Scholarly Contributions

a. **Books**

b. **Chapters in edited book**

c. **Articles published in refereed journals**

d. **Published abstracts and presentations at refereed conferences**
Public Sphere Thinking in Curriculum Development:
maps, metaphors, & agency

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between the curriculum development process of curriculum mapping in an undergraduate department and faculty-member agency. Participants were 13 faculty members responsible for delivering a four-year bachelor’s degree in a college environment. Faculty member experience in the department ranged from 2 to 40 years. The curriculum mapping project utilized facilitated discussion, curriculum surveys, graphs and visual analytic software to represent a set of nine core college-wide competencies and a set of eight department-defined competencies across the course requirements and progressions of the program. The final maps produced were interactive and visual in nature. Participatory action research was the chosen methodology for this study. Faculty members co-designed both the goals and process of mapping undertaken. The research data for the study were collected using pre- and post-mapping interviews, curriculum documents, and research notes. The results suggest that as a quantifiable reduction of lived experience, curriculum mapping fails to meet its promises; however, as a tool for fostering curriculum discourse and faculty agency, the process of mapping was generative for faculty members. Increases in shared understanding of instructional methods, assessment methods, program structure, and meta-curriculum competencies were evident. In addition, increases in faculty member’s perceived freedom were connected to increases in understanding and open discussions of actual curriculum-related freedoms. Emergent theoretical insights of this study relate to the use of public sphere thinking by curriculum facilitators to foster specific conditions supportive of faculty member agency, and the role of learning metaphors that relate learning to travel and place. From this convergence of thought, curriculum mapping becomes a tool to understand the wider curriculum village in which curriculum is enacted between students and faculty members. Within a curriculum village metaphor for understanding an undergraduate program, curriculum maps forged in the public sphere conditions of rational critical debate, communicative freedom, and attempts at consensus represent powerful communicative acts by faculty members. Curriculum maps, in this frame of thought, represent internal and external commitments made by faculty members. The metaphor of a curriculum village and application of public sphere thinking provides new analogic tools to those investigating curriculum development, facilitation, and representation.