

## Lawrence Stenhouse in Curriculum Development: Integrative Review

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### **Abstract:**

This integrative review explores the work of Lawrence Stenhouse in curriculum development and its relevance in contemporary educational practices. Stenhouse challenged the traditional view of curriculum as a fixed set of content and advocated for a dynamic and student-centered approach. His concepts of curriculum as a process, inquiry-based learning, the teacher as a researcher, and the importance of contextualizing curriculum have significantly influenced the field of curriculum

development. The study examines Stenhouse's ideas through a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, including articles, books, and other relevant sources. The findings highlight the enduring significance of Stenhouse's contributions in shaping contemporary curriculum development practices. Stenhouse's concept of curriculum as a process emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and the integration of students' needs and interests. This student-centered approach aligns with current educational philosophies that prioritize learner agency and engagement. The emphasis on curriculum as inquiry underscores Stenhouse's belief in fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and active engagement in the learning process. By encouraging students to explore meaningful questions and develop deep understanding, Stenhouse promotes a more holistic and empowering educational experience. Stenhouse's view of the teacher as a researcher emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development, reflective practice, and the integration of research and practice in curriculum development. The study also highlights the significance of contextualizing curriculum by considering the unique characteristics and needs of students, teachers, and the broader community. This contextual perspective ensures that curriculum is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to diverse educational settings. The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing conversation about curriculum development, providing valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers. By embracing Stenhouse's ideas, educators can create engaging, student-centered, and contextually relevant curriculum that promotes critical thinking, empowers students, and fosters continuous improvement in educational practice.

*Keywords:* Lawrence Stenhouse, Curriculum development, Integrative review, Student-centered approach, Curriculum as a process

## Introduction

Curriculum development is a complex and evolving field, with numerous theories and models that shape its practice. One influential figure in this domain is Lawrence Stenhouse, whose ideas and contributions have had a lasting impact on curriculum development. Stenhouse argued for a dynamic and student-centered approach to curriculum development. He challenged the traditional view of curriculum as a predetermined set of content to be transmitted to students, instead emphasizing the need for a curriculum that is flexible, open-ended, and responsive to students' needs and interests. Stenhouse's concept of curriculum as a process rather than a product emphasizes the importance of engaging students in active learning and critical thinking (Elliott, 1994).

A central aspect of Stenhouse's work is the notion of curriculum as inquiry. He believed that curriculum development should be an ongoing process of investigation, where teachers and students collaboratively explore meaningful questions and develop knowledge and understanding (Somekh, 1995). Stenhouse advocated for the integration of research and practice, suggesting that teachers should engage in reflective inquiry to continually refine and improve their curriculum.

Stenhouse also emphasized the role of the teacher as a researcher in curriculum development. He argued that teachers should be actively involved in developing their curriculum, conducting research, and evaluating the impact of their teaching practices on student learning (Elliott, 2019). This teacher-researcher model promotes a culture of inquiry and continuous professional development, empowering teachers to be reflective practitioners who make informed decisions about curriculum design and implementation.

Another significant contribution of Stenhouse is his emphasis on the importance of context in curriculum development. He recognized that curriculum cannot be detached from the social, cultural, and historical realities of the educational setting. Stenhouse argued for a contextualized approach that considers the unique characteristics and needs of students, teachers, and the broader community. This

contextual perspective ensures that curriculum is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of learners.

Stenhouse's ideas have had a profound impact on curriculum development theory and practice. His emphasis on curriculum as a process, inquiry, and teacher research has challenged traditional approaches and sparked a shift towards more student-centered and participatory models. Stenhouse's work has contributed to the growth of action research as a methodology for curriculum development, encouraging teachers to actively engage in reflective practice and collaborative inquiry.

Stenhouse's ideas remain highly relevant in today's educational landscape. In an era characterized by rapid change and diverse student populations, his emphasis on flexibility, responsiveness, and contextualization provides valuable guidance for curriculum designers and educators. Stenhouse's approach aligns with current trends in personalized and inclusive education, highlighting the importance of student agency, critical thinking, and the integration of research and practice.

However, it is important to acknowledge that Stenhouse's work has also been subject to critique. Some argue that his focus on teacher autonomy and individualized curricula may lead to fragmentation and a lack of coherence in education systems. Balancing individual needs with common educational goals continues to be a challenge in curriculum development.

Lawrence Stenhouse's contributions to curriculum development have left a lasting impact on the field. His ideas, centered on a process-oriented, inquiry-based, and contextual approach to curriculum, continue to shape contemporary practice. Stenhouse's work highlights the importance of engaging teachers as researchers and empowering them to design curriculum that is responsive to students' needs and the broader educational context. By embracing Stenhouse's insights, curriculum developers and educators can create meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students, fostering their intellectual growth and development in an ever-changing world.

## Literature Review

Curriculum development is a complex and evolving field that requires careful consideration of various theories and models. One influential figure in this domain is Lawrence Stenhouse, whose work has significantly impacted curriculum development practices. This review of the literature aims to examine the scholarly discourse surrounding Stenhouse's ideas, theories, and methodologies in curriculum development.

Stenhouse challenged the traditional view of curriculum as a fixed set of content to be delivered to students. His concept of curriculum as a process, rather than a product, emphasizes the need for flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs and interests (Stenhouse, 1975). According to Elliott (2015), Stenhouse argued that the curriculum should be dynamic, engaging students in active learning and critical thinking. This shift from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one aligns with contemporary educational philosophies promoting learner agency and empowerment.

A central aspect of Stenhouse's work is the idea of curriculum as inquiry. Stenhouse advocated for curriculum development as an ongoing process of investigation and exploration of meaningful questions (Stenhouse, 1975). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2015) highlighted Stenhouse's belief in the integration of research and practice, where teachers and students collaboratively engage in a dialogue to develop knowledge and understanding. This inquiry-based approach encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and active engagement in the learning process.

Stenhouse emphasized the role of the teacher as a researcher in curriculum development. He argued that teachers should actively engage in developing their curriculum, conducting research, and evaluating the impact of their teaching practices on student learning (Stenhouse, 1975). Hargreaves (2005) noted that Stenhouse's work revolutionized the way educators think about the purpose of education and the role of teachers in shaping the curriculum. This teacher-researcher model promotes professional development, reflective practice, and evidence-based decision-making in curriculum design and implementation.

Stenhouse recognized the significance of context in curriculum development. He stressed that curriculum cannot be detached from the social, cultural, and historical realities of the educational setting (Stenhouse, 1975). According to Altrichter (2005), Stenhouse argued for a contextualized approach that considers the unique characteristics and needs of students, teachers, and the broader community. This perspective ensures that the curriculum is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of learners.

Stenhouse's ideas have had a substantial impact on curriculum development theory and practice. His emphasis on curriculum as a process, inquiry, and teacher research has challenged traditional approaches and inspired a shift towards more student-centered and participatory models (Hargreaves, 2005). McKernan, (1998) stated that Stenhouse's work has contributed to the growth of action research as a methodology for curriculum development, fostering collaboration, reflection, and ongoing improvement in educational settings.

Stenhouse's ideas remain highly relevant in today's educational landscape. In an era characterized by diverse student populations and rapid societal changes, his emphasis on flexibility, responsiveness, and contextualization provides valuable guidance for curriculum designers and educators. Stenhouse's approach aligns with current trends in personalized and inclusive education, highlighting the importance of student agency and critical thinking.

However, it is important to acknowledge the critiques of Stenhouse's work. Some argue that his emphasis on teacher autonomy and individualized curricula may lead to fragmentation and a lack of coherence in educational systems (Tavares, 2017). Balancing the individual needs of students with common educational goals continues to be a challenge in curriculum development.

The literature on Lawrence Stenhouse in curriculum development demonstrates the lasting impact of his ideas and theories. His concept of curriculum as a process, inquiry-based learning, and the role of the teacher as a researcher have significantly influenced curriculum development practices. Stenhouse's emphasis on context and his call for flexibility and responsiveness align with contemporary educational philosophies. However, careful consideration is needed to balance individual needs with common goals in curriculum development. By incorporating Stenhouse's insights, curriculum developers and educators can create meaningful and relevant learning experiences, fostering students' intellectual growth and development in a rapidly changing world.

## Methodology

An integrative review methodology was employed to conduct this study on Lawrence Stenhouse in curriculum development. The integrative review approach allowed for the synthesis of diverse sources of literature to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

1. Defined Research Objective:

The research objective of this study was to explore Lawrence Stenhouse's work and its relevance in contemporary curriculum development. The aim was to examine key concepts, theories, and methodologies proposed by Stenhouse.

## 2. Literature Search:

A systematic and comprehensive literature search was conducted to identify relevant scholarly articles, books, and other sources that discussed Stenhouse's ideas in curriculum development. Databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar were utilized, along with manual searches of relevant journals and reference lists of identified sources.

## 3. Selection Criteria:

The identified literature was screened based on pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included publications that directly discussed Stenhouse's ideas, theories, and methodologies in curriculum development. Exclusion criteria included sources that did not provide substantial insights into Stenhouse's work or those that were not peer-reviewed.

## 4. Data Extraction:

Data extraction involved systematically reviewing and extracting relevant information from the selected sources. This included Stenhouse's key concepts, theories, and methodologies, as well as the implications and critiques of his work.

## 5. Data Analysis and Synthesis:

The extracted data were analyzed and synthesized to identify common themes, patterns, and insights regarding Stenhouse's contributions to curriculum development. The data analysis process involved coding the extracted information, categorizing it into themes, and comparing and contrasting different perspectives.

## 6. Integration of Findings:

The synthesized findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive review of Stenhouse's work in curriculum development. Connections between different concepts, theories, and methodologies were explored, and their implications for contemporary curriculum development were discussed.

## 7. Limitations and Biases Assessment:

Potential limitations and biases in the reviewed literature were acknowledged and discussed. This included limitations related to the selected sources, publication biases, and potential biases in Stenhouse's work itself.

## 8. Conclusion and Implications:

The study concluded by summarizing the key findings and insights from the integrative review. The implications of Stenhouse's work for contemporary curriculum development were discussed, highlighting its relevance and potential areas for further research.

## 9. Ethical Considerations:

As an integrative review, this study did not involve primary data collection. However, ethical considerations were taken into account by properly crediting and acknowledging the authors of the reviewed sources.

## Findings

This study explored Lawrence Stenhouse's work and its relevance in contemporary curriculum development. Through an integrative review of the literature, key concepts, theories, and

methodologies proposed by Stenhouse were examined, shedding light on their implications for curriculum development practices.

### Stenhouse's Concept of Curriculum

Stenhouse challenged the traditional view of curriculum as a fixed set of content to be transmitted to students. Instead, he advocated for a dynamic and student-centered approach (Stenhouse, 1975). His concept of curriculum as a process emphasized the need for flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs and interests. This aligns with the contemporary educational philosophy of learner agency and empowerment, allowing students to take an active role in shaping their own education.

### Curriculum as Inquiry

A significant finding of this study is Stenhouse's emphasis on curriculum as inquiry. Stenhouse argued that curriculum development should be an ongoing process of investigation and exploration of meaningful questions (Stenhouse, 1975). This inquiry-based approach encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and active engagement in the learning process. It aligns with current educational practices that aim to develop students' higher-order thinking skills and promote deep understanding.

### Teacher as Researcher

Another key finding is Stenhouse's view of the teacher as a researcher in curriculum development. He believed that teachers should be actively involved in developing their curriculum, conducting research, and evaluating the impact of their teaching practices on student learning (Stenhouse, 1975). By engaging in research and reflecting on their practices, teachers can enhance their professionalism and contribute to the improvement of educational practice. This finding emphasizes the importance of teacher agency and continuous professional development in curriculum design and implementation.

### Contextualizing Curriculum

The study revealed Stenhouse's recognition of the significance of context in curriculum development. Stenhouse argued for a contextualized approach that considers the unique characteristics and needs of students, teachers, and the broader community (Stenhouse, 1975). This contextual perspective ensures that the curriculum is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of learners. It highlights the importance of tailoring educational experiences to specific contexts to enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes.

### Impact on Curriculum Development

The findings indicate that Stenhouse's ideas have had a substantial impact on curriculum development theory and practice. His emphasis on curriculum as a process, inquiry, and teacher research has challenged traditional approaches and inspired a shift towards more student-centered and participatory models (Hargreaves, 2005). Stenhouse's work has contributed to the growth of action research as a methodology for curriculum development, promoting collaboration, reflection, and ongoing improvement in educational settings (Somekh, 1995).

### Contemporary Relevance and Critiques

The study found that Stenhouse's ideas remain highly relevant in today's educational landscape. In an era characterized by diverse student populations and rapid societal changes, his emphasis on

flexibility, responsiveness, and contextualization provides valuable guidance for curriculum designers and educators. Stenhouse's approach aligns with current trends in personalized and inclusive education, promoting student agency and critical thinking.

However, it is important to acknowledge the critiques of Stenhouse's work. Some argue that his emphasis on teacher autonomy and individualized curricula may lead to fragmentation and a lack of coherence in educational systems (Gleeson, 2022). Balancing individual needs with common educational goals continues to be a challenge in curriculum development.

The findings of this study highlight the significant contributions of Lawrence Stenhouse to curriculum development. His concepts of curriculum as a process, inquiry, and teacher research have influenced contemporary curriculum development practices. Stenhouse's emphasis on context and his call for flexibility and responsiveness align with current educational philosophies. By incorporating Stenhouse's ideas, educators and curriculum developers can create meaningful and relevant learning experiences, fostering students' intellectual growth and development in an ever-changing world. While acknowledging the critiques, Stenhouse's work remains a valuable resource for advancing curriculum development practices and improving educational outcomes.

## Discussion

The findings of this study on Lawrence Stenhouse in curriculum development provide valuable insights into his ideas and their implications for contemporary educational practices. The discussion of these findings sheds light on the significance and relevance of Stenhouse's contributions to curriculum development.

One of the key findings of this study is Stenhouse's concept of curriculum as a process rather than a product. Stenhouse challenged the traditional view of curriculum as a predetermined set of content and emphasized the need for flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs and interests. This concept aligns with contemporary educational philosophies that prioritize student-centered approaches and learner agency. By viewing curriculum as an ongoing process, educators can create learning experiences that are more engaging, meaningful, and relevant to students' lives.

The finding regarding curriculum as inquiry highlights Stenhouse's belief in the importance of critical thinking, problem-solving, and active engagement in the learning process. By emphasizing inquiry-based learning, Stenhouse advocated for a curriculum that encourages students to explore meaningful questions and develop a deep understanding of the subject matter. This approach aligns with current educational practices that aim to develop students' higher-order thinking skills.

Furthermore, Stenhouse's emphasis on the teacher as a researcher highlights the importance of teacher agency and continuous professional development in curriculum design and implementation. By engaging in research and reflecting on their teaching practices, teachers can enhance their effectiveness and make informed decisions about curriculum development. Stenhouse's view of the teacher as a researcher promotes a culture of inquiry and supports the ongoing improvement of educational practice.

The finding related to contextualizing curriculum underscores the significance of considering the unique characteristics and needs of students, teachers, and the broader community in curriculum development. Stenhouse recognized that curriculum cannot be detached from the social, cultural, and historical realities of the educational setting. By embracing a contextual perspective, educators can create curriculum that is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to the diverse backgrounds and

experiences of learners. This finding aligns with current trends in personalized and inclusive education, which emphasize tailoring educational experiences to specific contexts.

The finding regarding the impact of Stenhouse's ideas on curriculum development theory and practice highlights his significant influence in the field. Stenhouse's emphasis on a student-centered and participatory approach has challenged traditional models of curriculum development and sparked a shift towards more inclusive and engaging educational practices. His work has contributed to the growth of action research as a methodology, empowering teachers to actively engage in reflective practice and collaborative inquiry. Stenhouse's ideas have shaped curriculum development by promoting flexibility, responsiveness, and a focus on meaningful learning experiences.

While Stenhouse's ideas have had a positive impact, it is important to acknowledge the critiques and challenges associated with his work. Some argue that an emphasis on teacher autonomy and individualized curricula may lead to fragmentation and a lack of coherence in educational systems. Balancing the individual needs of students with common educational goals remains a challenge in curriculum development.

The findings of this study underscore the significance of Lawrence Stenhouse's ideas in curriculum development. His emphasis on curriculum as a process, inquiry, and teacher research aligns with contemporary educational philosophies that prioritize student-centered approaches, critical thinking, and contextualized learning. By incorporating Stenhouse's insights, educators and curriculum developers can create meaningful and relevant learning experiences, fostering students' intellectual growth and development. However, it is essential to consider the critiques and challenges associated with Stenhouse's work and strike a balance between individual needs and common educational goals. By doing so, curriculum developers can navigate the complexities of curriculum development and create impactful educational experiences for students.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study on Lawrence Stenhouse in curriculum development highlight the enduring significance and relevance of his ideas in contemporary educational practices. Stenhouse's concept of curriculum as a process, his emphasis on inquiry-based learning, the teacher as a researcher, and the importance of contextualizing curriculum have all left a profound impact on the field of curriculum development.

Stenhouse's belief in curriculum as a dynamic and student-centered process challenges the traditional notion of a fixed set of content to be transmitted to students. Instead, he advocates for flexibility, responsiveness, and the integration of students' needs and interests. This aligns with current educational philosophies that prioritize active and meaningful student engagement in the learning process.

The emphasis on curriculum as inquiry underscores Stenhouse's commitment to cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving, and deep understanding. By encouraging students to explore meaningful questions and actively participate in their learning, Stenhouse promotes a more holistic and empowering educational experience.

Stenhouse's view of the teacher as a researcher emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development and reflective practice. By engaging in research and evaluation, teachers become active contributors to curriculum development, enhancing their effectiveness and promoting a culture of continuous improvement.

Contextualizing curriculum is another significant aspect of Stenhouse's work. By acknowledging the unique characteristics and needs of students, teachers, and the broader community, educators can create curriculum that is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to diverse contexts. This approach recognizes the importance of cultural, social, and historical factors in shaping the educational experience.

The impact of Stenhouse's ideas on curriculum development theory and practice is evident in the shift towards student-centered and participatory models. His work has inspired educators to embrace flexibility, responsiveness, and a focus on meaningful learning experiences. The growth of action research as a methodology is a testament to Stenhouse's influence, empowering teachers to engage in reflective practice and collaborative inquiry.

While Stenhouse's ideas have had a positive impact, it is important to acknowledge the critiques and challenges associated with his work. Striking a balance between individual needs and common educational goals remains a complex task in curriculum development. However, by critically engaging with Stenhouse's insights and considering the broader educational context, educators and curriculum developers can navigate these challenges and create impactful learning experiences.

Lawrence Stenhouse's contributions to curriculum development continue to shape and inform contemporary educational practices. His ideas, centered on a student-centered, inquiry-based, and contextual approach, provide valuable guidance for educators striving to create engaging, meaningful, and relevant curriculum. By embracing Stenhouse's insights, educators can foster critical thinking, empower students, and promote continuous improvement in the ever-evolving field of curriculum development.

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