



Qualitative Approaches to Key Persons' Views of Curriculum-

Introduction

Konstantin Bähr, Anna-Verena Fries

We are pleased to offer you a general idea of the qualitative study of our project. For reasons of time we limit this insight to the topic of the *Introduction of new curricula*. We will show you what is meant when there is talk about introducing a curriculum.

For this symposium, we have analyzed more closely 7 out of the 56 interviews on curriculum-making. The conversations centered mainly around the issue of introducing a curriculum. You will find an overview about curriculum introduction in Switzerland at the end of this paper.

Data Sources: We are basing our observations on four data sources: In the first place, the texts of the transcribed interviews we had conducted last year; then a process documentation of curriculum-making in the 7 cantons which have been analyzed; a comparison of the curricula, and finally, our own knowledge in this field, both of us being involved in curriculum-making in the canton of Zurich.

An Access: Ethnographical Semantics

Ethnographical semantics as a procedure is oriented towards milieu analysis. However, it does also include the possibility of text-analysis which is based on the written text, or more exact, on written-down observations. In the research presented here, I proceeded in such a way that I took the core of ethnographic semantics, i.e. textual analysis or the so-called domain-analysis, I isolated it from the overall milieu-oriented methodology and used it for textual interpretation.

I would like to describe briefly, what I mean by domain analysis and how it is done: domain analysis aims at the reconstruction of meaning. The reconstruction of meaning takes place by reconstructing the relation between terms. Or, in other words: when doing domain analysis, one has to find out which terms are connected to other terms or associated with other terms, and how.



Let us take a sentence. Let us assume that there are two terms in it. We will be interested in both. We are further interested in the question, whether the two are somehow related. We would like to know how they are linked to each other, or, which is the type of semantic relationship that defines them. Let us say, for example, that {term 1} {is a characteristic of} {term 2}. Here, "is a characteristic of" describes the semantic relationship. We call term 1 an <included term> and term 2 a <cover term>. If term 2 is characterized by a further term 1', we will then have a bigger unity made up from two included terms (1 and 1'), one semantic relationship and one cover term (2). Such bigger unities are called domaines.

As I should like to add, domain analysis starts from the assumption, that a semantic relationship can be defined as one out of a set of nine possible relationships (they are listed below):

NR	RELATIONSHIP	FORM
1	Strict inclusion	X is a kind of Y
2	Spatial	X is a place in Y X is a part of Y
3	Cause-effect	X is a result of Y
4	Rationale	X is a reason for doing Y
5	Location-for-action	X is a place for doing Y
6	Function	X is used for Y
7	Means-end	X is a way to do Y
8	Sequence	X is a step (stage) in Y
9	Attribution of Y	X is an attribution (characteristic)

I give you an example: an informant who had been involved in the writing of curricula, was asked what he thought, was the meaning and purpose of the curriculum. When speaking about the functions of the curriculum, he used, among others, the following clauses: "define yearly aims ... define intersections between subjects... the curriculum has to list up the minimum standards a pupil should fulfil in one subject." The following domain tries to characterize the functions of the curriculum by interpreting the chain of argument the informant produced:

Figure 1. The-Functions-of-the-Curriculum-Domaine [Attribution]



<i>Included Terms</i>	<i>Semantic Relationship</i>	<i>Cover Term</i>
define yearly aims		
to list up the minimum standards a pupil should fulfil in one subject	is an characteristic of	what a curriculum has to do
define intersections between subjects		



Curriculum-Introduction in Switzerland

I would now like to draw your attention to some peculiarities in the introduction of curricula in the cantons we analyzed.

Figure 2. Concerning the Objects of Introduction, i.e. the Curricula

Aspect	Possible version
Curriculum type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum for compulsory schooling • Subject-centered curriculum
Curriculum status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test version • Final version
Function of curriculum-introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum-introduction in a narrow sense • Testing of a curriculum • School development with a curriculum • Training in a special subject • Imparting information through new teaching materials
Status of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory • Optional • Mixed

Curriculum Type

The cantons A and B have developed curricula valid for all levels, grades and subjects and with a uniform structure. I call them curricula for compulsory schooling. In the other cantons, there is a separate curriculum for every subject. It sometimes happens that traditional subjects are integrated into a new special subject; biology, chemistry and physics, for instance, are put together into one „subject“ called general science.

Curriculum Status

We observe that most of the curricula are not yet definitely in force at the moment of their introduction. They are valid for a trial period whose duration is determined beforehand in some cases, in others not. The putting into force of these provisional curricula at a later stage depends on the experience made during the trial period and the subsequent evaluation. Sometimes you



already notice the provisional character of a curriculum by looking at it: In the canton D, for instance, the document consists of just some photocopies.

Function of the Curriculum-Introduction

In our research we have made the following observations: Unlike what the notion curriculum-introduction suggests, what really happens nowadays under this heading goes much further. Curriculum-introductions take place under the sign of application and simultaneous evaluation. Besides the actual introduction, test runs of curricula are carried out simultaneously. Curricula for compulsory schooling are implicitly or explicitly used for advancing school development; the teachers are encouraged to collaborate, they elaborate school plans, etc. The introduction to new subject-centered curricula provides the occasion for making up for professional deficits of teachers or preparing them in the first place for teaching a particular subject. Moreover, during curriculum-introduction information is given about new teaching aids, teaching forms and instructional materials.

Status of Participation

The cantons have different practices regarding the status of participation in events of curriculum-introduction. Most introductions are compulsory for all the teachers. In exceptional cases, teachers can decide themselves whether or not they would like to participate. Sometimes there are mixed forms, the teachers have to participate in part of the event, the rest is optional.



Experience in Curriculum-Introduction

I shall now try to present a few shortcuts through some interviews. They were given by people who had the task to introduce a new curriculum. I tried to find answers to the following questions from this material: What experiences did people make? How did the ideas of the interviewees change after they had introduced the curriculum?

In the case of person Nr. 1 you can feel his frustration at the fact, that, as he sees it as a professional, the curriculum had not been introduced at all, but had simply been mailed to everybody.

Person Nr. 2 stresses that future workshops dealing with the introduction of the curriculum should be noncompulsory. As the workshops he gave were compulsory, this gave reason for conflict.

Person Nr. 3 shows emotional distance to the curriculum which she had introduced together with other colleagues. Nr. 3 is enthusiastic about the idea of a future frame-curriculum. As a positive consequence of this frame-curriculum-to-be, she develops the following scenario "organize individual curriculum work together with the schools" (DS 888)", "include the basis (i.e. the teachers) in the schools" (DS 893), "the communities work together at those themes, which they want to actively develop" (DS 889).

Figure 3. The-Frame-Curriculum-Domaine [Cause-effect]

<i>Included Terms</i>	<i>Semantic Relationship</i>	<i>Cover Term</i>
include the basis (i.e. the teachers) in the schools		
organize individual curriculum work together with the schools	is a result of	frame-curriculum
the communities work together at those themes, which they want to actively develop		

Person Nr 4 tried to change the first session of the compulsory training course she had to give. She did not want a plenary session fraught with theory which would have made the compulsory character of the event all too clear. When the course session was newly defined as a demonstration of



collective feelings of the type "we are all part of this", she agreed. The results were sobering. Person Nr. 4 defined "free choice" as a characteristics of future introductory courses to the curriculum (DS 1286). "I do not think that one can reach people who are being compelled as much as those are" (DS 1323).

Person Nr.5 rejects voluntary attendance at the curriculum introduction. He thinks that "if you let people choose, we will have only those taking the course who don't need it anyway "(DS 1255). His attitude is probably a result of his position: he is representative of the subject he teaches as well as head of the curriculum-introduction. In his opinion, attendance at the curriculum introduction has to be compulsory "otherwise you have a whole range of people who will never have even set eyes on the curriculum" (DS 1276).

Person Nr. 6 plans an in-service introduction to the curriculum that will be non-compulsory. One of his reasons is that "teachers should select in-service training in fields where they feel they have a defizit" (DS 1229). This procedure, however, could only be established by convincing people. In the beginning, the crew singled out for the introduction of the curriculum was confronted with typical administrative thinking, which expressed itself in the sentence: "If everybody has to work with this curriculum, then everybody will have to be introduced to it, don't they? (DS 1212). But "we did not want that" (DS 1214). Because a lot of negative experience had been collected in earlier courses of a similar type, which had been compulsory, this time the in-service trainers wanted course attendance to be voluntary: "People used to block whole course groups" (DS 1217), and: "People had long discussions and ...went on and on about how they were being forced into this" (DS 1219). The introduction to this curriculum will thus be non-compulsory for the teachers. Person Nr. 6 called the first of the voluntary participants in these courses "big freaks" (DS 1185). The organizers hope that the word will go round and that course will advertise itself. "When everything is over, you go and give to those who have not yet been to a course an introduction of one or two days." (DS 1222, quotation slightly changed).

In the case of person Nr. 7 the training is again compulsory and soon - i.e. (that is) with the participants of the second training group - problems will emerge how to motivate the people taking the course.

Matter for Conflict: The Temporary Status of Curricula



So we observe that educational authorities do not provide ready-made, definitely approved and, therefore, clearly binding curricula. As a result, curriculum-introduction creates specific areas of tension and conflicts. I claim now that the provisional status of a curriculum to be introduced has the effect of involving all the participants in the discourse on the new curriculum. This means that they identify themselves with this curriculum and comply with the directions. Let me explain this a bit more.

The document you received shows that of the six curricula which were introduced, one was not available at the time of introduction, six of them were trial versions, and only one was already the final version. Curricula represent rules issued by educational authorities. Most of the time, they have the legal status of regulations. Normally, no administration introduces a regulation by way of trial; rather, it is elaborated by the responsible authority, put into force and then becomes mandatory. Therefore, by introducing trial versions of curricula, the educational authorities issue a kind of „provisional regulations“ which is a contradiction in itself and raises the question as to whether or not this regulation is binding?

The introduction of such provisional curricula constitutes an area of tension to which all those are most exposed who are responsible for introducing it. Usually, the educational authorities are the mandator, those who then fulfill the mandate are the cantonal institutions for the further training of teachers, teachers who have been relieved of teaching duties or teachers on leave. Tensions and conflicts arise between the educational authority and the further training of teachers, but they can also be felt within the teams charged with introducing the curriculum, or they appear directly between the further training of teachers and a school.

For instance, in the case of canton A, where the curriculum was not available at the time of its introduction, the tension was manifested between the educational authority and the further training of teachers. As the further training of teachers charged with introducing the curriculum could not fulfill the mandate of the educational authority and a way of cooperating could not be found, the person in charge simply changed the mandate: Instead of speaking about *curriculum-introduction*, it was now called an *approach to the curriculum*. This meant that in this canton - contrary to what the educational authority declared publicly - there was no introduction to the new curriculum.



The teachers examined the basic principles of the new curriculum, but never the real document.

There is not doubt that regarding curriculum-intro-duction, there is a basic antagonism between educational authority and further training of teachers. An educational authority works on the principle that the curriculum is compulsory. (In Zurich, for instance, the trial version of the curriculum explicitly says: *The curriculum is compulsory.*) Looking at it from the authority's point of view, all teachers affected by the changes must participate in the introduction of a curriculum, the curriculum-intro-duction is compulsory.

Opposed to this is the standpoint of the further training of teachers. For them, the crux of the matter is not the role of the curriculum as an instrument of regulation, but rather its educational potential. During a curriculum-introduction teachers shall be trained or continue their training, this can take place through working with the curriculum or with a special subject or collaborating with each other. The basis of this educational logic - which corresponds to the spirit of time - lies in the conviction that learning cannot be ordered from above. That is why the teachers must be able to decide whether nor not they want to participate in a curriculum-introduction.

The antagonism between administrative and educational logic intensifies when the curriculum to be introduced is considered to be a provisional regulation. The provisional character of the curriculum and the question: Is it binding or not? pass on to the events themselves. The question arises as to whether teachers *have to* take part in the introduction of a new, still provisional curriculum or whether they *can* take part. Can the educational authority oblige the teachers to participate or does it have to declare it optional?

In the interviews, the representatives of teachers' training reason within the framework of an educational logic. What strikes one about this is how vehemently they call for an optional participation in curriculum-intro-duction. I interpret this attitude - which in the final analysis questions the binding character of a curriculum - as being a possible answer to the fact that provisional curricula are but documents which simply are not yet what they once will be.

Since the educational authority is the mandator, it will in the end decide whether a curriculum-introduction is compulsory or optional. Looking at the 6



examples, we observe that the *administrative logic* has prevailed in all but one.

In this context, the refusal of one school to submit to the compulsory introduction of a curriculum is quite revealing. Neither the further training of teachers charged with the mandate nor the educational authority itself has been able to impose itself. The procedure petered out and in that particular school, the curriculum has not been introduced. There is much reason to believe that the curriculum being only a trial version played a decisive role in the educational authority's not having sufficient power to assert itself and oblige the school to introduce the curriculum.

The fact that many curricula have only provisional status at the moment of their introduction and that this quite obviously creates particular problems, calls for an explanation. I evolve the following thesis: The provisional introduction of a curriculum leads to a particularly strong identification on the part of all those who are charged with introducing and testing it. This coincides with a reflection of Rudolf Künzli who says that the educational effect of visions is stronger than the binding effect of regulations.

A provisional curriculum released for testing implies that it can be changed and formed. It gives the users the impression that by applying and examining it, they are participating in its development. They feel that in this way their vision of schooling is incorporated into these regulations and that they are not just the executors of instructions, but themselves producers. Hence, the commitment to the curriculum is much stronger than in the case of a curriculum which is put into force, sent to the teachers and then gets lost in the daily flood of papers.

Types of change

Summing up the results we can say that till now we have met only detailed curricula and two different types of introductory training for their implementation: one of them is compulsory, the other is not. But next time the trainers want to do it differently. From the material I construct two main types of change envisioned by the interviewees:

- Type A: The next curriculum will be produced by similar methods like this one. The introductory courses to the curriculum, however, will not be compulsory, but will only be offered to those interested. Also, they will preferably be school-based.



- Type B: Some of the interviewees have already done with categories such as "course" and "introduction", these are, to their thinking, obsolete. The German word *Einführung* (introduction) has a rather mechanistic touch anyway. These persons would like to initiate a discourse on school and education on the basis of a frame-curriculum. They see their future task in supporting teachers who write their own curriculum, a practice that would exclusively take place in individual schools.

Figure 4. The-Curriculum-Implementation-Domaine [Means-end]

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
to get across the philosophy of the curriculum in the schools over many years		
to let people grow up with the philosophy of the curriculum	is a way to	implement a curriculum
to let the curriculum be the matter one had always stood up for anyway		



Bibliography

- Ekholm, M. & Trier, U.P.: The concept of institutionalization: some remarks, in: Miles, M.B., Ekholm, M., Vandenberghe, R. (Hrsg.), *Lasting School Improvement: Exploring the Process of Institutionalization*, ISIP-Book, No. 5, Leuven/Amersfoort: Acco 1987, S. 13–21.
- Glaser, B. G.; Strauss, A. L.: *Die Entdeckung gegenstandsbezogener Theorie: Eine Grundstrategie qualitativer Sozialforschung*. In: Ch. Hopf und E. Weingarten [Hrsg.]: *Qualitative Sozialforschung*. Stuttgart 1979, S. 91-111.
- Honer, A.: *Lebensweltliche Ethnographie: Ein explorativ-interpretativer Forschungsansatz am Beispiel von Heimwerker-Wissen*. Wiesbaden: 1993.
- Kindt, W.: *Organisationsformen des Argumentierens in natürlicher Sprache*. In: Paschen, H., Wigger, L. [Hrsg.]: *Pädagogisches Argumentieren*. Weinheim 1992b, S. 95–120.
- Maeder, Ch.: *In totaler Gesellschaft: Eine ethnographische Untersuchung zum offenen Strafvollzug*. Bamberg: 1995.
- Maeder, Ch.; Brosziewski, A.: *Ethnographische Semantik: Ein Weg zum Verstehen von Zugehörigkeit*. In: R. Hitzler und A. Honer [Hrsg.]: *Sozialwissenschaftliche Hermeneutik*. Stuttgart 1997.
- Paschen, H., Wigger, L.: *Zur Analyse pädagogischer Argumentationen – Bericht des Forschungsprojekts „Bielefelder Katalog pädagogischer Argumente“*. Weinheim 1992a.
- Paschen, H., Wigger, L. [Hrsg.]: *Pädagogisches Argumentieren*. Weinheim 1992b.
- Patzelt, W. J.: *Grundlagen der Ethnomethodologie*. München 1987.
- Spradley, J. P.: *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York 1979.
- Spradley, J. P.: *Participant Observation*. New York 1980.
- Soeffner, H.-G.: *Überlegungen zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik am Beispiel der Interpretation eines Textausschnittes aus einem „freien“ Interview*. In: Th. Heinze, H.-W. Klusemann, H.-G. Soeffner [Hrsg.]: *Interpretationen einer Bildungsgeschichte: Überlegungen zur Sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik*. Bensheim 1980, S. 70-96.
- Strauss, A. L.: *Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung*. München 1994.