

## Publication Review

Kerry J Kennedy  
University College of Southern Queensland

C. McBeath. *Curriculum Decision Making in TAFE*. 2nd Edition. Perth:  
Australian Society for Educational Technology WA Chapter, 1991, 118pp.  
<http://education.curtin.edu.au/pubs/cdmt/home.htm>  
[now at <http://www.clare-mcbeath.id.au/cdmt/home.html>]

It is good to see a second edition of this book for it has a great deal to teach curriculum developers. Among the more important lessons are:

- Curriculum development is a humanistic rather than a technical enterprise. No single model can remove the importance of judgement and professional insight when it comes to making key curriculum development decisions.
- Curriculum development decisions take place in a social, political and economic context. This context may very often determine both the process and the product of curriculum development.
- Curriculum development decisions are more often than not decisions about shared values.

These lessons are not simply a priori assertions by the author. They emerge from an empirical study of curriculum development teams in action. They are grounded in the reality of what curriculum developers actually do and therefore they deserve some attention.

Curriculum development, as advocated by the TAFE sector, seems largely to be technical/rationalist in its orientation. Such approaches assume that simple prescriptions can capture the essence of the curriculum development process. A good example is the Instructional Systems Model which provide thirteen steps that take developers from the initial analysis

through to the validation phase. McBeath's study demonstrates, however, that in the real world developers adopt the parts of the model that suit them, they reject those parts that do not and they improvise when their own intuition tells them to do so.

---

*The methods of science are too restrictive to assist us in  
the understanding of education*

---

It may be, as Elliot Eisner proposed, that we need to look at educational phenomena from an artistic rather than a scientific perspective. The methods of science are too restrictive to assist us in the understanding of education. They impose restrictions unnecessary to human thinking and are designed simply to impose order on an essentially chaotic world. An artistic perspective, on the other hand, illuminates and takes seriously the unpredictable and the unforeseen. The artist portrays the world through his/ her own value system and through unique insights into the human condition. McBeath's description of what curriculum developers actually do lends weight to Eisner's position. The curriculum developer as artist seems like a theme that might be worth exploring in subsequent work of this nature.

I hope that there will be more empirically based curriculum research such as McBeath has produced here. As educators, we need to turn from *a priori* theory building. We need to focus our attention on what Shulman has called 'the wisdom of the practice'. In this way, theory will emerge from practice, grounded in reality and capable of being tested again in other contexts. McBeath has demonstrated the worthwhileness of such an approach and it is to be hoped that she continues such efforts.

**Please cite as:** Kennedy, K. J. (1991). Review of "Curriculum Decision Making in TAFE", 2nd Edition. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 7(2), 164-165. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet7/kennedy.html>