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## **Students as Designers of Their Own Life Curricula: Reconstruction of Experience in Education through Thoughtful Deliberative Action**

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### **Curriculum of Life**

The myopic subject matter consideration of curriculum gives a sense of a curriculum that is both distant and distinct from life. Rather than students' experiences, some educators, administrators, policy-makers regard the syllabus or sequence of topics as all that there is to curriculum. Such curricular idea suggests a demarcation between students' school and outside school experiences. This severity contributes to the loss of the educational values of students' outside school experiences in particular and their lived experiences in general.

This article addresses the need to salvage the severed situation and conceives a solution in the theory of the construction of a life curriculum. The theory is part of my contribution to the curriculum conversation. It is a notion of curriculum that administrators and policy-makers should bear in mind in developing a curriculum. It is a theory that should guide teaching and resonate in the mind of teachers as they implement the curriculum. Students also should be aware of this theory of curriculum as they learn and interact with their teachers and as they experience the world.

In the elementary and high schools, it is the responsibility of teachers to get the kids to begin to ponder about their lives in relation to the various disciplines of study. Educators focusing on life as the organizing center of curriculum can help students assimilate school syllabus within their life curricula. By constructing their life curricula, students take

charge of their own learning and lives and design their own curricula in a way that not only retrieves the educational values of their outside school experience, but also merges them with classroom inquiries and teacher interactions.

It is important to define the boundaries of the notion of a curriculum of life. To do so I will distinguish between the notion of life as curriculum and the notion of a curriculum of life. The study of life as curriculum is an enormous task that appears to have no boundaries because life involves everything. But the notion of building a curriculum of life—a deep-seated meaning that guides our being and actions—is primarily concerned with students taking charge of their own education, asking practical curricular questions, and learning from past experiences by reconstructing them in the present. Secondly, there is the transition to curriculum of life that influences future experiences. It does not involve every aspect of life. However, the intellectual journey and conversation leading to the idea touches on different aspects of human experience.

The curriculum question has always involved a consideration of what constitutes worthy knowledge. “What knowledge is of most worth?” (Spencer, 1861, p. 5). This is a basic question in curriculum development. However, considering the nature of curriculum today and its various orientations and relations, I consider the Schubertian version more appropriate, “What is worth knowing and experiencing?” (1986, p. 411) because it does not demand that we select the most worthwhile and it certainly does not invoke Spencer’s sordid, social Darwinism of self-preservation and survival of the fittest.

The curricular consideration of what is worth knowing and experiencing has existed as long as humans have considered what they should do and become. It should precede or be embedded in any educational inquiry aimed at curriculum development. Classroom teacher-student inquiry is an example of such curricular investigation. The classroom is a place where students in union with their teachers inquire about is worth knowing and experiencing in their lives. Unlike the customary subject matter consideration of curriculum, such worthy classroom practical inquiry considers all educational experiences—both school and outside school. The words “non-school” and “outside school” have sometimes been used interchangeably but I find “outside school” more suitable. This is because in “non-school” the prefix “non” gives the impression of direct opposition and such connotation does not support the idea of educational values in experiences. It also suggests an opposition to school experiences where as the adjective “outside” gives a sense of an alternative and not necessarily an opposing view.

The customary subject matter consideration (adopted by some school

systems) presents school curriculum as an enveloped package that teachers deliver to students without defying its purity. Such curricular outlook obscures the relationship between curriculum and life and does not promote teacher-student curricular inquiry. It makes teachers not realize that the curriculum question is also a question of what is worthwhile in life and that lifelong learning should be the ultimate aim of curriculum. Curriculum transcends school, and that is why Schubert (1981) suggests that educators should begin to view curriculum in a “dynamic interdependent and ecological relationship with out-of-school curriculum” (p. 185).

### **Life as the Organizing Center of Curriculum**

The consideration of life as the organizing center of curriculum is not a new question in curriculum. For Whitehead (1929), “there is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations” (pp. 6-7). Decades later, Smith, Stanley, & Shores (1957) quoted these words of Whitehead (p. 244). Etymologically, the word education comes from the Latin *educo, educare* meaning to lead. Therefore, to educate means to lead out of ignorance of life. Whitehead put it better and defines education as “the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge” (p. 4) and “the guidance of the individual towards a comprehension of the art of life” (p. 39). Bobbitt explained that human life consists in the performance of diverse activities and these activities are human experiences. He also noted that curriculum is a series of things that children and youths must do and experience. He went further and offered two definitions of curriculum:

(1) it is the entire range of experiences, both undirected and directed, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual; or (2) it is the series of consciously directed training experiences that the schools use for completing and perfecting the unfoldment. (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 43)

Experience is what constitutes the curriculum. It is the essence of curriculum. No matter the demarcation between experiences, all our experiences fall within one curricular continuum—life. When Bobbitt wrote about directed and undirected experiences it seems he was referring to in and out-of-school curricula. The two constitute the entire range of the continuum of experience and that is why (even though he made the distinction) he was clever to observe that “the line of demarcation between directed and undirected training experience is rapidly disappearing” (p. 43).

Besides, the idea of life as the organizing center of curriculum could

be looked upon as an advocacy to broaden the conception of curriculum after the example of Schubert (1986) who writes:

When we consider the fact that every human being learns from experience, and when we reflect on the sizable amounts of time students spend outside of school it is obvious that a great deal of learning transpires in non-school organizations, mass media, peer groups, homes and families, vocations, and avocations...What is needed since children and youth (all of us) learn from each of these areas is a broadened conception of curriculum. (pp. 107 & 108)

The joint idea of school and outside school experiences or curricula covers the entire range of students' life experiences. The inclusion of non-school or outside school curriculum in the idea of curriculum indicates that the meaning of life should be the organizing center of curriculum. Because the meaning of life is supposedly different for every student and no two lives are the same, students should be part of the inquiry about the curriculum that educates and directs their lives. Students' lives comprise their school and outside school experiences. Peer groups, family, religious, business, social, and cultural organizations are all outside school as well life experiences. It is proper to include these outside school experiences as part of the notion of curriculum. It is also proper (and not out of place) to focus on life as the organizing center of curriculum.

### **Types of Curriculum**

One way of looking at the notion of curriculum of life is thinking about it as comprised of values. Students' life curricula consist of the values they have been able to cultivate and continue to construct and reconstruct from the cluster of values they have been exposed to from home, schools, peer groups, employment, religion, their reflections, etc. Thomas Hopkins (1954) made this distinction about values and he writes:

There is a sharp distinction between the way individuals obtain and the way they build values. Children obtain values by psychic, emotional, or social contagion, usually as aspects of action in particular situations. These are the dominant or controlling tendencies in the immediate and general family environments in which they are reared. Such specific patterns are introduced by adults into their experiences at the outset in order to limit the area of activity and control the action toward their individual or group preferences. Adults deliberately groove the experiences of children into the patterns of behavior which meet their value judgments... Each individual builds his own values by thoughtful deliberative action in all life situations which he really faces. (p. 303)

This distinction sums up the process of curriculum building and at

the same time reveals the forms of curriculum in life. There is the curriculum that we obtain; the *exposed* curriculum (from Latin *adepto*: to obtain, get, acquire). There is also the curriculum that we construct and build: the *construed* or *constructed* curriculum (from Latin *construo*: to construct, build).

### Exposed or Acquired Curriculum

In life, humans come across different forms of experiences in different environments. These experiences constitute different curricula that sometimes conflict with each other. There is a religious curriculum and sometimes it conflicts with school curriculum. The confusion concerning the use of contraceptives, stem cell research, abortion, and pre-marital sex are glaring examples. Religion educates us and instills a curriculum in us. T. S. Eliot articulated the religious nature of curriculum and he writes:

Education is a subject which cannot be discussed in a void: our questions raise other questions, social, economic, financial, and political. And the bearings are on more ultimate problems even than these: to know what we want in education we must know what we want in general; we derive our theory of education from our philosophy of life. The problem turns out to be a religious one. (1952, p. 132)

There are other sources of curriculum and curricular conflict and the family is one of them. It does happen that sometimes the schoolteacher says one thing and the parent says another. Sometimes what happens in school conflicts with how parents want to bring up their children. For instance, the teacher tells a mildly sick student to stay home while the parent, in an effort to instill in the child the toughness to combat the tough conditions of life, encourages the child to go to school despite his or her mild illness. Who is correct, the teacher or the parent and what should the child believe? Messages learned from gangs, peer groups, and even the media do not at times go together with family values. Those who host various shows on television are not experts when it comes to knowledge of various inquiry areas like history, art, theatre, music, religion, medicine, sociology, law, politics, etc. Thus, there is always the possibility of miseducation from the media that conflicts with school syllabi and vice versa.

Apart from the media, individuals are in constant struggle in the society: trying to find their identity in it. The employee is also struggling in the place of employment. Due to the nature of the world economy today, many people find themselves in positions they dislike. Such people do what they do to survive even when they do not find it pleasing. This

is sad to say, but since 9/11 and the economic decline that followed, it appeared that the teaching profession (especially in the elementary and secondary education) became a professional safe haven for some people. Some who lost their jobs embraced the alternative means of teacher certification. Some of these professionally dislocated teachers wake up sad every school day worrying about how to control the kids and manage the classroom. There is always this experience of conflict between such teachers and teaching itself.

Married people and unmarried partners also experience conflicts. It is true that marriage joins two people together but at the same time, no two people have the same opinion in all issues. There are conflicts in opinions, beliefs, values, teachings, and ethics, which tend to tear the partners apart from time to time. This is more serious when the two partners are adherents and staunch members of conflicting religious sects.

Apart from joint conflicts, people also experience conflicts on the personal and epistemological levels. In our silent and reflective moments, the internal senses are operative. Sometimes the conclusions of our reflective and internal senses are in conflict with the concupiscence of the external senses. The former says one thing and the latter does another. Inability to resolve and integrate the conflicting experiences of life can lead to a miseducative curriculum or no curriculum at all. Cultivating a curriculum of life is a process of finding meaning amongst conflicting experiences. The overall purpose of the school curriculum is to educate students on how to integrate various curricula that come their way. James B. Macdonald touched on this point and he writes:

The school does not exist primarily to inculcate our cultural heritage, not principally to develop role players for society nor primarily to meet the needs and interests of the learners. The school exists to bring learners in contact with (*the learner's own appreciation of the world*) reality, of which our society, ourselves, and our cultural heritage are parts. (1964, p. 47, words in italics and bracket are mine)

The reality referred to above is the learner's appreciation of the world in the learner's way and manner of perceiving and knowing, and on that note, I define curriculum studies as a study of the organization of the experiences that inform our lives and the basis from which we build our convictions and actions.

### **Construed or Constructed Curriculum**

The constructed curriculum introduces the discussion on reconstruction of experience. The constructed curriculum is the curriculum that students consciously select from the *exposed* curriculum. This selec-

tion process is by systematic and thoughtful deliberation on the *exposed* curricula that have influenced students' lives in meaningful ways. This process of constructing meaning is a continuous one, in which case, life becomes a series of meaningful ideals. Even the ideals of one person can be reconstructed to become that of another when two persons come into a meaningful contact. In some real life situations, in substance abuse therapy for instance, long lasting results have been noticed when substance abusers acted in accordance with their therapist's advice not simply because they were advised to do so. Rather, because the substance abusers reconstructed their therapist's advice by embodying it, that is, deliberating on it, finding it meaningful, and lastly making it theirs. This ownership admits the therapist's advice into the substance abusers' life curricula, and became part and parcel of their persons. In other words, the substance abusers acted the way they did because they chose to do so. Such can also be said of a good teacher-student curricular interaction.

In the above instance, the therapist's advice was an *exposed* curriculum that also became a construed curriculum. Without reconstructing and owning the therapist's advice, substance abusers act unconvincingly and easily yield to the temptations of their environments. This is due to the lack of the immense power of action and restraint that comes with thoughtful deliberation on experience.

### **Reconstruction of Experience through Thoughtful Deliberative Action**

Here I rely on the theories of Dewey, Pinar and Grumet, and Husserl to demonstrate that it is through thoughtful deliberative action that experiences are reconstructed in the present. Looking closely, the thoughtful deliberative action talked about by Thomas Hopkins is an important part of the Deweyan notion of reconstruction of experience. Dewey defined education as "the reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 76). Although Dewey did not explicitly use the phrase "thoughtful deliberative action," we construct meaning by reconstructing our experience through thoughtful deliberation on experience.

In Dewey, not all experience is educative. There are educative and miseducative experiences. A miseducative experience is one that has the effect of distorting the growth of further experience (1938, p. 25). In an educative experience, the principle of *continuity* of experience is operative: every experience takes up something from those that have gone before and modifies the quality of those that come after (p. 35). In

addition “every experience influences to some degree the objective conditions under which further experiences are had” (p. 37). There is also the principle of *interaction*: objective conditions are not subordinated but ordered in a kind of interaction with the immediate internal states of the experiencing individual (p. 42). The principles of continuity and interaction constitute the criteria of experience—the educative significance and value of an experience. They unite and intercept each other and are the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience.

In the discussion of a life curriculum in the light of Deweyan reconstruction of experience, a consideration of Pinar’s and Grumet’s philosophy of *currere* seems *ad rem* (fitting to the thing). *Currere* is a meditative imagination of the possibilities of the future through a regressive and progressive analysis of the past and present. *Currere* rests on the phenomenological *epoch* of Edmund Husserl. Through a method of “bracketing”, empirical data are removed from further consideration. “I may accept it only after I have placed it in the bracket” (Husserl, 1931, p. 111). This leaves pure consciousness, pure phenomenon, and pure Ego as the phenomenological residue. Everything including the marvels of science and technology have all been reduced to pure consciousness, placed in brackets, and suspended without judgment.

Likewise, in the construction of a life curriculum, after an experience what remains during the thoughtful deliberation is the phenomenological residue of experience. As students deliberate whether to admit the meaning of an experience into their life curricula, empirical data of the experience is removed from further investigation by placing it in brackets. Judgment is suspended until after deliberation and meaning making. This is the importance and curricular implication of the Husserlian phenomenology.

Pinar and Grumet enumerate four moments important to *currere*: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical. They summarized the four methods thus:

The first step of *currere* is the regressive, the free associative remembrance of the past. We work to excavate the present by focusing on the past, work to get underneath my everyday interpretation of what I experience, and enter experience more deeply. The next step, the progressive, asks me to ponder meditatively the future, in order to uncover my aspiration, in order to ascertain where I am moving. Third, I analyze what I uncover in the first two sections, an analysis devoted to intuitive comprehension as well as cognitive codification. I work to get a handle on what I’ve been and what I imagine myself to be, so that I can wield this information, rather than it wielding me. The beginning of agency. Now the antithesis, the synthetical stage. More



deeply, now, in the present, I choose what of it to honor, what of it to let go. I choose again who it is I aspire to be, how I wish my life history to read. I determine my social commitments; I devise my strategies: whom to work with, for what, how. (1976, p. ix)

On a closer look, *currere* is related to Dewey's definition of education. Schubert made a similar observation when he identified Deweyan reconstruction of experience with Pinar and Grumet's reconceptualization of experience (2004, p. 19). When Dewey wrote about reorganization or reconstruction of experience, I suppose he was talking about looking back on an experience (or our past in general) that we already had. Just as Pinar and Grumet rightly pointed out, it is like a phenomenological moment when we bracket certain existence or experience *in order to give ourselves standing presence* (p. 35, words in italics are mine). Therefore, when we reconstruct, we look back into the past while standing in the present. This is actually the regressive and the progressive moments of *currere*. The Deweyan analytic moment is that moment when the reconstructed experience adds to the meaning of experience itself. It does so by the examination of lived experience and existential data. The Deweyan synthetic moment is that moment when analytic result of a reconstructed experience increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.

The dialectic character of *currere* is interesting. It seems dialectic when the past is antithetically analyzed with the present in the hope of a future that is synthetic of the past and present. Living and experiencing is an on-going process. It does not end with this one experience. In the same vein, each synthetic experience at some point becomes a present and a past, and by so being offers itself for analytic evaluation and synthetic appraisal and the process continues.

### Transition to a Curriculum of Life

Louise Rosenblatt (1986) wrote that, "meaning does not reside ready-made in the text or in the reader, but happens during the transaction between reader and text" (p. 6). Every experience is a text of its own. Words do not mean, it is the individual that means through words. Even individuals can consider themselves as texts. For Dewey, "to learn from experience" is to make backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence" (1916, p. 140). In an experience, the individual interacts with the environment and constructs meaning out of that experience. This meaningful ideal is what connects the incoming experience.

In order for students to use their education to guide their lives,

I consider it helpful that students ask themselves how they came to be who they are. What curriculum are they made of and how often do they consciously bring their curricular meanings to their experiences and interactions with the environment? The meaning of life is a living curriculum that brings together all our life experiences and sometimes resolves the conflicting ones into a curricular format that terminates in a human this or that person.

Life is all about dealing with our trials while living out our potentials. Students can increase their potentials by learning from their experiences. Every experience (whether good or bad) should be a stepping-stone toward achieving goals in life. The teleological nature of life is based upon meaning making. Life becomes hopeless without the possibility of more meaningful future experiences. It is the meanings and curricula that students construct from experiences that close the gap between the students and their goals. Constructing a curriculum of life helps students pay attention to their experiences in a way that they are able to retrieve the educational values of those meaningful past experiences.

The quest for the meaning of life is the organizing center of the curriculum. We bring something to a future experience and at the same time, we walk away with something. What we take away from an experience becomes part of our life and part of what we bring to a future experience. Life is interplay between what we bring to an experience and what we obtain from experience. It is a dialectical process. As humans, we approach each experience with an already-made curriculum (or a thesis curriculum) and at the same time, we improve our curriculum by learning from the coming together of the thesis curriculum that we are and the incoming experience (or the antithetical curriculum). The result is a synthesis, which may be a new and improved curriculum. This synthetically new and possibly improved curriculum becomes the new thesis and current curriculum while the immediate future experience becomes the antithesis, and the cyclic process continues throughout life. The antithetical and synthetical curricula are adaptations of the thesis curriculum—prompted by the changes and demands of the environment.

### **Reconstruction as Artistic Adaptation to Changes in the Environment**

There is an arrangement that comes with the interconnection and reconstruction of experiences. Dewey in his definition of education also referred to it as reorganization. To arrange or reorganize is an artistic practice. The reconstruction and rearrangement of experience is a work of art. The curriculum is an art. Art does not stand in isolation to human

experience. It is a participation in the environment. It is a response to various stimuli from the environment. Dewey (1934) puts it well when he writes, “every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives” (pp. 43-44). “Work of art is generated when the living organism interacts with the environment, an interaction which when carried to the full, becomes a participation and a communication with the environment” (p. 22). In the same manner, students can think of curriculum as living participation and communication with their environments. The challenges and demands of the environment prompt the nature of this romance between the student and the environment. Art is the arrangement of experience and so is the curriculum. However, it is a misconception to think that art and experience constitute primarily in arrangement or sequence.

The conception that the essence of curriculum lies in the sequence of topics appears to be part of the problem with curriculum development today. In some classrooms and state boards of education, there is always this myopic conception of curriculum as a sequence of topics where one topic necessarily follows another. There is so much emphasis on what should be taught first and what comes after that rather than on students' experiences themselves. The curriculum is not a sequence of experiences rather *it is experience itself*. If curriculum is a pathway to knowledge, then that pathway is experience and nothing else. Any pathway to knowledge created by any particular sequence is composed of experiences. Different autonomous and independent experiences are united in the line of the path that leads to knowledge. “Every successive part flows freely, without seam and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time there is no sacrifice of self-identity of the parts” (Dewey, p. 36).

Given the foregoing, there is need for fluidity in our curriculum. The fluidity of curriculum has to do with centering our classroom education in such a way that its beginning slips off from students' experiences and slides right back into them. Lesson plans should be made in such a way that classroom experiences become a continuation of life experiences. Pinar (2004) imagined a similar situation when he asked, “What would the curriculum look like if we centered the school subjects in the autobiographical histories and reflections of those who undergo them?” (p.38). William and Ann Schubert (1981) urged educators to “develop ways to form curricula with students so that learning activities come from within them as well as from without” (p. 250). When classroom experiences are interwoven with daily life experiences, students stand better chance of seeing schooling as a continued part and parcel of their lives. This would probably lessen the number of dropouts in our schools.

Whether we consider curriculum as experience or the components

of the path to knowledge as experience, there is a primacy and immediacy enjoyed by human experience in so far as human knowledge is concerned. If art is the conveyance of feelings in the experience of the environment, and if art is experience and the curriculum too is experience, one is inclined to reason without any fear of fallacy that curriculum is the conveyance of feelings in the adaptation to the growing demands and changes in the environment. Our experiences proceed from the adaptation to the changes in the environment which may not necessarily mean a change in life curriculum.

### **Procession of Experiences**

Given the emphasis on life curriculum, one wonders if the curriculum of life bears upon and informs all future experiences. We expect our actions to flow from the convictions, ideals, and values that we have established for ourselves but this is not always the case. Sometimes we behave in certain ways that we begin to question ourselves and our motives. In the language of Dewey, we keep reconstructing and reorganizing our experiences; and our meaning about life keeps evolving. Today, we look at life this way and the next day we look at it differently. However, at any point in our lives, whatever meaning we make of life is an assemblage of all the experiences that we have had up until that moment in our lives.

Thus, the assemblage, arrangement, sequence, interconnections, and above all, interpretation of our experiences are responsible for our convictions and meaning making in life. Depending on the level of our convictions, our ability to direct the course of subsequent experience (in the language of Dewey) is either increased or diminished. If our convictions are strong, subsequent experiences are assumed, overshadowed, and predicted by our prior understanding of life and not necessarily prior experience.

Smith, Stanley, and Shores wrote about value system in their discussion of the fundamentals of curriculum development. They pointed out that people express two kinds of beliefs: one in reference to what a given set of circumstances actually is, or was, and the other, to what it ought to be or ought to have been (1957, p. 59). People frequently express their values as maxims based on their factual statements (whether true or false) about a situation and what the situation ought to have been. In this ethical consideration of curriculum, the maxims are sometimes different from the actual situations. The factual statements are products of our external senses while the maxims are products of our internal senses—particularly the intellect. There is sometimes a *disconnect* between the intellect and the external senses. The intellect builds upon the factual statements of

the external senses, rises beyond them, and formulates the maxims. The maxims of the value system serve as the rule of conduct or basis for judging people's behavior including oneself. The fact that behaviors and rules guiding behaviors proceed from different sources explains why a person believes one thing but sometimes does another. The saying "what am I doing?" is an indication and a realization of a conflict of sources. This is a point when the ideal maxim of the intellect is kicking in and questioning the behavior. The intellect by doing so makes one realize that one has gone contrary to one's established rule of conduct.

What this tells us is that not all of our experiences proceed from our curricula of lives. Sometimes the frailty of the flesh can redirect the source of our actions. Instead of acting in accordance with our maxims, we dance to the tunes of the flesh. It is only when the flesh is led by the intellect or rather when both are guided by a common understanding that we can achieve an absolute unity of curriculum and action. One's life curriculum changes at any point one's subsequent experiences are not directed by one's prior overall understanding of life. For this change to happen, the incoming experience must be so overwhelming to direct the arrangement and interconnection of all prior experiences in its favor.

### **Conclusion**

Constructing a life curriculum: so what and who cares? Human life is a phenomenon that is shrouded in mysteries. Sometimes when we think we are closing in on it, the more it appears to get away from us and our findings become only an uncovering of mysteries and inconsistencies. There is always this constant struggle between us and the world as presented to us. The world-as-it-is, unthought-of and unexamined, always tries to overwhelm our existence. Nevertheless, in our resolve to untwist and unravel its machinations, we hold it, supplant it, and configure it to our pleasing. This we do on the scientific as well as on the personal levels. The two go hand in hand. There is a difference between the way humans want to live their lives and the way nature entraps them into living their lives and that is why the construction of a life curriculum is relevant. A life curriculum is also relevant because not enough attention has been paid to experience. I have been a mental health and crisis worker for almost five years now and have seen a lot of people come in and out of the emergency room due to an inability to learn from experience. Some people dwell on the hurtful part of certain experiences without tapping into the educational values of such experiences. Mistakes are repeated and the result is more hurtful feelings and nothing learned and advanced forward.

A curriculum of life is not an intellectual articulation of the meaning of life. It is a deep-seated meaning that informs behavior and builds character through skills, knowledge, and dispositions acquired in life. It is a meaning that resides and evolves in the innermost recesses of our being. It relates our knowing and meaning to our doing, behaving, living, and acting. This meaning, knowing, acting, and behaving do not come from this or that single experience. They derive from an integrated ensemble of all experiences: that momentary pause and halt, the wondering and pondering that initiates an experience into a life curriculum. Marriage, relationships, schooling, parenting, religion, employment, science and technology, business and everything else have all been absolved and resolved into the notion of a life curriculum. Without thoughtful deliberation, an indelible experience becomes stale and meaningless. This is an attitude that should be fostered by teachers and brought to bear on practical curriculum inquiry in the classroom.

Summarily, the idea of life as a curriculum is an invitation to extend the notion of curriculum to include outside school curriculum (Schubert) and to emphasize life as the organizing center of curriculum. This is because we build new values (Hopkins) by reconstructing (Dewey) the values we obtain from all our experiences (Hopkins) in a way that influences our future life (Pinar's and Grumet's *carrere*). Just as Schubert (p.108), advocated for the evaluation of outside school experiences with Tyler's rationale, the same rationale can as well be used in analyzing the curricular implications of life experiences in general.

Lastly, the curricular conception of a life curriculum is not an aggressive effort to answer the curriculum question or articulate with exactitude the question and meaning of life. Rather it is only an attempt to shed more light on the nature of the question itself and provide another way of thinking about it. The question of curriculum and other questions of its kind are not simple issues, raising the questions and pondering about them is sometimes better than the answers themselves.

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