Decisions That Impact Curriculum Development

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Curriculum Governance and Reform Challenges

The school curriculum is the prerogative of state authorities, local leadership and, largely, the school itself (Chan, 2012; Priestley et al., 2014). Experts who analyzed the content and implementation of curricula in early 2016 noted the lack of system and continuity, fragmentation, eclecticism, superficiality, random selection of material, and lack of a solid scientific foundation. According to the conclusion of the commission, the curriculum of the American school became “grey, blurred and diffuse enough that it ceased to satisfy the main task of general education.” The main recommendation of the commission was to strengthen the main academic subjects in the Plan. There should not be a single high school graduate who has not completed at least a 4-year course in English and literature, 3-year courses in natural science, mathematics and social studies, or 2-year courses in foreign language, art and music (on average 250 hours per year).

Structure of the American Secondary Curriculum

According to the American tradition, the academic disciplines in the senior secondary school are studied concretely for 6-8 hours a week, but the number of subjects studied simultaneously is small. Along with the establishment of minimum compulsory courses in general subjects, ways are developed to achieve the required level of assimilation, which is controlled by tests. The regulation of the school curriculum in the US is a new phenomenon. Therefore, the State Department for Education calls not to consider this regulation as a manifestation of negative attitudes toward subjects of choice and vocational training. The point is only that “academic subjects should occupy the central place in the curriculum of the general education school.”

Standardized Curriculum Models and State Direction

To a large extent, the Standardized Model Curriculum of the High School of 2008 and the curriculum of the Higher School of 2017 were offered by the State Department of Education with the aim of

mastering the basics of academic studies by graduates of the school; the ability to think independently, answer critical questions, solve problems, put forward arguments, defend one's point of view, understand opponents' judgments, weigh alternatives. The criticism of the local education councils today is tough enough. American experts believe that since the last significant reform of local education authorities in the early twentieth century, there has been a significant evolution of their role: they were conceived as bodies that develop educational policies and prospects for development but turned in many cases into administrative structures involved in micro-management not only school districts but also educational institutions. Many authors agree that there are a number of common, typical problems in the activities of local educational authorities.

Limitations of Local Education Councils

School Tips:

- are not interested in reforms;
- they have become another level of administration;
- they pay little attention to important issues of education and too much – administrative trivialities;
- do not care about their own professionalism;
- do not exercise the necessary supervision over the implementation of educational policies;
- Do not have effective reporting forms, are unable to inform society properly about the state of affairs in the school system, etc.

To top it off, new problems have arisen, such as unprecedented turnover of superintendents in large urban districts. The average term of office of superintendents in the 45 largest school districts of the country is now only 2.5 years. Annually, about 1/3 of all school board members are updated.

One of the most serious complaints to the Education Councils is that they show indifference to the promotion of educational reforms initiated by the federal and state governments. When discussing the problems of local education councils, different points of view are expressed, radical and moderate, but quite clearly reveal two main areas: one – for the modernization and improvement of the existing system; others – for searching and creating new structures and replacing them with old ones. Proposals of the supporters of the first direction are reduced mainly to the revision and streamlining of the existing regulatory framework in state legislation, a clearer definition of the role of education councils, and the identification of a number of basic tasks that should determine the main components of their activities. There are proposals to replace the election of members of the Council with their appointment, to influence the quality of the councils, and to strengthen their responsibility and accountability.

Proposals for Alternative Educational Governance

Proponents of the reform of the system offer more radical methods: in general, to abolish the local education councils, replacing them with other bodies in which different groups of the population would be more fully represented. One of the main proposals of the reform is to transform the Councils of Education into local councils for educational policy. Then, they could only deal with the formulation of educational policy, overseeing its implementation, and implementing short-term and long-term strategic planning. All the proposals mentioned above remain so far only at the level of proposals; Although discussions on the role of the Councils on education have been going on for many years, not a single comprehensive reform has been carried out in any state. In some states, there is a search for ways to improve and modernize education at the local level (Kansas, Massachusetts). Within the federal state, there has been a radical revision of the legislation on education and the role of school councils.

State Legislation and Shared Decision-Making

A number of states have adopted laws that change the decision-making and management process in school districts. One of the opportunities for changing local education management was an attempt in Colorado to link higher education with the school administration. So, in Pueblo, such cooperation led to the semi-merging of universities with local school districts. In the state of Illinois, a law was passed in which old school boards were dissolved, and a new board consisting of 15 people was formed, whose members were partially appointed by the mayor of the city and partially elected. Here, councils of schools are created, consisting of a director and representatives from teachers, parents, and local communities. Thus, reforms in local education administration have not been implemented in the US, but active preparations are being made for this. For many years, the professional development of US teachers has been the subject of concern only for local education authorities, while in some school districts, this work was not conducted at all. The funds required for the retraining and upgrading of teachers were received mainly from local sources. Under the conditions of the decentralized system of organization of the US national education, not all school districts could allocate sufficient funds for this since the standard of living of the population in a number of districts is extremely low. Some universities had branches and courses for teachers, but they were almost everywhere paid. This kept many teachers from visiting them. A number of universities and colleges had summer courses, but the total number was very small. In addition, most of the courses did not deal with polling skills but with raising the level of education of low-skilled teachers.

Compulsory Education and Child Labour Laws

The laws on universal compulsory education require children and adolescents from 7 to 16 years of age to attend school in the majority of states. However, the laws on child labour in most states allow

wage labour for children from the age of 14, in a smaller number from 12 years. Serious changes in the concept of elementary and secondary education of the American states occurred in the period from 1820-1920, when the laws on compulsory primary education were enacted. The law on free education in 1821 in Ed. 1825. provided for the organization of an apprenticeship bureau under the Ministry of Labor and allocated allocations for the implementation of apprenticeship programs on a national scale. The Dawes Act of 1881 established the right to create “full-day” general educational reservation schools and higher non-secondary schools (outside the permanent residence of Indians) in indigenous populations, with the right to visit their pupils belonging to small peoples. The system established in 1881 began to be realized only in 1889 and fully developed only in the 20th century.

Historical Federal Reform Proposals

Later, Bill Smith-Tauner, in 1919, proposed the possibility of progressive improvement of the system of public education throughout the country, defined the tasks of the equation of the possibilities of obtaining training in all states, the unification of the content of education and methods of preparation. The detailed rationale for the purpose of schooling was found in the Report of the Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education, “Basic Principles of Secondary Education” of 1918, and the Report of the Commission for the Definition of School Policy, “The Goals of Education in American Democracy” of 1938. So, the first of them officially registered the ongoing movements for the expansion of the tasks facing schooling, and now included seven aspects: health care, development of basic mental abilities, education of a good family member, civic education, development of skills, reasonable use of leisure, appreciation and creation of beauty, preparation for the world of work.

National Goals for Public Education

The Report of 1938 was the first attempt to detail the common goals. In this document, the goals were divided into four areas: self-realization of the person, mutual relations of people, economic efficiency, and civil responsibility. In each area, a specific list of tasks was defined and expressed in the form of a description of the behaviour and qualities of skills. Thanks to these Reports, the concept of elementary education has expanded considerably. Thus, it was pointed out that the tasks of mastering knowledge are reduced to the following values: an educated person has the desire to learn, can clearly speak in his native language, read well in his native language, correctly write in his native language, solve his problems by applying an account.

Postwar Federal Legislation and Funding

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, new laws on public education were adopted, which provided for an increase in appropriations for its needs. The basis of US regulations on the education of the 1960s. Theoretical justifications for school reforms put forward by economists Schulz, Bekeron and Denisson,

who developed the concept of human capital, according to which education was viewed as a condition of social stability, lay down. The main place in the reform was assigned to the modernization of the school curriculum.

Curriculum Innovation and Research Projects

A detailed description of curriculum projects is given in another document of the same Association, where 43 projects are presented. These documents mainly defined the direction of the new content of education in relation to government policy. Part III of this Law determines the status and competence of the Ministry of Health, Education and Social Security to expand the intervention of the federal government in the matter of national education. The Act was intended to implement a number of measures aimed at eliminating the various shortcomings of American schools. There was, for example, the task of improving the teaching of mathematics and natural science, and measures were planned to reduce dropouts from secondary and higher schools. Particular attention was paid to activities to identify capable young people for which local educational authorities received significant funds.

In order to create more favourable conditions for higher education, a loan system was introduced for talented young people for students in need of material assistance. For these purposes, during 1958-1962. $ 295 million was spent. This enabled over 200,000 students to receive a loan in the amount of no more than one thousand dollars annually in the course of study at the university, with the condition of repayment after graduation.

An equally important task, as outlined in the Law on Elementary and Secondary Education, was the development of a plan for the construction of a number of national and regional research pedagogical laboratories over a period of five years, as well as the expansion of research work in this field that facilitates the rapid introduction of the achievements of pedagogical thought into the practice of the American school. Improvement of the quality of the school's work should also be facilitated by the exemplary setting up in several US schools of curriculum and extra-curricular activities so that these schools serve as an example for all teachers and public education workers of the school district, state and the country as a whole. The law also provides for the establishment of a network of special centres in the country to supply schools with the latest textbooks, teaching aids, materials, and equipment.

The improvement in the activities of the State Education Departments, which largely depends on the success of the implementation of plans developed by the federal government in accordance with the requirements of this act, entailed spending $25 million. The letters of recommendation of the Commission on the School Policy of the National Association of Education of the US State Department for Education are also sources of American law.

Bilingual Education Policy

In US public schools, bilingual education (bilingualism) is supported by the Federal Fund and programs created on the basis of the 1967 Act and the Bilingual Act of 1968, according to which funds were allocated and continue to be allocated for the training of teachers – specialists in bilingual training (teaching in two languages), especially the Hispanic population. The first half of the 1960s. It was marked by great changes in the system of preparation of students of colleges and universities, which increased the contingent of students. Such changes were facilitated by the adoption of the law of 1963, which increased federal subsidies for higher educational institutions.

Economic Opportunity and Access to Education

The Law on Economic Opportunities, published in 1964, allowed federal funds, for three years, to support the admission of more than one million young people from rural areas to college with partial provision of their work. In 1965, the Law on Higher Education was adopted, which provided funds for helping talented young people who can not pay for tuition. Under the Law on the Development of Primary and Secondary Education in 1965, $10 million was allocated for the training of students who were partially employed in production. The implementation of the above laws, subject to the full use of all funds planned for the adoption of these laws, would certainly give the opportunity to resolve some long overdue issues of school matters in the US. In 1976, the National Pedagogical Conference proposed the following standards for the preparation of secondary school students: reading at the level of the VIII class, the ability to write without errors, counting with interest and decimal fractions, knowing Russian history, mastering elementary knowledge of natural science. The pedagogical community of the country responded, first of all, to such a powerful organization as the National Association of Education and the National Commission for Teacher Education and Professional Qualification closely associated with it.

Restructuring the American High School

The extensive memorandum published by this Commission pointed to the need to transform into a “high school” – three senior high school classes. As a result of two years of work, the Committee on Experimentation at the Department of Education published a draft of the “high school” reform in New York.

Extended School Time and Student Progression

The project envisaged an increase in the school day from 6 to 8 hours and the school week from 30 to 40 hours. The school year was divided into five semesters, and students were given the opportunity to move forward quickly from semester to semester as they mastered the subject, successfully

completed assignments, and completed a normal three-year course in two years. But the concept of “mastered the subject” was significantly different from the former; the requirements for the student are rising; not quick enough “grasp”; only the developed skills and the determined attitude of the student to the subjects will give him the opportunity to move from semester to semester. In its recommendations, the Committee paid special attention to the students’ mastering of work skills, in particular, the ability to quickly and easily print on a typewriter.

Physical Education in Curriculum Reform

In the project “High School”, a significant place was occupied by the issue of the physical education of schoolchildren. “The goal,” the Committee’s report will agree, “is to eliminate the unhealthy spirit that usually accompanies school sports”. In the documents entitled “Basic Principles of Secondary Education” of 1981 and “Education for All American Youth” in 1984, they received a pedagogical formulation of the requirements that America’s big business makes to schools. Recognition of the priority of education is manifested in the constant cultivation of respect for education and encouraging the participation of the general public in the affairs of educational institutions:

Public and Corporate Support for Educational Excellence

1. The US president finds time to welcome the best students – graduates of the year in the White House; 2. firms set scholarships to the best students for university studies;

3. Large corporations and enterprises cooperate with schools, invest money in experiments and innovations;

4. The National Movement “Association of Volunteers to Help the School” encompasses more than a million people in the United States – all these small and large-scale actions at the local and national level are forming a single policy aimed at increasing the prestige of education in society.

Lifelong Learning and System Renewal

Such an atmosphere, which attests to social support and interest in education, is an indispensable condition for its renewal. Continuity of education as a qualitative characteristic of the new pedagogical system. The high dynamism of the world of work, the emergence of new industries, and the continuous replacement of technology, professions, and specialities put forward the task of human education throughout his life.

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