

# Philosophies of Education, Knowledge and Curriculum & Instruction

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**Abstract:** Education is viewed as a mean for economic growth and development within which nations are allotted a substantial chunk of their annual revenue for having skilled work force, but this is not well materialized specially in the third world countries due to considerable human vulnerabilities and under investment in the sector that also crippled the productivity and labor competent, to achieve positive state objective of education in consideration to economic and social prosperity, effective curriculum need to be in place to empower people's horizon of understanding themselves and their world at large, increase creativity, technological advancement, entrepreneurship, income distribution and economic and social transformation. However, such a curriculum is primarily influenced by varieties of inescapable competing ends such as philosophical and epistemological views, political and economic environments, content knowledge and curriculum expectation as well as quality of educational inputs and facilities. Therefore, this is a conceptual analysis on philosophy of education and curriculum, knowledge and its process of knowing as well as curriculum and instruction with the main purpose of exposing the interplay between knowledge, philosophy and curriculum in education, the paper had qualitatively reviewed the existing body of literature relevant to these terminologies precisely and finally concluded to a general umbrella of understanding these three vernacular as significantly intertwined and a joint phenomenon in the overall education scenario.

**Keywords:** Philosophy of Education, Knowledge, Curriculum

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## 1. Introduction

Education is viewed as an art of utilizing human skill, knowledge and experience for better pay and social transformation; however, such an experience and skills are drawn mainly from formal schooling therefore, the paper had primarily addressed on philosophy of education and curriculum, knowledge and process of knowing and finally curriculum and instruction which are all considered to be the very basic foundation of educational institution.

## 2. Philosophy of Education and Curriculum

The term philosophy is literally means the love of wisdom and with this definition one could conceive whenever philosophy is being mentioned. However, in our world of diversity and natural environments philosophy is a widely

used phenomenon that is to understand the fundamental truth in the planet and peoples themselves. Similarly, philosophy influence educational value, objectives, focus including what to teach and why; therefore, this paper focuses on the four major philosophies that influence education in general and curriculum in particular.

### 2.1. Perennialism

With this philosophical view of education truth is an ever existing and constant which makes both natural and human world stagnant observable fact while the aim of schooling is intellectual cultivation and as such humans are rational being that their mind should be developed through worthwhile education that is critical to principles.

### 2.2. Essentialism

Similar to Perennialism, essentialism emphasizes on intellectual nurturing and morally standardized teaching.

However, unlike Perennialism, essentialism accepts the idea of changing knowledge and curriculum over time that school should teach and conform to the changing reality. The curriculum is knowledge and skill centered with rigor academic portfolio that was intended to prepare students to member of the society, teachers are supposed to help students improve their unproductive behavior such aggression and mindlessness.

Schools should teach the objective reality, hard work, respect for the discipline and basic training that are essential to the students such as reading, writing, communication skills, computing and logics. However, schools are not in position to set or influence policy unless instructed by the governing authority that students are subjected to respect and be loyal.

### 2.3. Progressivism

Unlike Essentialism, progressivism focuses on individual students' experience and understanding of the world where he/she was supposed to test the idea of schooling with their own experience. Learners drive experience from physical environment and the cultural context within which they are living in and develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills to become an active member of the society, educative experiences that match to the individual students' choice and willingness should be accumulated and taught by the schools to have effective instructional practice [3] where students entertain their freedom of choice through their experience.

The basic notion of progressivism education is schools should improve social living through experience and democratic choice via shared decision making and instructional planning of teachers with students [2]. Students were endowed the right to select the topics of concern; therefore, curriculum is a tool to be selected rather than a superior content that is subjected to realize.

### 2.4. Reconstructionism

Reconstructionist focuses on the issue of society and social betterment; it is a solidified quest for social transformation and widespread world democracy, the aim of education is more on social development and the curriculum is geared towards social change and reform. Education is mainly humanistic and is believed that it is education which prepares a new social order through technology and human compassion.

Reconstructionist believes human improvement through system change and reform which in turn eradicate evils and oppression among society, and this require collective dialog, developmental strategies and awareness where the teaching and learning is not to deposit information into the students' head, but a process of inquiry and logical reasoning through which the child invent and reinvent the world they lived in. reconstructionist curriculum focuses on social wellbeing and students' experience that accommodate social problem solving by dealing with social controversies,

setbacks like hunger, violence, inequalities etc.

## 3. Knowledge and Process of Knowing

In field of epistemology or theory of knowledge the term "knowledge" is not commonly defined, or there are still opposing arguments on it epistemologically, despite deferring definition yet knowledge according to Epistemology itself, is not sufficiently defined in a way that is convincing to all.

According to [9] Noah Lemos, in his book theory of knowledge there are three things of "knows" *Noah stated that in ordinary language when we say that someone knows something, we can mean different things by "knows." There are different senses of "knowledge" or, we may say, different kinds of knowledge. Among the three most significant are (1) propositional knowledge, (2) acquaintance knowledge, and (3) "how to" knowledge.*

Propositional knowledge, in simple ground propositional knowledge is thinking and believes in relation to a proposition or subject sentence. For example, we know we have a class at Dilla University, here the essence of knowledge lies on "what is known" in this proposition, which is having a class at Dilla University

Acquaintance knowledge, unlike propositional knowledge acquaintance knowledge is the one attributed to one with doubt as though it may or may not so, but more probably inferential to be as such. For example, Almez knows the course lecture, the implication meaning here comes is that once Almez Know the lecture that we all not know, she has acquainted or meet with the lecture before, however, this implication may not be true in the essence that she may not have acquaintance knowledge of the teacher, she may rather some other details about him such as, where he was born and when, some of his professional career and even she may know someone else who have acquaintance knowledge with the course lecturer.

### 3.1. How to "Knowledge"

This kind of knowing is two sided or applicable to dual implication of something in terms of the true essence that we could not assure weather something as exactly as we think it could be. For example, if we said X know how play piano, this implies that X has the ability to play piano and he do it right away, such implication is performance related that one possess the skill to the task ahead. However, in "How to, Knowing" there may other way round that X doesn't have the skill to play piano, but well familiar with the theoretical aspect of how play piano.

The assumption that teachings of the great spiritual leaders and philosophers such as Buddha, Confucius etc. were of immense importance to explain it as "justified true belief", Knowledge is the "awareness" and "understanding" of particular aspects of "reality", the approach is that knowledge requires three necessary and sufficient conditions, so that knowledge can then be defined as "justified true belief [1].

Truth, as stated by the great philosopher Aristotle, the false proposition is not known, "for something to count as a

knowledge” it should convincingly be an actual true, here Aristotle expressed it as a very confusing manner when he said, to say something is that which is not or to say something is which is not, is either false or true. Here once infer that what constitutes to be true is contextual reality of things in their habitual context.

Justification, is a solid opposition of believing things as a matter of mere luck or spontaneous occurrence, under this layer of knowledge digestion, there should be a manifestation of knowledge itself to both “externalism” such as those things that exist outside of individual mental abilities and his/her spirituality within such as knowledge of object and “Internalism” that is the psychological state of the individual that gain and validate knowledge like spiritual knowledge, knowledge of emotion, intelligent and thought.

Now let us consider an example by [18] “suppose you are walking towards your home and you are unsure that your watch is working properly and you take a look at the big public watch (say the Big Ben) and it shows the same time (say 6:00 pm), and you know your watch is working properly because it is justified (by the fact that the big watch shows the same time), it is true, and you definitely believe it too right! So you have the knowledge of the time, but what you don't know is that the big watch hasn't been working for some time, so is your knowledge actually knowledge? Can it be true and false at the same time? Such a case is called a *Gettier problem*” with this example of [18] we can understand that the knowledge is justifiable as one knows it in relation to other thing in parallel that contextually proof that something is true because its justifiable to him/her; however, this does not again mean it is universal and justifiable to others.

Belief, According to the Book, “Theory of knowledge” stated that “because one cannot know something that one doesn't even believe in, the statement “I know x, but I don't believe that x is true” is contradictory” in regard, one knows whatever he/she believes, meaning that those things we know are those we believe in, the above statement by the book “I know “X”, but I don't believe “X” is true” is a paradoxical statements meaning that once one knows X he/she should as well know or believe whether “X” is true or false in his/her context and justification. Therefore, what is known at one's context is also true and justifiable to that particular context until it's disproved by another externalism through the disclosure of a solid and convincing justification.

### 3.2. Knowledge in the Field of Curriculum

Knowledge influences the curriculum and the overall educational objective as form of epistemology, (theory of knowledge), Axiology (the value system) and ontology (the nature of knowledge, therefore, in defining knowledge under the field of curriculum, knowledge is both practical and theoretical understanding of subject matter, here the most influential form of knowledge among the three discussed above is epistemological knowledge which is also theory of knowledge, in the field of curriculum such knowledge is either implicit, explicit, formal, informal or systematic that is geared towards developing the learners intellectual thinking

and productivity.

With this all in a nutshell, knowledge in curriculum encompasses all Epistemological, Axiological and ontological knowledge in the form of syllabus and subject matters to be taught in schools, colleges and universities, where the ultimate purpose is to solve worldly problems particularly those associated with human life.

In the theory of knowledge (Epistemology), we said that knowledge is a justified true believe, in this respect knowledge is accumulation of facts, information, skills acquired through structured educational system or causal learning. *Knowledge refers to the body of information that teachers teach and that students are expected to learn in a given subject or content area such as English, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies* [16]. Therefore, with its all forms knowledge is taught and learned in schools curriculum as a form of planned course content and subject of specialization across-disciplines.

Knowledge generally refers to the facts, concepts, theories and principles that are taught and learned rather than related to skills such as reading, writing, or researching that student also learns in academic courses.

#### 3.2.1. Source of Knowledge

Knowledge is an accumulation of justified true believe “theory of knowledge” or “Epistemology” therefore we drive knowledge from variety of justified truth source which is believed to be contextually authentic then test and re-test upon the context. In schools we offer knowledge through teaching in and out of the classroom in a well-organized hierarchical order, where students learn the content and syllabus in grade wise. Therefore, the following are the major source of knowledge that influences the curriculum.

#### 3.2.2. Sense Experience Empirical Knowledge

It is a knowledge that is acquired through sense organs, therefore, all the knowledge we had accumulated either in our curriculum or tested empirically in modern science are the results of sense experience and is known as sense experience knowledge.

#### 3.2.3. Reason / Rational Knowledge

A kind of knowledge which is essentially common or universal that is processed and known by mind than sense is called rational knowledge and was named after the great philosophical view of rationalism. Reasoning is the central factor for such knowledge to be universal and consistent.

#### 3.2.4. Experimentation

It is a field trip test or observation under controlled situation; we know something is authentic because we had tested it. Seeing and doing it through first hand manipulation is an ingredient of both sense organs and empirical evidence within which we controlled the situation.

#### 3.2.5. Authority

It is an expert knowledge with the central doctrine of authoritarianism, this form of knowledge is understood as an ultimate knowledge based on expertise authority ascribed to

subject matter knowledge or divinity knowledge such God, traditional value, believes, norms and cultural heritage that the society praise to be authentic.

### 3.2.6. Intuition

A strong personal way of knowing, but in a latent consciousness, in such a knowledge close interconnection between the inner state of the individual and his/her feeling and emotion is made where the threshold intention is a logical processing associated with higher level of thinking.

### 3.2.7. Revealed Faith Knowledge

Faith knowledge is a form of knowledge that understood as a superior knowledge due to it is divine source through revelation; faith knowledge is descended by God to his chosen man of the time to record and made accessible to all human kind, the main premises is that those who accept it will never be mistaken. Such knowledge is subject to variety of human interpretation and understanding which may in turn leads to distortion, but in itself is Devine truth is what is being believed.

### 3.2.8. Process of Knowing

Process of knowing or ways to acquire knowledge is those means that we get knowledge through. The following are the common and most viable means of accessing and getting knowledge.

### 3.2.9. Observation

It is first a careful information scrutiny to grasp a concretely tested justified knowledge which is available for

others understanding. Observational knowledge is a firsthand knowledge where things from which the knowledge is drawn are directly and visibly accessed most at their natural environments.

Logic/ Reasoning, Logical knowledge is mostly drawn from other knowledge being acquired that is either verified or not verified, therefore, through reasoning and logic we can infer weather something deserve or not. Logical knowledge is derivative in nature that is being derived from both observed and experimented knowledge.

Testimonial, Testimonial is a kind knowledge accepted from others saying it, such a hearsay and accepted knowledge should sometimes be witness or evidence based. For example, one may say I only know that Dire dawa is an administrative city in Ethiopia, such knowledge is a testimonial knowledge and is one of the most common ways of acquiring Knowledge. It is subject to error and complexity of meaning and lacks neatness to easily understand.

Authority, Authoritative knowledge acquirement are mostly related to reputation and/or prestige possessed or associated with individual popularity or institutional external alumni, efficient or acceptance, while it is mostly acquainted to academia; for example, Harvard University. Like testimony knowledge, Authoritative knowledge is sourced from other means of knowledge acquirement.

### 3.2.10. Revelation

As it is also considered a source of knowledge, revelation is at the supposed to be a mean of getting knowledge through revelation from God such as Bible or Koran.

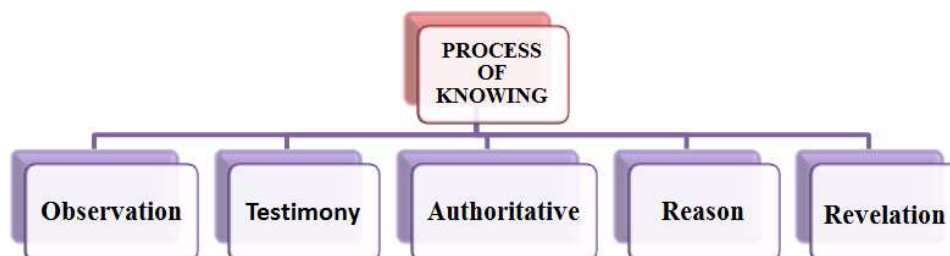


Figure 1. Ways of knowledge acquirement/ process of knowing.

## 4. The Relationship, Similarities and Difference Between Curriculum and Instruction

The term curriculum and instruction are both closely associated in function that one cannot stand alone without the other. While this doesn't mean the two are interchangeable in meaning, however, both are strongly interlinked to ensure teaching and learning within which schools cannot operate without it. Now let us look each one in detail

### 4.1. Curriculum and Instruction

#### 4.1.1. Curriculum

Curriculum is etymologically derived from the Latin word "currere" meaning run or running courses, in this regards,

curriculum meaning was directed like that of courses operational in school settings, Mide lice, also define curriculum to be an intention or an engagement by the person to educate others. Therefore, curriculum is the totality of social environment and our daily events in live including all activities and experience in and out of schools. Yet many equate curriculum with a syllabus and limit it as mere planning of content or the body of knowledge they wish to transmit or simply a list of the subjects to be taught [7].

The term curriculum is broader concept that is defined differently by different educators; however, it constitutes "what" to teach and deliver to a student that is the content and syllabus decided by the authorities that descend the policy and legislation.

Albert Oliver, refers to curriculum merely as the educational program consisting of three important elements, such as studies, activities and guidance, in this definition one

can simply infer that curriculum is a set of activities to be studies and guidance of how it should be studied; therefore, curriculum is an accumulation of content that guide schools to instruct their pupils accordingly.

(13), also refers to curriculum as a well-planned and care fully implemented content that constitute the wider educational aim and objective, with this definition, curriculum molds the overall educational roadmap without which schooling doesn't matter. Hilda Taba, again conceptualized curriculum as an operating engine for school to sustain, in this regard Taba, stated functions like, cultural transmission and preservation and cultural transformation are induced by curriculum.

Curriculum is provided in the form of text, it is skeleton that guides "what is to be" delivered to let the student understand the content and develop the skill, attitude and knowledge intended to build, similarly all subjects from within the course or amongst the courses are called curriculum. Curriculum is the backbone of educational institutions that determines what to do and how to do as the very first essence of it. Curriculum is a set of planned content and learning experience that are intended to teach in schools [5, 6, 10, and 17]. Defined curriculum as a planned activities or program for all experiences that were intended to encounter by the learner under the direction of the school. Similarly, [19] stated that curriculum is a generic plan of content or other materials of instruction for students that makes them professionally qualify through certification.

According to [15] curriculum is simply a plan for action, or a written document, which includes strategies for achieving desired goals or ends. While Galen Saylor also stated that curriculum is simply a plan for providing a set of learning opportunities for persons to be educated [4].

Therefore, even though there are some variation about the meaning of curriculum this difference is also binding one another that curriculum constitutes what is to be thought and how or what mode of delivery which in turn embrace back to curriculum implementation. Therefore, curriculum is the combinations of the overall activities and experiences received by the pupils at schools as well as outside schools in order to achieve a pre-determine school objectives.

#### 4.1.2. Instruction

Instruction is a method of realizing teaching learning process at schools environment particularly at class room level, it is primarily implemented by the teachers in the classroom with all teaching facilities available for instruction. As the name itself indicates instruction is a joint work or activities in the classroom between teachers, students and the material content to be delivered. Instruction is a joint interplay between actors in classrooms or with the learning environment [13]

In delivering the curriculum where instruction also takes place teachers should bear the student abilities in term of intellect of understanding instructional activities in the classroom. Instruction is guidance and interaction between students, teachers and teaching material to realize a pre-

specified academic credit through lectures, laboratory instruction, seminars, colloquia, independent study and computer-aided instruction.

#### 4.2. Similarities, Difference between Curriculum and Instruction

Both curriculum and instruction are two highly interrelated terminologies with little confusing difference between them. However, hence they exist independently whenever; there is no deliberate combination amongst the two in order to achieve particular school objectives scholars tend to differentiate.

Curriculum basically constitute "what" and whereas instruction is "how" is to be taught, curriculum is simply a course content, a written text to be taught, according to Olive 2009, curriculum is a plan or program for educating others in schools, in this regard, curriculum is plan, learning experience and sequences of subjects to be taught, while instruction underline how this plan or program for education could be implemented, instruction is a method for curriculum implementation.

Instruction is occur among educators and learners in the classroom, while curriculum is more on planning educational program for better schooling [20]. After all, they are regarded as concepts which interdependently or interchangeably interact with each other [12]

Scholars and different models of curriculum do create very little difference and similarities on curriculum and instructions saying that "curriculum and instructions" are verily interwoven that neither curriculum nor the instructions dominated the other [8, 10, 11, 14]. Therefore curriculum and instruction are interlocking concept that the existence of one necessitates the other, with this in mind one could assure that curriculum is simply "what" to teach, while instruction is "how" or the method of presenting content to the end users.

For more understanding of difference and similarities between curriculum and instruction the figure below depicts a very concise and understandably easy way of how these two are interrelated.

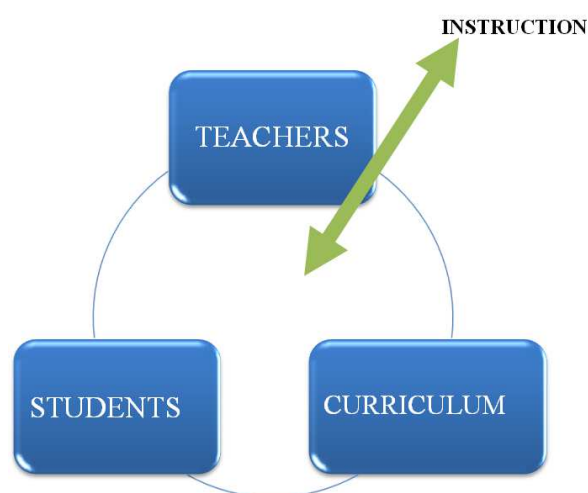


Figure 2. Similarities, difference between curriculum and instruction.

Even though specific similarities and differences is not drawn even in the literature of curriculum and instruction one may understand the transaction between the three as depict by the diagram above.

## 5. Conclusion

Knowledge curriculum and philosophy are inseparable in the field of education in general and curriculum in particular; therefore, one should bear in mind philosophy in designing and organizing a particular educational system's curriculum as philosophy shape and influence curriculum objective, focus and value, similarly epistemological understanding of what constitute knowledge is another big parable to consider when designing curriculum and this may influence the content and what one is going to offer the end users as knowledge or what is one expected to make students know in application at the world of work.

Finally the combination of these entire elements into the classroom as a form of instruction between teachers, students and the curriculum incorporates the entire of such element to be considered as one material. In nutshell knowledge, philosophy and curriculum and instruction are all interlinked and one cannot stand independently without the other particularly in the field of education in general and curriculum in particular.

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