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Organizing curriculum change: an introduction*

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the questions and approaches of a five-nation cross-cultural study of state-based curriculum-making discussed in this issue of *JCS*. The paper reviews the two decade-long interest of many nations in state-based curriculum-making and presents a framework for thinking about state-based curriculum-making as a tool of educational governance.

KEYWORDS

Canada; curriculum standards; legitimacy; national curricula; state-based curriculum-making

Few undertakings of departments of education and of governments mobilize as many people, lead to so many controversies and public debates in various bodies, school publications and media – and tie up so many resources – as the development and revision of the curricula ... Committees are appointed, innumerable meetings called, consultation processes organized, tests scheduled and administered. It commonly takes years from the initiation of such an undertaking to the final introduction of a curriculum – and some curricula barely reach the point of formal adoption before their next revision. (Bähr et al., 2000, p. 3)

Introduction

Authoritative documents issued by national, state and/or provincial ministries, boards, or councils of education that aim to govern the content and aims and, often, forms of teaching of their teachers and schools are increasingly omnipresent in national or provincial school systems. Such documents can present in comprehensive volumes curriculum frameworks

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*The network of national studies on state-based curriculum-making in five countries – Finland (Sven-Erik Hansén, Åbo Akademi University, Vaasa; Jessica Aspfors, University of Nordland, Norway), Germany (Frank Ohlhaber, Goethe University Frankfurt/Main, Germany), Norway (Kirsten Sivesind, University of Oslo; Kari Bachmann, Volda University College), Switzerland (Anna-Verena Fries, Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Moritz Rosenmund, Zurich University of Applied Sciences), and Illinois (Ian Westbury, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) – was conceived by Stefan Hopmann of the University of Vienna, in collaboration with Rudolf Künzli of the University of Zurich. It is a continuation of work on curriculum-making in Germany that Hopmann had conducted with Henning Haft of the Institut für die Pädagogik der Naturwissenschaften (IPN). The development of the common OCC database was undertaken by Moritz Rosenmund with support from the School of Education of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences. We describe the study below and in other papers in this series.

Table 1. Nova Scotia, Canada, Department of Education: Provincial Curriculum Documents for all subjects, Mathematics and Social Studies.

<i>Subject categories</i>	<i>Curriculum documents for mathematics</i>	<i>Curriculum documents for social studies</i>
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 General	Mathematics Curriculum Grades 4–6	Canadian History 11
Health Education	Mathematics Curriculum, Pre-calculus 12	Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum
Languages	Mathematics Curriculum:	Gaelic Studies 11
Mathematics	Mathematics 10	Geography 10
Personal Development and Career Education	Mathematics Foundations 10	Global Geography 12
Physical Education	Mathematics Foundations 11	Global History 12
Science	Mathematics Foundations 12	Mi'kmaw Studies 10
Social Studies	Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Mathematics Curriculum	
Student Services	Mathematics Curriculum	
Technology Education	Mathematics Grade 7: A Teaching Resource	
	Mathematics Grade 8: A Teaching Resource	
	Mathematics Grade 9: A Teaching Resource	

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

for all subject areas at a school level and/or school type or they can be organized as subject syllabi, covering single subject areas in school types or levels. They can be supported by additional documents giving local educational authorities (LEAs), other school owners, schools, and teachers 'guidance'.¹ Table 1 lists the many documents that the Canadian province of Nova Scotia has developed to direct curricula and teaching in its schools. Such documents, developed by national, and/or state, provincial or cantonal departments and boards of education, are at the heart of the work of *educational* leadership of governments and their ministries of education (see International Bureau of Education, 2001). *But how should we think about such documents? How should we think about the work of state-based curriculum-making that underlies them?*

Formal curriculum documents of the kind illustrated in Table 1 are the outcomes of the work of ministers, ministries, boards and departments of education and, in some jurisdictions, legislatures and their committees. But they are also the work of civil servants *and* representatives of the communities of practice in schools and colleges. They present authoritative mandates and/or entitlements. They outline how the *educational* work of a system of schools should be described, categorized, and sequenced in terms of 'subject' categories and descriptors; what content should be taught to (different) classes of students at the various grade levels; (often) how teaching should be undertaken, i.e. the timetable; and they (typically) outline the social, educational and pedagogical rationales underlying the curriculum or syllabus (see Tables 2 and 3). They may include examples of 'best practices' as a way of 'educating' teachers and schools in the forms of teaching and instruction that the curriculum-makers envisage. They may specify in some detail the 'content', the topics and themes (and at times the individual authors, works of literature, scientific laws, etc.) that teachers will treat (see Table 4); or they may outline competence or learning 'standards', expectations for the outcomes of learning without a precise specification of the teaching 'content' (see Table 5). They may be highly prescriptive, or they may present frameworks, outlines to be developed by local education agencies and/or individual schools and teachers. They may exert their influence by way

Table 2. The Finnish Framework Curriculum for secondary school mathematics (1994).**Mathematics*

The important role of mathematics in the culture of our time presupposes an ability to understand and utilize information that is presented mathematically. This ability is needed in work, studies, and everyday life ...

The purpose of teaching of the short course in mathematics is to develop students' general civic abilities in the acquisition, treatment and understanding of mathematical knowledge, as well as in the use of mathematics in various life situations. The subject aims at providing abilities for continued studies primarily in the fields of the humanities, the social sciences, and economics

The short course in Mathematics

Objectives

The purpose of the study of the short course in mathematics is that the students:

- know how to use mathematics as a necessary aid in everyday life situations and in solving problems in society
- get positive learning experiences and learn to trust their own abilities, skills and thinking; for this purpose, they are encouraged to engage in experimenting, investigating, and innovative learning
- acquire useful mathematical knowledge, skills, and abilities that form a sufficiently good basis for continued studies
- realize the significance of mathematics as a means in describing, explaining, and making models of reality, and its use in drawing conclusions
- develop their ability to analyse mathematical knowledge and to understand its logical structure
- learn, as part of their general education, to receive, analyse, and critically assess information offered in mathematical form by the mass media
- develop, through many-sided practice, the ability to use calculation and reasoning skills, various aids and reference materials
- know how to use and apply mathematics to solve problems, learn to construct models in various practical problem situations and to utilize different solution strategies
- be able to handle information in the way that is typical of mathematics, learn to make assumptions, study their correctness and give exact reasons, as well as learn to assess the validity of reasons that have been presented and the generalizability of the results

Obligatory courses

Statistics and probability theory

Mathematical problem solving

Geometry

Mathematical models

Mathematical analysis

Mathematical research methods

Specialization studies

Econometrics

Probability and statistics

The nature of studies and some suggestions for teaching

The instruction of the short course in mathematics attempts to create a positive and active study environment. The instruction encourages experimenting, investigating and innovative learning; methods of work are varied, and calculators, computers, and other facilitating aids are used in many different ways. Learning environments should be constructed around concrete problem-solving situations or real application targets, not forgetting abstract general mathematical principles. This motivates students and promotes a good command of the concepts

Source: Finland, National Board of Education (1994).

of curriculum documents developed and issued by LEAs and/or school owners or they may address teachers directly. New curricula may be episodic, occurring every 10 or so years, or they maybe—as is increasingly the case—in an almost permanent flux (see Table 6).

In other words, the character and nature of the mandates set out in state-based curricula can, and do, differ within and across jurisdictions – and across time periods. But where it is practised, it has within its purview many important decisions about what schools do and how they are organized. For example,

Table 3. Science changes to the English National Curriculum for 2006.*Foreword*

From September 2006 a new programme of study for key stage 4 science will be introduced in schools and colleges in England. The curriculum has been updated and consists of a smaller core of science relevant to all learners. A wider range of science qualifications will be available

Previous key stage 4 science curricula were criticized for concentrating too much on the needs of future scientists at the expense of science that is relevant to students' everyday lives . . . One of the governments key aims for the 14–19 phase is that students should have greater freedom to choose programmes of study that meet their needs, capabilities and aspirations . . .

However, these changes do not mean that students are expected to study less science at key stage 4. The government expects that the vast majority of students will continue to do, as a minimum, two GCSEs' worth of science at key stage 4 which will enable them to progress to advanced study. Indeed, subject to parliamentary approval, this expectation is being made into a new statutory entitlement

Ken Boston

Chief Executive, QCA

Source: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) (2005, p. 2).

Table 4. Curriculum specifications: UK National Curriculum: English: Key Stage 3.*Breadth of study*

During the key stage, pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through the following ranges of literature and non-fiction and non-literary texts:

Literature

8. The range should include:

- (a) plays, novels and poetry from the English literary heritage, including: (i) two plays by Shakespeare
 - (ii) drama by major playwrights¹
 - (iii) works of fiction by two major writers published before 1914 selected from the list of page on 36²
 - (iv) two works of fiction by two major writers published after 1914³ . . .
- (1) Examples of major playwrights: William Congreve, Oliver Goldsmith, Christopher Marlowe, Sean O'Casey, Harold Pinter, J. B. Priestley, Peter Shaffer, G. B. Shaw, R. B. Sheridan, Oscar Wilde
 - (2) Example of major writers published before 1914: Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, John Bunyan, Wilkie Collins, Joseph Conrad, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Eliot, Henry Fielding, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jonathan Swift, Anthony Trollope, H. G. Wells
 - (3) Examples of fiction by major writers written after 1914: E. M. Forster, William Golding, Graham Green, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, George Orwell, Muriel Spark, William Trevor, Evelyn Waugh

Source: QCA (1999).

Table 5. Michigan, grade level content expectations, Seventh-grade science.**Seventh-grade science: Life Science****Organization of Living Things**

K-7 Standard L.OL: *Develop an understanding that plants and animals (including humans) have basic requirements for maintaining life which include the need for air, water, and a source of energy. Understand that all life forms can be classified as producers, consumers, or decomposers as they are all part of a global food chain where food/energy is supplied by plants which need light to produce food/energy. Develop an understanding that plants and animals can be classified by observable traits and physical characteristics. Understand that all living organisms are composed of cells and they exhibit cell growth and division. Understand that all plants and animals have a definite life cycle, body parts, and systems to perform specific life functions*

L.OL.M.2 Cell Functions – All organisms are composed of cells, from one cell to many cells. In multicellular organisms, specialized cells perform specialized functions. Organs and organ systems are composed of cells, and function to serve the needs of cells for food, air, and waste removal. The way in which cells function is similar in all living organisms

L.OL.07.21 Recognize that all organisms are composed of cells (single cell organisms, multicellular organisms)

L.OL.07.22 Explain how cells make up different body tissues, organs, and organ systems

L.OL.07.23 Describe how cells in all multicellular organisms are specialized to take in nutrients, which they use to provide energy for the work that cells do and to make the materials that a cell or organism needs

L.OL.07.24 Recognize that cells function in a similar way in all organisms

Source: Michigan Department of Education (2007).

Table 6. Ontario: policies for curriculum revision.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education established a schedule for ongoing curriculum review. Each year, a number of subject areas enter the review process, to ensure they are kept current, relevant and age-appropriate. In September 2007, this process will be in its fifth year of a seven-year cycle

Reviews are conducted with great care. Comprehensive information gathering includes:

- Studying research in the subject area
- Comparison with other jurisdictions
- Focus groups comprised of educators from all Ontario school boards
- Technical content analysis conducted by subject experts
- Consultations with:
 - Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education
 - Faculties of Education
 - Employers
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Universities, colleges
 - Other branches of the Ministry of Education
 - Other ministries
 - NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations)

These sources of information form the basis of recommended revisions to the curriculum. Writing teams drawn from school boards across the province then develop revised English and French documents

Source: Ontario, Ministry of Education (2009).

- that the time in students' schedules that should be made available for locally developed activities and units; that the time that had been available for such activities be restricted or modified;
- that English as an international language will be taught to all students beginning in, e.g. grade 4; that, e.g. Mandarin, Hindi and/or Japanese rather than, e.g. French or Spanish will be the first foreign language taught in secondary schools;
- that an integrated 'social studies' or 'science and society' rather than distinct courses in history, geography, chemistry, biology, etc. will be the vehicles for civic and environmental education; that religious education be moved beyond a Christian perspective;² that courses in national history in settler societies become vehicles for teaching the history of the nation's indigenous or immigrant peoples as well the histories of the settlers.

In addition to specifying the scope and sequence of graded subjects or areas of study, curriculum documents set out the structures of courses and course sequences (and their creditability) to be available within school systems. When curriculum documents are set alongside a system's policies, rules and practices relating to the *distribution* of forms of schooling and the *evaluative* rules that define expectations for 'successful'/'unsuccessful' students, curricula constitute one of the principal instruments potentially available to states both for the governance of inner work of the school and for the legitimation of their educational systems (see Bähr et al., 2000; Lundgren, 2003).

State-based curriculum-making

The presence and place of state-based curricula in school systems is closely linked to the development of 'modern'/'public' schools constituted as systems for the social distribution of forms of consciousness. Prussia's first *Normalplan für Gymnasien* was issued in 1816, and was the starting point for what was to become the pattern for curricula and curriculum-making in the 'German' world (see Haft & Hopmann, 1990a, b; Sivesind, 2008). In the post-war years, many of the *Länder* (i.e. states) of the former Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)

were, as a matter of routine, developing new subject syllabi for their different school levels and types every 6/7 years (Hopmann, 1991). Other states and nations have been less predictable in their cycles of curriculum-making and a 'new' curriculum was an important development and a marker of significant sociocultural and/or educational transitions. Thus, there was a gap of 30+ years between Ontario's curriculum of 1937, the 'interim revisions' of that curriculum adopted between 1966 and 1970, and the 'new' curriculum of 1975 (Gidney, 1999).

In recent years, many jurisdictions have turned their curriculum-making from a periodic into a more or less ongoing process.³ In addition, many jurisdictions that had never used (or had abandoned) the instrument of state-based curricula began to (re-)introduce formal curriculum documents to govern the work of their schools. England was the first, and most dramatic, of these cases with its implementation of the National Curriculum in 1991. In Australia, where education is, as in Canada, Germany, Switzerland and the US, a constitutional responsibility of the states/provinces/cantons, a national curriculum was developed for introduction in 2013 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, n.d.). All US states moved to develop state curriculum *standards* during the 1990s as a follow-up to the federal government's intensive, and unprecedented, efforts to develop national 'curricula' seen as content and achievement standards (Wixson, Dutro, & Athan, 2004). Forty-three US states (out of 50) have adopted the federally-sponsored *Common Core State Standards* for English language arts and mathematics as a basis for a new round of intensive state-based curriculum development (Council of Chief State School Officers/National Governors Association, 2016).⁴ *How might we understand such unprecedented actions? Are these states discovering, or rediscovering anew, the utility of an 'old', well-honed administrative instrument or tool?*

This work of developing, communicating, and 'implementing' practical guidelines for teachers and schools involves large numbers of people from inside and outside the central institutions of educational administrations;⁵ political stakeholders; school owners; the communities of practice around and within school systems; and interest groups and organizations, e.g. universities, with concerns around the work of schools, textbook authors, etc. It is an activity in which high hopes are often vested; but at the same time it is an activity which many contend has only a limited direct impact on and in schools (see, e.g. Levin, 2010). *How can we think about the state's work of curriculum-making? What does it accomplish?*

Curriculum commissions

Although other forms are found, we will label the characteristic organizational framework for state-based curriculum-making a *curriculum commission* or *committee*. Such commissions are formal working groups created within ministries, typically appointed and directly funded by ministries or councils of education, that reflect in their membership and working structures governmental/political and public interests *and* the communities of practice within and around schools. Like the analogous mechanisms for public inquiries,⁶ curriculum commissions work outside the routine structures of educational administrations. Like commissions of inquiry:

- The work of curriculum commissions is seen as representing 'public' and 'educational' interests and the 'needs' of the society rather than narrowly political or 'party' interests.

- Many, if not most, of the working committees of commissions reflect and represent the communities of practice that will implement the curriculum they set out. The work of commissions draws on the experience of these leaders of these communities, *not* on expertise, formal investigations, or systematic research and/or development.
- Commissions actively solicit public and professional participation through public hearings and submissions, and look for broad public and professional support for their recommendations.
- Governments rarely reject the recommendations of commissions, although this acceptance can come after very active intervention into the work of the commissions by political leaders and ministry administrators.

However, although they work outside the routine structures of educational administrations, the mandates, budgets, organizational structures, and memberships of curriculum commissions emerge from decisions made within governments. Ministers and boards of education (or their senior advisors) and/or state administrations (and sometimes parliamentary committees) develop the documents outlining the terms of reference of the commissions. Ministers and/or state administrations define the structures and appoint the members of commissions and their working committees, and very often have their own personnel situated at the heart of the work. State administrations set out the templates for the documents to be produced by the working committees and manage (and sometimes closely monitor) the work of curriculum development and writing. Ministers and/or public administrations seek formal evaluative input around draft documents and largely direct how such feedback enters the deliberations around the draft documents. Ministers and governments formally approve the final documents setting out the curriculum guidelines. The ‘implementation’ of a commission’s recommendations will also depend on the decisions of governments.

In other words, the work of state-based curriculum-making (and of those whose task it is to administer the curriculum-making) is always (potentially if not actually) embedded within governments and, therefore, within politics, party and ‘interests’. What schools might (or might not) teach about, e.g. the environment, global warming, sexual mores, national and heritage languages,⁷ etc. are inescapably matters of party and parties, and governments. This reality has inevitable implications for the work of curriculum commissions; as Connelly and Connelly (2010) put it:

The political promise to revise or create curriculum policy may be a factor in the election of a particular government. When elected the Education Department or Ministry oversees the follow-up curriculum policy development process. Curriculum policy revised or created in this way is political in character and functions to justify voter trust in the political party. *From this perspective curriculum policy is not only political in the sense of being a practical resolution to a public debate; it is political in the party sense.* This is neither good nor bad. It simply means that curriculum policy is a two-sided entity that functions both to guide practical curriculum activity and to temporarily resolve political debate. (p. 225; emphases added)

In highlighting what they term the ‘*political-resolution-of-issues*’ and the ‘*practical guideline*’ functions of state-based curriculum-making Connelly and Connelly (2012) make a claim that is central to the argument we seek to make in this set of papers in *JCS*. *There are always (potential) problems in reconciling the public and ‘political’ aspects of the state’s curriculum-making with the traditions of practice and the work of guiding what schools will do.* There are

problems of reconciling 'advanced', 'progressive' or 'best' teaching practices with the capabilities of the body of teachers who work in the schools (see, e.g. Hart, 2001, 2002).

Research on state-based curriculum-making

The work of curriculum commissions and curriculum-making as a general phenomenon with state-based educational systems has received little sustained attention within recent Anglo-American educational research. There were, of course, no state curricula in England for much of the 20th century. In the US, with significant exceptions, curriculum-making has been a low-key responsibility of states or local districts. It has emerged as a significant policy or research issue only when important cultural conflicts sprang up within or around the work (Apple 2008, Binder, 2002; LaSpina, 2009; Lippmann, 1928). As a result in the US research on curriculum-making the traditional focus has been, in the main, 'professional', outlining how school- and district-based curriculum-making might be undertaken or political and cultural, the exploration of the professional and public ideologies at play around the school curriculum (see, e.g. Apple, 1978; 2008, Kliebard, 1995).

However, in the 1990s, with the emergence of the English National Curriculum and the US 'standards' movement, the idea of state-based curriculum-making *and* the structures and mechanisms of curriculum commissions have emerged as topics for English language research. Many analyses and case studies of curriculum-making and implementation have emerged, as well as literatures of advocacy or critique of the curriculum frameworks, organizational structures and the political/party agendas they seemed to embody (see, e.g. Bernstein, 1996; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Luke et al., 2013, Wixson et al., 2004). However, these studies have been, in the main, undertaken as discrete case studies within single jurisdictions, and have lacked a comparative or historical frame of reference.

State-based curriculum-making has received more sustained and systematic attention within the European traditions of curriculum research where national (e.g. Finland, France, Norway, Sweden), and state/cantonal (e.g. Germany, Switzerland) curricula have long been the norm.⁸ The structures and mechanisms of curriculum-making by the *Länder* within the FRG, in particular, were objects of intense debate in the late 1960s and 1970s. The occasion was the idea of a comprehensive 'reform' of the differentiated German school system. This movement found one focus in the concerns of the 1960s and 1970s for economic and social planning and the first stirrings of what was to become the educational mobilization towards employment and economic development. As these debates and controversies focused on the practices of curriculum-making within the *Länder*, the issue became the seeming 'conservatism' and 'irrationality' of the traditional structures and methods for curriculum-making – seen from the point of view of the 'progressive' and modernizing ideologies of that decade. For the reformers, the state's curriculum-making needed to be in the hands of 'dynamic' modernizing groups rather than the committees of backward-looking, traditionalist teachers who had dominated the process. The 'public' as well as disciplinary experts needed to be incorporated into the curriculum-making; participatory processes and formal evaluations were needed to replace the traditional experience-based patterns of work (see Frey, 1971; Robinsohn, 1967).

The most prominent example of empirical research animated by this starting point was Haller's (1973) survey of *Länder* curriculum commissions. His findings were widely seen as making the case for reform: commission members were largely current and former teachers,

almost randomly selected who muddled through an informally organized writing process, ending up in draft documents that became the basis for new curricula and syllabi without extensive review or testing. Haller's study was followed by numerous small-scale studies that seemed to confirm his findings, and by many development projects aiming at 'modernizing' the structures and working practices of the state's curriculum-making.

In the 1980s, Haft (1986) and Hopmann (1988) undertook a follow-up of Haller's (1973) study and found that 10 or so years after 'the decade of curriculum' the practices of state-based curriculum-making were more or less unchanged from the 1960s – and that the reforms that had been introduced in the 1970s had been largely abandoned. *They went on to suggest that the traditional practices had a utility that the reformers had not heeded, or understood.* Thus Hopmann (1988; see also Haft & Hopmann, 1990b) contended that the modernizers and reformers of the 1970s had seen the state's curriculum-making as, first and foremost, a form of social planning and educational decision-making animated by a search for best ('progressive'/modernizing) practices in classrooms and schools. This perception had led to a framework of reasoning around the idea of curriculum-making that saw it within educational theory, educational evaluation and research. From this point of view a finding that curriculum commissions did not base their work on notions of best practices or that members were not appointed on the basis of expertise were disturbing. However, Haft and Hopmann (1990b) contended that this conclusion was valid only if it was assumed that curriculum commissions were in fact primarily educational undertakings.

Hopmann (1988; see also Haft & Hopmann, 1990b) pursued this hypothesis with the benefits of hindsight, and the passing of the ideological movements of the 1970s. They concluded that curriculum commissions should be understood as instruments, or tools, used by the school administrations of the *Länder* to manage the interfaces between 'party' and 'political' (i.e. 'outsider'), professional and institutional interests (i.e. 'insider') and the public. More specifically the curriculum-making of the *Länder* serves to develop, or redevelop, narratives that address the discourses salient around and within school systems. A curriculum commission is a tool available to public administrations to manage contention (potential or actual) between the platforms of political (in the broad sense) 'parties' and the institutional structure and interests of schools as well as differences within the professional communities working across school levels and types.

Haft and Hopmann (1990b) went on to distinguish two primary domains, 'levels, and/or contexts for such educational and curricular policy production – with each domain following its own conditions, constraints, languages, agendas, etc. There is:

- (a) The '*political*' and '*public*', i.e. public, political and 'party' discourse on education and schooling and its tasks and functions;
- (b) The *school and classroom* where teachers enact the scripts and routines they know and are comfortable with, typically, the strong support of local (and parent) communities; The 'discourses' and issues that emerge in (a) and/or (b) are reconciled at the (state) administrative level in a process that links 'political' expectations to the 'practical' traditions of school systems.

Hopmann (1988; see Haft & Hopmann, 1990b) contends that within such a framework it is possible to integrate many observations of curriculum-making into one coherent picture. *Curriculum commissions, and the documents that are their product, become an administrative tool ultimately directed at the public discourses, or narratives, that address the 'inner work' of the school.* Such guidelines, with their presumptions about the work of

schools, serve to legitimate (or legitimate afresh) the idea of the school.⁹ For Haft and Hopmann 'successful' curriculum-making depends on creating a structure and a process that allows the syllabus developers to acknowledge the language of, e.g. the labour market or of 'competence', while *not* engaging with the implications of such languages.

As they looked for the mechanisms by which this is achieved Haft and Hopmann highlighted the institutionalized separation found in Germany between a curriculum's content and the approaches teachers take to teaching that content – with the 'freedom to teach' (*Lehrfreiheit*) that is guaranteed to German teachers. Given the insulation of curriculum policy-making from the school practice that follows – along with the potential for blame games – they suggest that the core task of the state's curriculum-making is in developing and projecting adequate accounts of the narratives that offer explanations for the school's existence and functioning. Curricula offer legitimating symbols, or 'cultural accounts', within the terms of which the work of schools can be presented, and understood (see Edelman, 1971, 1975; see also Weiler, 1988, 1990). As Meyer and Scott (1992) put it,

We take the view that organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization – the extent to which the array or established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning and jurisdiction. And lack or deny alternatives ... [*Legitimacy*] mainly refers to the adequacy of an organization as theory. (p. 201; emphasis added)

Haft and Hopmann (1990b) contend that *such legitimating authority cannot be provided by a text that is a curriculum; it is a by-product of the institutional processes, the 'theatre', around the development of the text*. In particular, it requires the authority and legitimacy that can be given the developmental process only by educational/pedagogical leaders. This involves bringing *both* political and public and educational/pedagogic discourses into the *process* of developing the text.

Organizing curriculum change (OCC): The study

The OCC study emerged within this context. Haft and Hopmann (1990b) described the German 'curriculum commission' as a tool used primarily by *Länder* educational administrations to manage ideological exchanges between the public/political and educational/school systems. The perspective on state-based curriculum-making offered by Haft and Hopmann opens many new questions. They are questions that demand comparisons across times and jurisdictions. Thus, Haft and Hopmann's formulation was embedded within a particular body of research in Germany and in the larger frame of the German perspective on curriculum theory and curriculum. The OCC study sought to explore the portability of Haft and Hopmann's frame of reference by going beyond Germany to place the German analysis within a comparative perspective. This, in its turn, opened new questions given the recent widespread development of state-based curriculum-making. The OCC study was centred on episodes of state-based curriculum-making in the national school systems of Finland and Norway and sub-national ('state') jurisdictions in the federal states of Germany, Switzerland and US.

The papers that follow in this and subsequent issues of *JCS* begin the reporting of the OCC study. In the following papers, we examine the architecture and outcomes of the curriculum commissions that developed Norway's *Læreplanverket 1997* (L97; Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1999) and the *Illinois Learning Standards (ILS)* of 1997. The two commissions worked in very different contexts located at the opposite sides

of the North Atlantic Ocean. Are there any similarities across the two cases? In a second set of papers we take as our starting point Basil Bernstein's (1996; see also Singh, 2002) framework of the development of pedagogic discourse to consider how the curriculum writers within the seven commissions explored in the course of the OCC study responded to the principles of curriculum-making they were presented by their context. As Rosenmund (2000) notes, these studies began as single national or state cases of state-based curriculum-making. OCC, with its comparative and empirical cross-cultural focus, sought to explore the commonalities and differences across the cases – and in so doing illuminate the widely diffused institution of state-based curriculum-making.

We deal here with curriculum writing and curriculum writers as components of the larger framework of state-based curriculum-making. We do *not* examine or evaluate the introduction of these curricula to the schools and teachers or the use made by the curricula in teachers' lesson planning. Our questions centre on the comparison of the sentiments of the curriculum writers within the set of commissions, and the structures and processes of curriculum development across a set of national and sub-national jurisdictions.

Notes

1. In Canada, for example, the provinces direct the programmes of their schools using a libraries of authoritative subject-area guidelines; see Mølstad and Hansén (2013).
2. In Norway 'Kristendoms-religion -og livssynskunnskap' ('Christian knowledge and religious and ethical education') became 'Religion, livssyn og Etikk' (i.e. 'Religions, philosophies of life and ethics').
3. In 2003, for example, Ontario converted its curriculum-making into an on-going process, with each subject being formally revisited every seven years (see Table 6).
4. Prior to the early 1990s many US states had left responsibility for curriculum-making exclusively in the hands of LEAs.
5. Sivesind (2002) reports that 229 people were directly engaged in the development of the 343-page Norwegian compulsory school curriculum of 1997, and a further 1000 people had roles in the in-service work around the new curriculum (p. 321).
6. That is, royal or presidential commissions, commissions of inquiry, etc.; see Prasser, 1994.
7. What, and how, heritage languages found in a national community might be acknowledged by schools has political implications. The languages for which curricula exist in the state of Victoria, Australia, include Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bosnian, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Latin, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Maltese, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tamil, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Yiddish (Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority, 2009).
8. See, e.g. Gundem, 1990; Gundem, 1993; Sivesind, 2008; Weniger, 1930, 1952, 2000.
9. In presenting this framework for understanding state-based curriculum-making Haft (1986) and Hopmann (1988; see also Haft & Hopmann, 1990b) anticipated the analyses of curriculum-making that followed the introduction of the English National Curriculum (see Bernstein, 1996; Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992; Roberts, 1995). Thus, Bowe et al. (1992) highlighted the character of the National Curriculum as a text that must be *interpreted* by its readers to be given meaning. But every text is read in the light of the interpretative starting points, routines or scripts of its readers, and within the framing of the social systems within which it is read. To the extent that the interpretative starting points of different sites and/or settings, e.g. political 'parties', teachers' communities of practice, schools, etc., vary more or less widely, the understanding and uptake of any curriculum will vary more or less widely.

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