Challenging the Current Curricula: A Look into Individualizing Teaching

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**Definition Of Mandated Curriculum**
- Researchers Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske (2002) state that a “complete curriculum specifies content, skills, or topics for teachers to cover; suggests a timeline; and incorporates a particular approach or offers institutional materials”
- Curriculum can either be the guide that publishers and those of higher authority give the teachers to teach their students, or can be developed by a teacher who designs a plan of how to teach specific subject matter to his or her students
- In this paper I use the term “curriculum” to refer to the method and the content students are taught under school guidance

**Research Question**
What affect does mandated curriculum have on teachers?

**Background**
**Historically:**
- Teachers had autonomy in the classroom (Ingersoll 2003)
- Though teachers had to follow certain education policies, traditionally the method of forming a curriculum was an interactive process

**Now:**
- Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002, many new demands have emerged
- To ensure teachers are meeting every standard, many schools are now enforcing mandated curricula whether it be through the state, district, or individual school

**Methodology**
- The research I found to support my topic was primarily from online search engines
- I started with Google Scholar as well as through the Ames Library catalog
- I used a variety of key terms in my search to find relevant articles, specifically literature review of ten peer reviewed articles from the last decade

**Findings**

**Positive:**
- Consistency
- Support system

One in five new teachers in the U.S. leave within their first three years of teaching (Olson, 2002, as cited in Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002, p. 292)

**Negative:**
- Deskilling
- Limited curriculum
- Implemented differently

Many teachers stated that they supplemented and modified their district’s mandated materials (Goldstein, 2008, p. 462). Teachers have also been known to “cherry-pick” the curriculum—“plucking out the activities and materials they liked and disregarding the rest” (Goldstein, 2008, p. 463)

**Conclusion**
- Teachers can be more effective teachers if given more discretion in the curriculum design and delivery
- This will require changes in teacher education programs and possibly even in acceptance criteria into those programs
- Short term, teacher collaboration and continuing education will help close the gap

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