On page 463 of this enchiridion, we come to the section titled "The Curriculum as a Shaping Force." That promises a lot. Is this title more of the puffery we have come to expect in educational declaratives, overpromising once again? We should expect to learn in a section so entitled the best understandings from professional experience and research about how school curricula influence pedagogy, student achievement, the support of the community for education, and how the curriculum iteratively shapes itself—all the things my fellow evaluators and I have seldom been able to attribute to curricula. Does this section live up to its instrumentalist promise, "The Curriculum as a Shaping Force"?

I approached my review of this section in the midst of mindfulness about other things. The abiding curriculum question for me recently has been the match or alignment or transformation between the meaning of student achievement advanced by goal staters and test authors, and the meaning of student achievement in teachers' minds and manifest in their teaching activities. I have been writing papers questioning the curricular value of a concept of abilities—essential in the formulation of most goal statements and in the interpretation of standardized achievement tests, but indifferent to teacher attention to tasks and elemental accomplishments. Can one transform the

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meanings of ability scores into the meanings of teacher task completions? Educational reform across this country presumes we can. Much teacher practice suggests we do not. So this was on my mind as I entered these gates of enlightenment. That is to say, I approached each of eight chapters with a thematic curiosity—the alignment of goals, test scores, and teacher tasks. I wanted to see if Phil Jackson’s new Handbook would help me toward greater understanding of the issue.

The issue really belongs to the preceding section, “How the Curriculum Is Shaped”, and I admit that from time to time I did slip back, especially to read Francis Shrag’s fine chapter, “Conceptions of Knowledge.” But responsibility drew me back to my assignment, “The Curriculum as a Shaping Force”, and I presumed that if the alignment theme was as important as I thought it was, I would find leads on the issue of the curriculum as a force moderating the interpretation of tests and the refinement of goal statements.

In Chapter 17, “Students’ Experience of the Curriculum,” Fred Erickson and Jeffrey Schultz emphasize research on the varieties of experience students have in schools, lamenting the incompleteness of knowledge of any one kind of experience and urging more intensive, interpretive study. They declare that students are silenced both by the culture of our classrooms and by the deafness of our research ears. As to my alignment theme, Erickson and Schultz claim that student experience, including experience resulting from curricular persuasion, is more complex than we acknowledge and, citing Nancy Cole, urge new ways of conducting assessments. They stop short of identifying ability conceptualization as a constriction upon curriculum development.

Walter Doyle, writing in Chapter 18 on “Curriculum and Pedagogy,” elaborates on the widely recognized distinction between explicated and experienced curricula, noting that, in spite of widespread use of curriculum guides, and other mechanisms for standardizing teaching, much teaching remains idiosyncratic, and we know too little about how teachers embellish and preempt. Doyle dwells at length on research showing pedagogy as task-oriented and confirms that “teachers’ knowledge is organized around real-world events (e.g., activities, assignments, student reactions and typical mistakes, and time allocations)” (p. 509). Doyle suggests that the value of educational research is not its delivery of prescriptions for teaching practice but its descriptive representations of events that occur in classroom settings, implying that it is teacher conception of achievement that lies at the base of educational reform.

In Chapter 19, “Cognition and Curriculum,” Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia write about cognitive science in education. Their treatment of problem solving, metacognition, memorization, and connectionism is laced with revelation, wit, and implication, but it is upsetting, too. Repeatedly the propensities of teachers and other educationists are dismissed. Without exu-

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rant feelings for American teaching, I have nonetheless maintained that our teachers are more effective than they would be using a teaching practice based solely on the advice of educational researchers or the demands of educational technology. Bereiter and Scardamalia urge us to look beyond research on learning and to study cognitive scientist views not only of pedagogy but of curriculum. That recommendation wasn't a quick fix for my question of whether or not teacher and testmaker perceptions of achievement are incompatible, but it did make me feel a bit optimistic that the research enterprise might someday go beyond merely reflective teaching.

Hugh Sackett addresses the failure of curriculum as a shaping force in his Chapter 20, "The Moral Aspects of the Curriculum." He notes that "the hidden curriculum of political socialization is much more effective, particularly as an instrument of social control, than the official curriculum is as an instrument of liberation" (p. 561). Both Sackett and Doyle treat the political use of curricula more as an incursion into professional space than as an exercise of social responsibility. My question about abilities and tasks as representations of achievement was not furthered here, rather it was severely derailed while I pondered the more substantive issues developed provocatively by Sackett.

In Chapter 21, Jeannie Oakes, Adam Gamoran, and Reba Page lead readers into consideration of "Curriculum Differentiation," the selection of different knowledge for different student needs and abilities. The intricacies of tracking and the philosophical differences among organizational patterns (elementary and secondary, for example) are nicely connected to existing research, but informal differentiation, especially how teachers treat each child's knowledge and knowledge needs as different, is not expanded upon. The subsection on "Questions, Debates, and Tensions" is intriguing and disheartening, acknowledging that a great accumulation of research on tracking has advanced us little beyond our primitive persuasions.

Next, in Chapter 22, Dorothy Strickland and Carol Ascher examine the attention of curriculum research to the topic of "Low Income African American Children and Public Schooling." They note that curriculum has been a weak aspect of compensatory education, often being no more than the regular curriculum repeated, broken into meaningless segments, or "dumbed down." They close with a strong recommendation against reliance on standardized tests. I wanted to interpret this as a recommendation against such reliance as a basis for conceptualizing curricula as well as a basis for measuring quality of achievement.

The 23rd chapter, "The Curriculum and Linguistic Minorities," finds no rod and staff for such minorities. Lily Wong Fillmore and Lois Meyer examine the complexities of bilingual education. They see widespread contemporary endorsement of an egalitarianism defined by the E.D. Hirsh, Jr., view of the school's responsibility "to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture" rather than a furthering of cultural pluralism, social empowerment,
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and diversity.4 Research on language choice dominates their survey, but content choice issues appear, too. These are tough issues—far removed from public and even most professional contemplation.

Reading my last assigned chapter, Chapter 24, I completely forgot what I was looking for as I pored over Nel Noddings’s “Gender and the Curriculum.” Technical aspects of deciding what knowledge to teach are peripheral as the fundamental question is raised, “Do we teach to perpetuate the culture or to renovate it?” The dilemma is of a “transformational feminism,” harboring, caring for a culture homeless, halt, and lame—visibly impatient with its restoration. This is a humanist critique, elegantly, powerfully laid out. For the eighth chapter in a row, I felt the poverty of my own knowledge.

Collectively, these 14 authors are dismayed by the inability of research to encompass the growing complexity of curricular issues, acknowledging our impotence as measurers of shaping, yet somehow optimistic about new understandings from inquiries closest to the classroom. Section Three does not deliver on the promise of “the curriculum as a shaping force,” but displays complex interactions of curricula with other forces.

Such commentary on titling is a brief harrumph on Jackson’s choice of a section title more poetic than informative. Section titles are seldom-used gates to anywhere. But how do readers enter such a handbook? Are they more likely to be searching for broad background or narrow issues—like mine about conceptions of abilities and tasks? For me, the Handbook’s index was of little help. Reading my quarter of the Handbook, I did not find what I was looking for. Perhaps we have handbooks to cover domains rather than issues. Acquisitional use rather than reference use. Acquisitional use, backgrounding are what the Handbook delivers—rather handsomely. The eight domains of these eight chapters, and the authors selected to develop them, were chosen to meet the needs of a society bereft of rationale for educational reform. At the three-quarter point, editor and authors were doing their job well.

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