

Theory & Theory Building

In the Curriculum Field

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Clarify Terms

- Curriculum
 - A document
 - A system of producing and implementing
 - A field of study
 - ? Input?

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Definitions of Theory

- Unifying statements
- Universal principles
- Predictive statements
 - Beauchamp, p. 10
- ?Input? From our discussions

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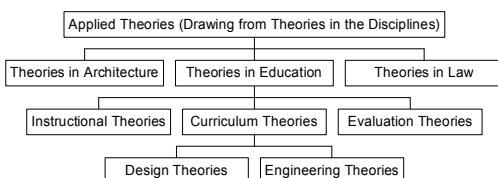
A Definition

- “A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena.”
 - Kerlinger, 1973 as cited in Beauchamp, p. 13

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Where Curriculum Theory Fits

Curriculum Theory in Perspective



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Think-Pair-Share

- Do you agree with Beauchamp's schema for curriculum theory as a sub-system of educational theory? Why or why not?

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Structural Elements of a Theory

- Terms
 - General language
 - Basic concepts
 - Theoretical constructs
- Statements
 - Facts
 - Definitions
 - Propositions
 - Assumptions
- Graphic Representations
 - Adapted from Beauchamp, pp. 14-16

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Definitions of Statement Types

- Fact
 - Known by observation
- Definition
 - Formal statement of meaning
- Proposition
 - Affirming or denying something
- Assumption
 - Identification of philosophical beliefs

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Possible Sources for Statements

- Personal experience
- Structured observation
- Philosophical positions
- Educational research
- Other related theories
- Other related research

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Functions of Theory

- Describe*
 - Give an account of something^
- Explain*
 - Account for something^
- Predict*
 - Account for something^
 - *O'Connor, cited in Beauchamp, p. 16
 - ^Fiegl, cited in Beauchamp, p. 18

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A Suggested Process

- Look at the obvious first
- State the obvious in its full generality
- Talk about one thing at a time
- Talk about a minimum number of things
- Don't stop talking until you have finished
- Embrace abstraction
 - Adapted from Beauchamp, p. 19

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Let's Practice

- First identify your focus area (or use Classroom Climate)
- 1. Look at the obvious
 - Identify your personal beliefs from your experience
- 2. State this in general terms

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Practice Continued

3. One thing at a time
 - Do any terms need defining yet?
4. Minimal number of items
 - Can you combine some of your ideas or statements?
5. Is it complete?
6. Is it abstract?

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Theorizing Activities

- Defining
- Classifying
- Inducing & Deducing
- Inferring & Predicting & Testing
- Developing Models
- Forming Sub-theories

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To Consider . . .

- Inference, prediction and research . . .
Implied in these processes is a movement from hunch, or assumption, to generalization based on some evidence (postulates), to deductions from the postulates, to hypotheses to be researched for purposes to stating laws that improve explanation of the set of events. The quality of theorizing is a function of the precision with which the theorist uses these processes.

– Beauchamp, p. 25

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