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Comparative Perspectives on Curriculum Development: A Study of Tyler, Taba, and Skilbeck Models

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the three centralized, decentralized, and school-based curriculum development approaches of education. For this, I reviewed the literature, including classical books and journal articles, as secondary sources. And then, I discussed these three approaches to curriculum development, thematically linking with their major strengths and weaknesses. The finding is that Tyler, Taba, and Skilbeck advocate centralized, decentralized, and school-based approaches, respectively, for curriculum development in their curriculum development models. The Tyler model is a more centrally dominated approach. This model advocates that the national agencies are more responsible and subject experts have a prominent role in curriculum development. The other two models are more participatory, where local agencies and schools are autonomous in taking curricular decisions. These models allocate the power to the teachers in developing their curricular plan. Taba believes in the rational sequence of curricular elements or stages, whereas Skilbeck puts the value of democratic and participatory ways for determining the sequence of curricular order. On the other hand, Tyler and Taba advocate the prescriptive nature of curriculum development, whereas Skilbeck focuses on the descriptive nature of curriculum development. These models offer the theoretical framework for designing the curriculum according to the responsibilities allocated to the national and local-level institutions.

Keywords: centralized, decentralized, school-based, curriculum, linear, participatory

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The centralized, decentralized, and school-based curriculum development approaches are popular in the field of education (Cui et al., 2018). For this, the ideological sprinkle has existed as an enforcer for developing this variation in curriculum development. Broadly, the centralized and decentralized approaches are in practice to develop the curriculum in the world where power is given to the central agency and the local agency, respectively. The central authority, such as the curriculum development center, develops the curriculum for all schools in a centralized model. On the other hand, the schools have the authority to develop the curriculum in a decentralized model. Tyler's scientific model is more centralized, in which the national agency is more responsible for developing the curriculum in its fixed sequential steps (Cui et al., 2018; Print, 1993). In this model, subject experts play the prominent role in curricular decisions (Tyler, 1949). On the other hand, the Taba model focuses on curriculum decentralization (Print, 1993), in which teachers are more responsible for developing the curriculum in a definite step (Print, 1993; Taba, 1962). These two approaches promote the linear and sequential process for curriculum development. Both believe in the rigid nature of the curriculum development process. These models are more rigid because curriculum developers must follow the fixed sequential steps for curriculum development. Behind this reason, the preceding steps provide the foundational basis for the subsequent steps. Therefore, both are prescribed fixed, rational, and sequential steps for curriculum development. The limited number of experts plays a decisive role in curriculum development. Consequently, the curriculum decentralization agenda emerged after the failure of the top-down decision-making process in education. The decentralized curriculum extends the greater participation of teachers in taking curricular decisions (Subedi, 2020). Considering this, Taba sought to address the limitations of the centralized model by placing the value of teachers at the grassroots level (Print, 1993). Apart from these, the decentralized model ensures community participation in the curriculum development process. To ensure participation, the local stakeholders can participate in the three levels, such as the selection of aims, content, and evaluation of the basic education curriculum (Onyeme & Okoli, 2018).

In contrast to highly planned and structured curriculum development process, the naturalistic model emphasizes the flexible, participatory and democratic process in curriculum

development. This naturalistic model promotes the contextual realities and stakeholders' experiences by creating the interactive platforms (Marsh & Willis, 1999; Print, 1993). Dekar Walker, Malcolm Skilbeck, and Glathron flourished this alternative approach to curriculum development; among them, the Dekar Walker's model emphasizes that curriculum development is an interactive process with the stakeholders in a democratic way. This model also advocates the non-scientific and naturalistic process of curriculum development, considering the local context (Print, 1993). Similarly, the Australian scholar Malcolm Skilbeck (1976) emphasizes the school-based curriculum development practice where schools are more responsible for making their own contextual curriculum. This model also advocates the participatory and democratic process for curriculum development (Print, 1993). These all different decentralized forms of curriculum development are being practiced in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China (Wang & Hsieh, 2017), Canada, Hong Kong, United States of America (Cui, Lei & Zhou 2018), Finland, Norway (Creese, Gonzalez & Isaacs, 2016; Tronsmo, 2018; Volmari, 2019), Singapore (Chen et al., 2015) and Indonesia (Akrom, 2015; Andrian et al., 2018). This is a reflective approach to curriculum planning that emphasizes bottom-up implementation. This bottom-up approach to curriculum planning can empower the teachers and promote the value of their autonomy (Yuen et al., 2018). The teachers can only develop the curriculum realistically where they are able to analyze the factors like parental expectations, values, cultures, local authority's expectations, changing nature of subject matter, aptitudes of pupils, teachers' knowledge, skills, and values, social ethos, political structure, and so on (Print, 1993). On the other hand, a centralized curriculum contributes to improving the students' performance and high academic performance (So & Kang, 2014). This curriculum offers a uniform curriculum and standardized assessment process (Cheng, 2021; Tyler, 1949). Therefore, this review article attempts to clarify which approach is appropriate to solve the societal expectations through the curriculum and how the curriculum development process could proceed effectively. Considering these approaches, here, I have analyzed the instructional/curricular models of each curricular approach based on the Tyler, Taba, and Skilbeck models. Specifically, how these models provide the basis for curriculum development and whose roles and responsibilities are crucial for the curriculum development process. Hence, these different approaches are expected to contribute to addressing the theoretical dilemma in the curriculum development process. This helps in providing the theoretical foundation for curriculum design and development.

Methods and Materials

This conceptual article has been prepared by incorporating various secondary data sources. These include academic books, contemporary peer-reviewed journal articles, and theoretical papers on centralized, decentralized, and school-based approaches to curriculum development. I adopted a thematic review process based on these secondary data sources. From these sources, this paper analyzed the three theoretical approaches to curriculum development in education. Basically, the theoretical framework employed the Ralph Tyler (1949), Hilda Taba (1962), and Malcolm Skilbeck (1976) curriculum development models. Using classical literature, we reviewed these models from centralized, decentralized, and school-based perspectives across various studies, books, and articles by different scholars. For this, I reviewed the three books: Tyler's *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), Taba's *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice* (1962), and Skilbeck's *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice* (1976). Apart from these, we also reviewed peer-reviewed articles and theoretical papers by various scholars related to these models. After review, thematic analysis was employed on the three major themes, viz. centralized curriculum development approach: Tyler model, decentralized curriculum development approach: Taba model, and school-based curriculum development approach: Skilbeck model, to analyze the curricular models of these curriculum development approaches. Accordingly, this paper also analyzed the theoretical frameworks, underlying assumptions, strengths, and criticisms of these three curriculum development models.

Review and Discussion

In this paper, the centralized, decentralized, and school-based curriculum development approaches have been discussed based on the Tyler, Taba, and Skilbeck models. In relation to curriculum development, these three models advocate both technical and non-technical aspects of the curriculum development process (Neary, 2002). In addition to this, the theoretical framework, strengths, and limitations of these models have been discussed thematically.

Centralized Curriculum Development Approach: Ralph W. Tyler Model

R. W. Tyler is the pioneer of the centralized curriculum development approach. This model is the earliest and still more influential in curriculum development (Marsh, 2009). This approach emerged during the 1930s to 1940s from Tyler's experiences in fieldwork with school teachers and university faculty. Tyler refined these experiences in his book 'Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction' in 1949 at the University of Chicago (Wraga, 2017). This model is

known as the objective model, classical model, means-ends model, and rational model (Print, 1993). Furthermore, this is known as a product and general-specific model, which primarily emphasizes the learning outcomes. In his deductive model, the curriculum planners decide the objectives or expected learning outcomes first, and other elements proceed sequentially (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Specifically, the central authority is responsible for developing the uniform curriculum for all schools to meet certain standards. In addition, teachers only get an opportunity to design instructional strategies during curriculum development (Bhuttah et al., 2019). On the other hand, this deductive or linear model is more appropriate if we want to make curriculum practitioners more accountable in their performance (Ibeh, 2021). Principally, Tyler explains education as an experience of learners. And, he presented the four fundamental questions, including educational experiences as a basis for curriculum development. Accordingly, he looks at curriculum development as a problem-solving process (Wraga, 2017). For this, Tyler suggests the four fundamental questions that need to be answered while developing the curriculum. Accordingly, the Tyler model proposes a systematic and logical order for curriculum development according to these four questions. These four fundamental questions are (Tyler, 1949):

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain this purpose?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

These fundamental questions guide us in curriculum development in the four basic sequences: formulating objectives, selecting learning experiences, organizing learning experiences, and evaluating what students have attained or achieved (Ibeh, 2021; Print, 1993; Wraga, 2017). This four-step process is linear in nature, where curriculum development activities start from the objective and end with evaluation. The objectives are the basis of all elements of instructional or curricular design. The learning experiences and evaluation process are determined according to the curricular objectives (Ibeh, 2021; Print, 1993). Accordingly, this model prefers the five basic sources, such as learner, society, subject matter, philosophy, and psychology, for making general and specific objectives in the curriculum development process (Print, 1993). The first three are major bases to identify the general objectives, and the other two are necessary to eliminate contradictory objectives (Gordon II et al., 2019). Considering the

educational purposes, Tyler prescribes the criteria for selecting the learning experiences to achieve the expected learning outcomes from learners. These learning experiences must be related to educational objectives; they must provide satisfaction to the learners, enhance their capability, and promote multiple learning outcomes (Tyler, 1949). After selecting the appropriate learning experiences, he prescribes the continuity (vertical repetition), sequence (simple to complex, known to unknown, concrete to abstract), and integration (horizontal relationship) as the major criteria for organizing the learning experiences (Print, 1993; Tyler, 1949). Similarly, the final step evaluation is always based on the stated educational objectives (Tyler, 1949).

This objective-driven model sketches out the clear-cut way to develop the curriculum in a definite order. At present, Tyler's rationale is popular due to the practical nature of curriculum development around the globe. For evidence, Tyler's work has been translated into at least six languages, which helped to flourish all over the world (Wraga, 2017). The uniform curriculum and standardized assessment process are the remarkable contributions of this centralized curriculum development trend (Cheng, 2021). The centralized curriculum contributes in the preparation of the nation's future economy, fixing the education system, constructing the vision of the nation, and setting the rules (Jang, 2017). Therefore, Tyler's centralized model is still popular for curriculum development in schools and higher education. However, critics argued that the Tyler model overemphasizes the measurable outcomes of learning. Apart from this, this model gives less attention to learner-centered curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Similarly, another criticism is that this model does not provide an individualized program for those who are excluded from the mainstream classroom (Ibeh, 2021). Similarly, a centralized approach to curriculum development encourages reproducing the hegemony of the teachers and students, incorporating the ideology of the ruling class. The ruling class people use this centralized approach to inject their values, cultures, and beliefs (Jang, 2017). In this approach, teachers are not free to demonstrate their creativity in curriculum development and implementation. And they do not get the chance to promote their professional development through the curriculum development-related activities (Akrom, 2015). Even so, the influence of this curriculum has spread throughout the world as a modernist curricular trend. This discussion makes it clear that the Tyler model is more beneficial when the curriculum developers are going to make a curriculum in a scientific and linear fashion. In addition to this, this model remains relevant for outcome-based learning. It also provides the grounds for competency-based learning. However,

it neglects the contextual factors such as local contexts, cultures, and stakeholders' participation in the curriculum development process.

Decentralized Curriculum Development Approach: Hilda Taba Model

Taba proposed her model by criticizing the Tyler top-down approach to curriculum development. She argued that teachers are being directly involved in classroom instruction and should play the central role in curriculum development. Therefore, she proposed a grassroots approach to curriculum development in her book 'Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice' in 1962. She is the pioneer of the decentralized curriculum development tradition in education. She inverted the previous wrong order administrative model of Tyler and prescribed the grassroots model for curriculum development (Print, 1993). This model is inductive in nature and uses bottom-up planning (Gordon II et al., 2019; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Zein et al., 2022). She also modified the wrong order of the Tyler model, whereas central authorities are more responsible than teachers in curriculum development (Bhuttah et al., 2019; Print, 1993).

Similarly, Taba suggests a rational sequence for curriculum development rather than rule-of-thumb procedures. She inverted the previous traditional model of Tyler, in which teachers have a crucial role in taking curricular decisions at the grassroots level. Taba agrees that the teachers who teach the curriculum should participate in the curriculum development process. Further, there is a definite order in developing curricula. And, the curriculum development process is linear and sequential, which needs to follow the step-by-step procedures (Print, 1993; Taba, 1962). In her argument, curriculum development requires the orderly thinking process in sequential steps such as a) diagnosis of needs, b) formulation of objectives, c) selection of content, d) organization of content, e) selection of learning experiences, f) organization of learning experiences, and g) determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it. Each of these steps is best for the next step in developing curricula. She adds that it requires the active participation of the teacher in designing, developing, and improving the curriculum (Taba, 1962).

The curriculum development process starts from assessment of learners and societal needs (Gordon II et al., 2019). This is a foundational step for formulating educational objectives in the curriculum development process. These objectives should describe the observable behavior and should be developmental, realistic, and attainable. Likewise, validity, significance, consistency with social realities, learnability, students' needs and interests, and support for a

wide range of objectives are the major criteria for selecting content. The curriculum developer must consider three major criteria, viz., continuity, sequence, and integration in organizing the content (Taba, 1962). These criteria help to increase the instructional coherence for better understanding of learners (Print, 1993). Similarly, the learning experiences should be related to the objectives and developmental level of students. Apart from this, these selected learning experiences should promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students (Taba, 1962). Along with these learning experiences should be arranged in a logical sequence (Print, 1993), aligned with objectives and students' engagement. Finally, the evaluation methods should measure the achievement according to the already specified objectives (Taba, 1962).

The strength of this model is to provide systematic and logical steps for curriculum development (Print, 1993). Accordingly, it promotes the creativity of teachers at the local level through curriculum development activities (Gordon II et al., 2019) as well as helps in their professional development. Similarly, the Taba model covers the grassroots realities as well as learners and societal expectations. On the other hand, curriculum is a way of preparing young people to participate as productive members of our culture. Not all cultures require the same kinds of knowledge. Nor does the same culture need the same kinds of capacities and skills, intellectual or otherwise, at all times (Taba, 1962). Therefore, this model is also appropriate to make the contextual curriculum considering the social expectations and cultures. In addition to this, the centralized curriculum is unable to accumulate the wisdom of diversified cultural groups, where the same kind of capacities are not suitable in all situations. To solve the diversified social expectations, the Taba model is helpful to address the community needs and interests, as well as protect the cultural values, norms, and occupations. Despite the strengths, this becomes more mechanical when applying the step-by-step procedure due to the linear nature (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). On the other hand, the effectiveness of this model depends on the skills of the teacher. Teachers must be competent in curriculum development skills (Kelly, 2009). Accordingly, this model puts little attention on the ideological and political interests of people in curriculum development (McNeil, 2009). Despite the several strengths of this model, it may not be possible to implement in the absence of adequate capacity of teachers in curriculum development and design. And, this will be challenging for all teachers to meet the predetermined standards of learning set by the nation. Nevertheless, this model appears to be an effective

framework in the professional development of teachers and in creating a learner-friendly environment at schools.

School-Based Curriculum Development Approach: Malcolm Skilbeck Model

The school-based curriculum development emerged as an alternative strategy to the centrally determined curriculum (Wang & Hsieh, 2017). It emerged in the late 1950s as a reaction to centrally or expert-dominated curriculum development practice (Lewy, 1991). This is the new curriculum movement that emerged in the counterattack of the top-down curriculum development approach, which was more popular from the 1970s to the end of the 1980s (Bolstad, 2004; Lewy, 1991; Marsh, 2009; Wang & Hsieh, 2017). At that time, the focus of this approach was to empower the teachers in developing the curriculum at the school level (Wang & Hsieh, 2017). After the end of 1980, several countries dropped out of using this term (Bolstad, 2004). Although again, this concept was reestablished after 2000 as a reemerging trend in curriculum development. It is now more popular to address the local knowledge, values, and practices in the school curriculum. Schools and teachers should play an active role in developing their own curriculum (Lewy, 1991). This approach assumes that the teacher should be a developer rather than a transmitter of curriculum. The central concern of school-based curriculum development is to reflect the local needs in the curriculum (Bolstad, 2004). Similarly, it is better to enhance the level of professionalism of teachers through their involvement in the curriculum development process. It also pursues better curriculum design by ensuring the needs of a diversified community and children (Wang & Hsieh, 2017).

Malcolm Skilbeck is one of the pioneers of the school-based curriculum development approach in the field of curriculum decentralization. According to him, schools are responsible in making contextual curriculum (Print, 1993). The teachers, principals, parents, and students play an important role in curricular decisions. This is a reflective approach that empowers teachers' autonomy and creativity (Yuen et al., 2018). Skilbeck argued that teachers can only develop a realistic curriculum because they can analyze the parental expectations, values, cultures, changing nature of subject matter, teachers' knowledge and skills, social ethos, etc. He does not believe in the fixed, predetermined sequence of curriculum development at the school level. He claims that the five steps are required in school-based curriculum development to work effectively in school. Although these steps are not a trap for curriculum developers, for developing a logical order-based curriculum. He suggests that curriculum developers may

commence at any stage and proceed in any order during the curriculum development (Print, 1993). According to him, the five steps are situation analysis, goal formulation, program building, interpretation and implementation, and monitoring, feedback, assessment, and reconstruction (Skilbeck, 1976). The first step, situation analysis, helps to identify the local needs of community people as well as the exact situation of curricular demands at the school level. Skilbeck recognizes the context aspect as a name situation analysis in the curriculum development process.

In situation analysis, the curriculum developer must consider the external factors such as national and local contexts. As well, the internal factors such as budget, resources, facilities, staff, and students also need to be considered while planning for curriculum development at the school level (Print, 1993; Skilbeck, 1976). In addition to this, if we are going to develop the school-based curriculum, the three important characteristics need to be considered while making the contextual curriculum. These characteristics are such as a) the presence of curriculum development activities at a school, b) the existence of collective efforts of school members in developing, implementing, and evaluating the school curriculum, and c) the appearance of institutionalized change in administrative rights and professional authority for managing their own curriculum (Akrom, 2015). This situational model is helpful in making a contextual curriculum considering the cultural, social, political, and economic environment of the local context. Specifically, teachers are actual actors in curriculum planning and implementation. Thus, teachers get the opportunities to innovate the teaching methods, assessment process, and learning resources at school. Similarly, it encourages the teachers to demonstrate their creativity and innovation. Along with this, students may receive varying quality education due to the varied standards of schools (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). In addition to this, if we provide the professional development training to the teachers continuously, this model becomes more useful in making a contextual curriculum at the school level. However, teachers need to have adequate curriculum design skills for better implementation of this model at school (Print, 1993). Likewise, it does not provide a clear structure for curriculum development. For this reason, teachers have a little more confusion while developing the curriculum. This model is strongly relevant to address the needs of a diverse society like Nepal. Along with this approach, it promotes the local knowledge and cultures, recognizing the sociocultural diversities through community participation. However, if all schools are adequately resourced and teachers are

skillful in curriculum design, this school-based curriculum development approach will be effective. Without prior professional competencies in curriculum development and design, the practical application of this model remains challenging.

The above discussion clear that each approach to curriculum development presents different key assumptions for curriculum development. The nature, central focus, roles, and steps for curriculum development have been summarized in the table below.

Table 1

Comparative Picture of Tyler, Taba, and Skilbeck Model

Bases	Tyler Model	Taba Model	Skilbeck Model
Models type	Administrative/ Production model	Grassroots models	Participatory model
Primary Role	Experts	Teachers	Teachers
Process	Top-down, Sequential, Linear	Bottom up, Participatory, Sequential, Linear	Contextual, Adaptive, Non-Linear
Approach	Centralized	Decentralized	School-based
Nature	Deductive, Rigid	Inductive, Rigid	Democratic, Flexible
Steps/ Components	✓ Formulation of objectives ✓ Selecting learning experience ✓ Organizing learning experience ✓ Evaluation	✓ Diagnosis of needs ✓ Formulation of objectives ✓ Selection of contents ✓ Organization of contents ✓ Selection of learning experiences ✓ Organization of learning experiences ✓ Evaluation	✓ Situation analysis ✓ Goal formulation ✓ Program building ✓ Interpretation and implementation ✓ Monitoring feedback and assessment
Focus	Objective and measurable outcomes	Teachers' involvement	Social needs and Local contexts

The Tyler and Taba models prefer the linear-standard-driven process, whereas Skilbeck refers to the nonlinear-driven activity for curriculum development. Both Tyler and Taba believe in the modernist framework that focuses on the linear, scientific, and sequential process of curriculum development (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Students receive the opportunity to get the same education through Tyler's centralized curriculum development tradition. At present, this centralized practice has strengthened the standardized assessment process through the use of high-stakes testing (Cheng, 2021). Although the school-based model is appropriate for developing a contextual curriculum considering the local geography, cultures, and occupations,

this model is appropriate to cover the local situations or contexts. It ensures the teachers' participation in curriculum development while taking the accountability of social expectations. Wither (2000) argues that teachers feel more comfortable, enjoy, are energized, and are more creative in this non-linear fashion. Therefore, teachers and curriculum developers are free to choose both these linear-standard-driven and nonlinear-activity-driven curriculum models. In the context of Nepal, the higher education policy still does not explicitly specify the theoretical foundations of curriculum design and the development process. However, the National Curriculum Framework-2019 has offered comparatively clear theoretical bases as well as procedural guidance to curriculum development for school education. This framework is more aligned with the Tyler model, which provides the space for curriculum design to the central authority. On the other hand, this framework also provides little space at the local level for local curriculum development. This local curriculum reflects the basic tenets of the Taba model, which aims to ensure local participation, content, and needs in a decentralized frame (Curriculum Development Center, 2019b).

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of curriculum development approaches indicates that the curriculum development models are different in terms of assumptions, curriculum development process, decision-making power, and curricular elements. The Tyler scientific model is appropriate for developing a uniform curriculum and relies on the prominent role of the subject expert, while Taba encourages teacher participation at the grassroots level within the decentralized frame. The central authority is more responsible for developing the curriculum in the Tyler model, whereas the decentralized bodies have the power to make decisions on curricular activities in the Taba model. In addition, both prefer the technical scientific process for curriculum development in a linear or sequential fashion. On the other hand, Skilbeck's school-based curriculum development approach prefers a flexible, democratic, and non-technical process for curriculum development. This model is more suitable for developing contextual curriculum in schools. The curriculum developers can use these models according to their underlying philosophical domination of the government's policies. Therefore, the Tyler model is more suitable for standardized and nationwide curriculum development, emphasizing the expected learning competencies and subsequent assessment of student achievement against those benchmarks.

Conversely, the Taba model is more appropriate when curriculum design requires the bottom-up planning process under the leadership of teachers. Moreover, the Skilbeck model offers a contextual framework considering the sociocultural diversities and community participation. Nevertheless, this theoretical article remains constrained due to the lack of empirical validation. For the extension of these models, future studies should be conducted using the field-based data.

Implications

This paper suggests the theoretical base to plan and design the curriculum for educators and teachers. If the curriculum developers are going to design a uniform curriculum for all, they can adopt Tyler's linear fashion. However, Taba's decentralized model is useful for teachers to make decisions at the grassroots level. The Taba model allocates power to teachers in curriculum planning. These both suggest the scientific process for curriculum development in which curriculum developers should follow the step-by-step procedures. On the other hand, the school-based curriculum development approach is applicable to develop the contextual curriculum through a flexible process. Along with schools, there are more responsible agencies to cover up the societal exceptions and schools' realities. Hence, the Taba and Skilbeck models are useful to enhance the teachers' professional skills through curriculum-related activities.

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