INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, TEACHING, LEARNING, ADMINISTRATION, AND SUPERVISION: A POSTMODERNIST INTERPRETATION

Jeffrey Glanz
Kean College of New Jersey

ABSTRACT

In this article, interrelationships among curriculum, instruction, teaching, learning, administration, and supervision are explored from a postmodernist perspective. The relationships among these fundamental educational ideas have not been explored adequately. Educators who have addressed these interrelationships have differed in definitions, nature, and scope. This article will not resolve this conflict, but will explore these relationships and present a different and perhaps controversial perspective.

Postmodernist literature rests its theoretical and conceptual formulations on the premise that our society is beset by a plethora of challenging, if not onerous, conditions that have devastated mankind (Bowers, 1993). Despite numerous technological advancements in the 20th century, modernity has witnessed unfathomable atrocities, increasing levels of poverty, starvation, drug abuse, illiteracy, ethnic violence, alarming ecological destruction, and the persistence of inequalities, injustices, and lack of opportunities for many Americans (Apple, 1985). For the postmodernist person, a sense of despair, cynicism, ontological confusion, meaninglessness, and disenchantment prevails. Yet, despite this pessimistic outlook, opportunities and hope continue (Starratt, 1993). Recognizing the fact that quick and easy solutions are impossible, the postmodern person understands that education is still the key to enlightenment (Elkind, 1994).

The prevalence of bureaucracy, however, continues to plague public schooling and limit opportunities for self-expression (Warner, 1994). A fundamental issue since the late 19th century has been an attempt to find a balance between order or organization and freedom or individuality. According to Dewey, the problem of education is the "harmonizing of individual traits with social ends and values" (Mayhew & Edwards, 1965, p. 465). In other words, how can we accentuate individuality and at the same time maintain bureaucracy? Different generations have sought different solutions to this problem. Still, the result has *remained* the same; that is, the dominance of bureaucracy over individual autonomy.

A postmodernist critique, in part, attempts to combat the forces of dehumanization, bureaucracy, and inauthenticity (Slattery, 1995). Possibilities abound for people to discover and actualize themselves as individuals despite bureaucratic constraints

and behavioristic conceptions of people. The individual, according to educational philosopher Maxine Greene (1973), can indeed "do philosophy; to find apertures in the wall of what is taken for granted; to pierce the webs of obscurity; to see and then to choose" (p. 263).

Education, from a modernist perspective, is a static, undynamic process of transmitting knowledge, skills, and values (Cremin, 1965). The function of schooling becomes concerned with transmitting and perpetuating the ideals and values of society. In this view, teaching becomes necessary to impart these knowledges, cultural patterns, and ideals. The teaching-learning process is best conceived as a "banking concept," as formulated by Paulo Freire (1974). In other words, teachers talk and students listen. Learning is a process of accepting ready-made bits of information that the student must recall on examinations. In this vein, administrators assure that external factors are conducive so that teachers may accomplish their objectives. Supervision becomes an inspection function to assure that teachers comply with mandated curricula and are meeting prescribed objectives.

For the postmodernist, however, education is much more than transmitting some set of prescribed cultural values and ideas. Education is the ongoing, spirited engagement that a learner undertakes. Evidence the fact that "education," etymologically, is derived from the Latin word "educare"–to draw out or to lead. That is, in fact, our goal as teachers–to draw out that unique latent potential within every person. As Smith (1991) has explained poignantly, "education cannot simply tell us what we are, but what we hope to become" (cited in Slattery, 1995, p. 73). A fundamental human quest is the search for meaning. As such, education becomes a lifelong journey of self-exploration, discovery, and empowerment.

Within this context, Rogers' (1969) discussion of self-actualization, a central concept in humanistic psychology as well as in Maslow's needs hierarchy, finds relevance and urgency. Carl Rogers, among the most influential of humanist psychologists, believed that all humans strive for achieving worth, self-efficacy, dignity, autonomy, and self-actualization. If self-actualization is the process or act of *becoming* oneself, of developing one's potentialities, of achieving an awareness of one's identity, of self-fulfillment, then education and teaching must focus on the process of "becoming." Self-actualization is not a state, but a process of growth–of becoming.

As educators, we must affirm the possibilities for human growth and understanding. Education embod-

ies growth and possibility, while teachers translate these ideals into action by inspiring young minds, developing capacities to wonder and become, and introducing an environment conducive for exploring the depths of one's being. The capacity for heightened consciousness, the emphasis on human value and responsibility, and the quest of becoming are our quintessential goals (Kohl, 1984).

Postmodernism challenges us to reconceptualize our taken-for-granted modern notions about educating merely through the extensive use of behavioral objectives, predetermined outcomes, and prescribed national standards. Education, from a postmodern viewpoint, becomes more than a process of accumulating bits of knowledges here and there, from time to time. In teacher education programs, for example, we generally focus on teacher competencies, isolated techniques and strategies, while neglecting more esoteric, enduring values (Hare, 1993). Our teacher candidates are Hunterized, Canterized, Johnsonized, and Bloomed. For the postmodernist, teachers must never forget their ultimate motive to inspire a sense of caring, sensitivity, appreciation, and respect for human dignity of all people. Noddings (1992) made the point, "We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring. Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (p. xiv).

In a postmodern world, education becomes more critical than ever as a means through which a person can find self-determination and expression of individuality. A teacher can empower a student to discard the sense of powerlessness prevalent in modern times. A teacher can create an educational milieu that fosters and provides opportunities for students to explore and become aware of their consciousnesses. A teacher is directly responsible for guiding experiences, offering choices, and identifying possibilities. But how can this be accomplished?

A Different Paradigm

The terms "curriculum," "instruction," "teaching," and "supervision," among other essential educational entities, express our concern for human dignity, caring, and becoming. They become the vehicles by which these goals are expressed and actualized. Curriculum is not merely conceived in a modernistic fashion as "a little race course"–"a kind of route over which the learner travels" (Lavatelli, Moore, & Kaltsounis, 1972). This mechanistic and rather dreary un-

derstanding considers curriculum as inert and lifeless. Conceiving curriculum more dynamically, as *currere*, is more aligned with a postmodern vision (Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992). This vision conceives curriculum as "the race," not merely the "course." Curriculum as *currere* is vibrant, interactive, and challenging rather than a static course of studies to be completed. Teachers engage and create curriculum in order to meet the needs of students. Students in turn "live" the curriculum by exploring, creating, and transforming meanings. Curriculum can become the means by which students and teachers alike can find self-expression. Curriculum is a search for meaning in the sense that opportunities are provided for students to interact actively by questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, developing personal perspectives, exploring how content may be relevant to contemporary experiences, and realizing infinite possibilities and individual potentialities.

Instruction, too, is ongoing and dynamic. It is not merely, in a modern version, a decision-making process of how best to use the system of knowledge embodied in a curriculum. In a postmodern view, instruction is not separate from curriculum.[1] Rather, instruction is viewed as the living manifestation of curriculum—extending, interpreting, creating, growing, and becoming. Instruction is a goal-setting, reflective process in which educators make specific decisions about curriculum and how best to engage students in learning. While instruction may provide only a general direction, teaching becomes concerned with vitalizing the humanness of the person—offering concrete possibilities and opportunities for growth and understanding by allowing students to be actively engaged in learning. Teaching, thus, is an active process of making curriculum and instruction come alive. Learning, in the Deweyian sense then, is "something the individual does when he studies. It is an active, personally conducted affair" (Dewey, 1916, p. 390). The extent to which we provide opportunities for students to actively and personally engage curriculum, we then demonstrate our concern for them as individuals. Supervision, too, in a postmodern era, is not merely inspectional and evaluative, but a continuous process by which teachers and others may delve more profoundly into how curriculum, instruction, and teaching might be better suited to meeting individual needs and interests (Glanz & Neville, 1996).

What we educators do (i.e., curriculum, instruction, supervision, and teaching) is ultimately entwined with being in the sense that we provide opportunities for growth. Curriculum, instruction, and supervision are tools by which we assist people to acquire not only requisite skills for a postmodern era, but ways of developing a sense of self, a sense of meaning, human intelligence, and purpose. In doing so, we fulfill our mission. We realize that teaching is much more than merely transmitting knowledge and utilizing scientifically-derived teaching skills. Fundamentally, effective teachers are trying to help the young grow and develop as human beings. In the end, what loftier pursuit and more meaningful goal is there than engaging our students in exploration of self, identity, and purpose.

Conceiving curriculum, teaching, and supervision in a postmodern way enables the individual to explore and become conscious of one's sensibilities and cognitive capabilities. The responsibility is surely awesome. But what are the alternatives? Can we, as committed beings, deprive our students of their existential reality? Can we somehow constrain our students from becoming spontaneous, creative, and conscious? I think not.

Of Interrelationships

Figure 1 illustrates a view of the interrelationships among administration, curriculum, instruction, teaching, learning, and supervision. Administration is that process that establishes a milieu conducive to instructional improvement, curriculum development, innovative teaching, and improvement of the quality of learning. Administrators are not merely concerned with logistics or "administrivia," but are instructional leaders, knowledgeable about interrelationships among curriculum, instruction, teaching, and learning, and are individuals who encourage instructional improvement through supervision. As such, the big "A" hovers over other components in an almost protective, yet nurturing fashion. Administrators, as leaders, are aware of the social and political dynamics that impinge on the system overall and are cognizant of their ultimate responsibility to promote student learning. Administrators are essential agents in any attempt to influence student learning positively due to their unique vantage point in the school organization.
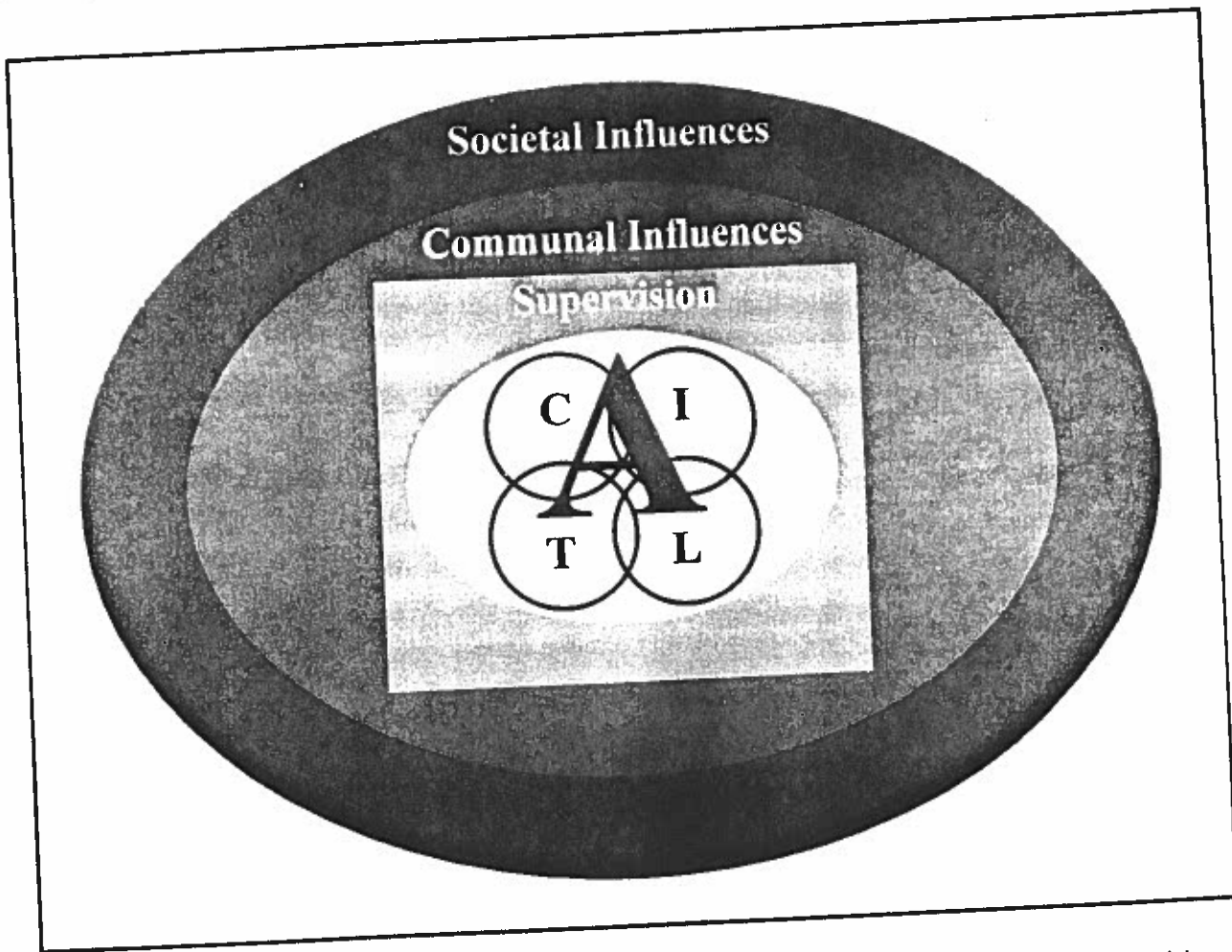
Figure 1: Interrelationships Among Administration, Curriculum, Instruction, Teaching, Learning, and Supervision

Curriculum, instruction, teaching, and learning are not unrelated activities, but occur in mutual harmony with each other. Modernist conceptions view curriculum and instruction as separate entities, as they do teaching and learning. For these educators, curriculum is the WHAT of education and instruction is the HOW. Teachers translate prescribed curricular and instructional strategies so that students may learn. For the postmodern educator, problems of instruction cannot be solved in isolation of wider curricular concerns, nor can the teaching-learning process be somehow divested from instructional or curricular issues. The teaching-learning process is intimately entwined with matters involving curriculum and instruction. In other words, instructional decisions are made through a careful consideration of the interaction among curriculum, teaching, and learning. Similarly, curricular decisions consider factors involving instruction, teaching, and learning. Learning is not merely an outcome of instruction, curriculum, or teaching, which is a modern notion influenced largely by the school effectiveness research. Learning, however, is a process in and of itself that is not only influenced but influences the design of curriculum, teaching, and instruction. Learners in a postmodern era assume responsibility for learning. Although each educational entity maintains its integrity and uniqueness, a postmodernist might view each as equal partners in an attempt to provide quality educational programming.

While administration may facilitate curricular/instructional renewal and encourage teaching-learning, supervision, derived from administrative theory, as a process and function concerns itself more specifically with all four facets: instructional im-

provement, curriculum development, teaching in the classroom, and the learning process. As such, supervision supports instruction, curriculum, teaching, and learning.

Modernist conceptions have dominated discourse in the field of supervision. The modernist approach relies on the empirical-analytical sciences and emphasizes the technical aspects of the supervision process. The applied science approach portrays a hierarchical relationship between supervisor and teacher. In May's (1989) words, "This conception suggests that supervisors are experts and teachers are not. . . . This view of teaching and/or supervision carries several labels which embody a theme of control: directive, executive, behavioristic, or positivist" (p. 729).

Using this approach implies that supervisors diagnose problems in the classroom after a series of close observations. Supervisors then prescribe a particular course of action and teachers are expected to incorporate the suggested changes. Suggestions offered are drawn from a research base, albeit often narrowly defined. Suggestions pertaining to classroom management skills and specific teaching strategies are common. The applied science approach is technically-oriented, hierarchical in its organizational structure, and most often associated with the more traditional, conservative views of supervision. This model is often called directive or evaluative supervision.

More in line with postmodern views of supervision is an "interpretive-practical approach." This approach, reflecting "person-centered" supervision, eschews prescriptive-type supervision. "Uniform answers to educational problems are viewed as impossible to apply because practical problems are seen to be context bound, situationally determined, and complex" (p. 729). The supervisor is not the overseer or prescriber, but the guide, facilitator, or confidante. Relying on enhanced communication and shared understandings, this approach encourages interpersonal and collegial aspects in the supervision process. This model is often called consultative or collaborative supervision. Clinical supervision, embodying neo-progressivism, may characterize this approach (Hopkins & Moore, 1995).

Postmodernism would also embrace an approach to supervision, described by May (1989), that encourages reflective action on part of teachers and supervisors. Going beyond mere collaboration in developing instructional goals, this approach challenges teachers to "examine the moral, ethical, and political dimensions embedded in everyday thinking and practice" (p. 730). Aiming to raise teachers' consciousness and

critical awareness of the sociopolitical contexts in which they work, emancipatory supervisors challenge teachers to take risks and construct knowledge for themselves (e.g., Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Waite, 1995).

A postmodern view, it seems to me, although embracing a more progressive paradigm for practice than evaluative supervision would not dispel more traditional approaches (e.g., directive supervision) when warranted. Varied models of supervision are welcomed. Supervision in this view can be conceived as that function or process which stresses a wide array of strategies, methodologies, and approaches aimed at improving instruction and promoting educational leadership as well as change. Those concerned with supervision may then work on curriculum development, staff development, school-wide reform strategies, action research projects, and mentoring while at the same time may utilize directive, collaborative, or empowering methods. Supervision is supervision regardless of the context in which it is practiced (e.g., preservice and/or inservice settings). Supervision as such doesn't become meaningless or lacking purpose. Rather, supervision is pliable enough to meet a wide range of instructional needs. Remaining responsive to diverse demands would be the field's greatest asset.

Fundamental Principles: A Summary

A postmodern view of the interrelationships among various educational entities (e.g., curriculum, instruction, teaching, learning, administration, and supervision) suggests that:

1. Education is best served by carefully considering ways in which entities relate to and affect each other.
2. Supervision and curriculum development are complementary processes.
3. Curriculum and instruction are intimately connected.
4. Administration and supervision as related processes function to support teaching, learning, curriculum, and instruction, albeit in different ways.
5. Learning is not merely an outcome to be measured, but a process by which learners actively and intentionally engage curriculum.
6. Postmodernism challenges educators to explore interrelationships among various educational entities and acknowledges the com-

plexities in educational engagement and that predictability and uniformity need to be supplanted by indeterminacy and electicism. (English, 1994)

7. Education is ultimately about the human quest for meaning and possibility.

Note:

1. Those who regard curriculum and instruction as separate realms envision supervisors as primarily concerned with improving instruction, and the development of curriculum the focus of "educational policymakers and subject-matter specialists" (Tanner & Tanner, 1987, p. 179). Under this scenario, teachers are often bypassed in implementing new curricula. Administrative fiat, top-down management, and "teacher-proof" curricula prevail. Many reforms of the 1960s and 1970s reflect such a modernist orientation.

References

Apple, M.W. (1985). **Education and power.** Boston: Ark.

Bowers, C.A. (1993) **Education, cultural myths, and the ecological crisis.** Albany: State University of New York Press.

Bowers, C.A., & Flinders, D.J. (1991). **Culturally responsive teaching and supervision.** New York: Teachers College Press.

Cremin, L.A. (1965) **The genius of American education.** New York: Random House.

Dewey, J. (1916) **Democracy and education.** New York: Macmillan.

Elkind, D. (1994) *Educational reform: Modern and postmodern.* Holistic Education Review, 7(4), 5-12.

English, F.W. (1994). **Theory in educational administration.** New York: Harper Collins.

Freire, P. (1974) **Pedagogy of the oppressed.** New York: The Seabury Press.

Glanz, J., & Neville, R.F. (Eds.). (1996). **Educational supervision: Perspectives, issues, and controversies.** Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publishers.

Greene, M. (1973). **Teacher as stranger.** Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Hare, W. (1993). **What makes a good teacher: Reflections on some characteristics central to the educational enterprise.** Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press.

Hopkins, W.S., & Moore, K.D. (1995). *Clinical supervision: A neo-progressive approach.* **The Teacher Educator, 30,** 31-43.

Kohl, H. (1984). **Growing minds: On becoming a teacher.** New York: Harper & Row.

Lavatelli, C.S., Moore, W.J., & Kaltsounis, T. (1972). **Elementary school curriculum.** New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston.

May, W.T. (1989). *Supervision and curriculum.* In Encyclopedia of Education, *1,* 728-730.

Mayhew, K.C., & Edwards, A.C. (1965). **The Dewey school: The laboratory school of the University of Chicago, 1896-1903.** New York: Atherton Press.

Noddings, N. (1992). **The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education.** New York: Teachers College Press.

Pinar, W.T., & Grumet, M.R. (1976). **Toward a poor curriculum.** Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Runt.

Pinar, W.T., & Reynolds, W.M. (Eds.). (1992). **Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text.** New York: Longman.

Rogers, C. (1969). **Freedom to learn.** Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Slattery, P. (1995). **Curriculum development in the postmodern era.** New York: Garland Publishing.

Starratt, R.J. (1993). **The drama of leadership.** London: The Falmer Press.

Tanner, D., & Tanner, L.N. (1987). **Supervision in education: Problems and practices.** New York: Macmillan.

Waite, D. (1995). **Rethinking instructional supervision: Notes on its language and culture.** London: The Falmer Press.

Warner, M.W. (1994). *Special education bureaucracy and the dilemma of modernism.* **Holistic Education Review,** 7(3), 51-61.