial interaction, giving attention to ... needs, accepting responsibility and accountability, ... participating in group problem solving to determine collectively the goals and direction of the school.’ (Kavina and Tanaka, 1991:115)

• “Freedom is not the absence of structure – letting employees go off and do whatever they want – but rather a clear structure which enables people to work within established boundaries in a creative and autonomous way” (RM Kanter)
‘Empowerment is that process of development and growth through which a person goes which enables him/her to take independent decisions and to act autonomously and independently with a view to making a contribution towards the development of his or her particular environment. This process is coupled with the development of applicable skills, attitudes and knowledge within a positive and democratic climate. These persons are therefore regarded as professionals in their own right as they are able to make a contribution to change through their particular power.’

(Carl, 2009: 7)