

The Crisis and Renaissance of Curriculum Studies: A Reflection on the Positions of Wraga and Hlebowitsh

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Abstract: This article is mainly a reaction paper that reflects on the views and positions of Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) concerning the crisis and renaissance of the curriculum field. In doing so, a brief critical review on the two authors' views with regard to the ups and downs that the curriculum field has passed through, and most importantly the crisis it faced as it went through its formative period. The article also endeavored to show the efforts of different curriculum scholars, including the proposals of these two authors, to rescue the field from its total collapse. Next to this, my reflections on the views and positions of the two authors vis-à-vis the current state of the field and the proposals they presented to solve its crisis are highlighted. The paper also tried to reflect on the current state of the Ethiopian curriculum field based on some personal experiences and observations. Accordingly, it revealed that many of the signs of curriculum crisis are prevalent in contemporary Ethiopia. Finally, concluding remarks and lessons to be learned from this article are included.

Keywords: Curriculum crisis, curriculum history, curriculum in Ethiopia, curriculum renaissance, re-conceptualization, The Practical I

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum studies, as a field of study, is relatively a young discipline. Many believe that the field was born in the second decade of the 20th century in the United States of America. Starting from that time, it has passed through many ups and downs. As of its formative years, the field has been characterized by conceptual disagreements, confusions and crises.

The article entitled *Toward a renaissance in curriculum theory and development in the USA*, written by Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003), is an important work that illuminates the problems that the field of curriculum has been experiencing starting from the 1920s. In this notable article, the two authors critically examined the current state of the curriculum field by using *Joseph Schwab's* six signs of curriculum crisis as a theoretical framework.

This paper, therefore, is a reflection indicating my perspectives of the ideas and views presented by the two authors. For that purpose, the article is organized under the following major themes. In the first part of the paper a brief overview of the main themes of the article is made. Then, attempts are made to critically analyze and reflect on the authors' positions

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vis-à-vis the crisis and renaissance of the curriculum field. Following this, a reflection is made on the current state of the Ethiopian curriculum field. Of course, the reflection on the state of curriculum studies in Ethiopia was made on the basis of some personal experiences and observations. The intention here is to pave the way and show directions for individuals and institutions who aspire to conduct rigorous empirical studies on the issue under discussion. Finally, concluding remarks and lessons to be learned from this reaction paper are included in the last part of the article.

An Overview of the Article and the Positions of its Authors

Brief historical accounts of the curriculum crisis

At the very beginning of the article, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) briefly summarized the crisis that the US curriculum field has experienced starting from the 20th century. For them, at the outset (1920s), the field had encountered conceptual disagreements among the proponents of the subject-centered, child-centered and activity-centered educational camps. Then, following the *Great Depression*², sharp disputes erupted between the progressive and social reconstruction educators. The scene, according to the authors, remained unchanged in the aftermath of WWII (1939-1945). The launching of *Sputnik*³ in 1957, they argued, had also aggravated the crisis of the curriculum field.

According to Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003), the above problems of the curriculum field had led to the emergence of new generation of curriculum scholars in the 1970s. These curriculum scholars, commonly known as *reconceptualists*, came up with ideas that were believed to be helpful in solving the problems of the field. These curriculum theorists were able to dominate the curriculum field almost for three decades (from 1970s to 1990s). Nevertheless, both internal disputes and external criticisms continued in the field of curriculum studies. For the authors, the field is still experiencing an aggravated crisis, and as a result of this described the situation that the curriculum field found itself in as '*stubborn disarray*'.

Critiques on reconceptualist curriculum theory

After giving a brief account of the crisis of the curriculum field, the authors have critically examined the current state of the curriculum field based on the signs of crisis identified by Joseph Schwab⁴. By so doing, the authors contend that, the six signs of curriculum crisis that

² It was a historical period in the USA from 1929 to 1933 characterized by unprecedented economic and social crisis.

³ It was the first artificial satellite in the world that was launched by the USSR. This event, as part of the cold war confrontations between the two big ideological camps, had a far-reaching consequence on the educational policy and practice of the USA.

⁴ Many credited J. Schwab as an educator who for the first time systematically and convincingly explored the crisis that the curriculum field had faced. In his seminal work called *The Practical: A language for curriculum* (also known as The Practical I), published in 1969, Schwab openly reported that the field of curriculum was "moribund" and "unable by its

were identified by Schwab in 1969, and promised by the reconceptualists to mitigate the crisis were not solved as pledged. In order to remind readers of the six signs of curriculum crises that Schwab identified in 1969, let's see the following table.

Table 1

Summary of Schwab's six signs of crisis in the Curriculum Field

No	Sign of crisis	Description of crisis
1	Flight of the field	A "translocation" of curriculum problems and solutions from curriculum specialist to experts of other fields or disciplines such as economics and politics.
2	Flight upward	A flight from discourse about curriculum to discourse about discourse.
3	Flight downward	A return to "the subject matter in a state of innocence, shorn not only of current principles but of all principles" (p. 301).
4	Flight to the sideline	A retreat of curriculum specialists to "the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic of contribution of others to the field" (p. 301).
5	Flight to perseverance	A "repetition of old and familiar knowledge in new language" (p. 301).
6	Flight to hot, caustic debates	A "rise in frequency and intensity of the eristic, contentious, ad hominem debates" (p. 302).

Source: (Deng, 2013, p. 87).

According to Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003), the first curriculum crisis, i.e. *a translocation of curriculum problems and solutions from the curriculum specialist to non-curriculum experts* is still a problem in the US curriculum field. For them, "persons other than curricularists bear primary responsibility for solving curriculum problems" (p. 427). The second curriculum crisis that Schwab identified, i.e. *flight from the use of principles and methods to talk about them* was also in existence. In order to elaborate this position, the authors indicated that the reconceptualists, with different names such as *structuralism*, *post-structuralism*, *deconstructionism*, and *post-modernism*, have been making inconclusive debates on diverse issues of the curriculum field. The authors further pointed that, the reconceptualists have been busy with talks and debates especially focusing on the interpretation of the Tyler rationale. Likewise, they argued, the third curriculum crisis identified by Schwab, *an attempt by practitioners to return to the subject matter in the state of innocence*, still characterizes contemporary curriculum field.

The fourth sign of crisis in the US curriculum field, according to Schwab, was the retreat of curriculum professors *to the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic of the contribution of others to the field*. Nevertheless, this crisis of the field, according to Wraga

present methods and principles, to continue its work and contribute significantly to the advancement of education".

and Hlebowitsh (2003), was not yet solved by the current curriculum field. To strengthen their position, the authors cited Pinar's (1978) idea, who had insisted on the necessity of '*an intellectual and cultural distance*' from curriculum practitioners. For them, "critical commentary on the current state of school curriculum with little commitment to the generation of practical activities" (p. 428) has become the norm in the curriculum field. A *repetition of old and familiar knowledge in new language which adds little or nothing to the old meanings*, the fifth crisis identified by Schwab, was also analyzed by the authors. For the authors, this crisis had emanated from the existence of the fourth crisis indicated above. By citing the works of an educator called Taubman, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) explained that this crisis of the curriculum field was aggravated by the reconceptualists themselves. For example, ideas such as national standards, high stakes testing, reductionist skill-driven curriculum and the hegemony of disciplinary knowledge that reconceptualists presented as alternative practices were not far from the practices of the historic curriculum field (p. 428). Surprisingly, the authors indicated that, some old ideas (example standard tests) were wrongly and inaccurately used by reconceptualists. Coming to Schwab's sixth sign of crisis, i.e. *a marked increase in eristic, contentious, and ad hominem debate*, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) underlined that, the problem still manifests itself in different forms. The exchange of hot words between Pinar and Wraga in 1999 is indicated as evidence in this regard (p. 429).

After critically analyzing the current state of the curriculum field against the six signs of crisis identified by Schwab, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) concluded that, the US curriculum field had been still in a state of crisis much like the one Schwab described before three decades. They further concluded that, those six signs of crisis were even aggravated by the reconceptualist curriculum theorists. In line with this, they wrote the following. "We would contend that the reconceptualization has not only failed to extract the field from the crisis that Schwab identified, but it may even have aggravated the crisis that Schwab sought to mitigate" (p. 429).

Proposal for coming out of the crisis

After a thorough investigation of the current state of the US curriculum field, in line with the six signs of crisis identified by Schwab, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) came up with some valuable ideas that, according to them, could rescue the field from its crisis. In this regard, the authors called upon curriculum scholars to give due attention to the following four important issues.

The first issue that Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) propose, so as to save the curriculum field from the crisis it faced, is the need to *have a clear boundary* for the field (p. 430). They suggest that the field should focus on matters pertaining to the life and program of the school. Issues such as cultural studies and psycho-social therapy, though important for the curriculum field, are beyond the bounds of curriculum enquiry. The second idea suggested by the authors is the need to consider *the history of the curriculum* field. In this regard, they suggested the following. "The US curriculum field in general and reconceptualist theory in particular, needs to come to terms with curriculum history" (p. 430). In short, the authors insisted that,

conscious reconsideration of the history of the curriculum field will contribute a lot to making creative advances in the field.

Shift *'from ideology to ideas'*, is the third idea that Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) proposed, so as to alleviate the crisis of the US curriculum field. For them, political ideology or doctrine is not compatible with sound scholarship, as the former compromises accuracy and constrains perspectives. The authors contend that, any scholarship is not free from ideology, and as a result, they strongly advise educators to use scholarship so as to promote ideologies, but not vice versa (p. 430).

The fourth suggestion proposed by Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) to rescue the curriculum field from the crisis it faced was the need to *link curriculum theory and curriculum practice*. For the authors, theoreticians and practitioners of the curriculum field should work collaboratively on diverse educational issues. Put differently, the distance between the two needs to be minimized. In this regard, the authors called upon curriculum professors to work as 'agents', not as 'spectators' of the field.

Towards renaissance in the curriculum field

Towards the end of their article, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) rejected reconceptualists' use of the term *'renaissance'* in reference to their movement. For the authors, the reconceptualist movement could not fulfill the very features of renaissance due to the following two reasons.

The first and most important reason for them is the fact that, reconceptualist curriculum theory did not solve the crisis of the field. Instead of mitigating the problems that the field had faced, the authors claimed, the reconceptualists had indeed aggravated its long-standing crisis. Secondly, the authors maintained that reconceptualists did not acknowledge and appreciate past achievements of the field. This, for the authors, is not in line with the true nature of renaissance. Due to this, they argued, the concept of renaissance could not be used with reference to the period of reconceptualism.

Finally, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) stated their views that could help to realize renaissance in the US curriculum field. In this regard, they wrote, "We submit, then, that a genuine renaissance in the US curriculum field will be predicated upon a continuing conversation which will enable the curriculum field to avoid the perils of academic balkanization" (p. 434).

Reflections on the Authors' Positions

Toward a renaissance in curriculum theory and development in the USA is one of the articles in the curriculum field that I read with much interest. This is because I found the article useful not only in briefly presenting the path that the curriculum field has passed through, but also in critically analyzing the challenges and conflicts (both inside and outside) it has been

experiencing. In line with this, I have tried to critically look at each and every idea and position of the authors, focusing mainly on the relevance and practicality of the suggestions they forwarded so as to mitigate the crises of the curriculum field. As a result of this, I came across some points that, in my view, are convincing and relevant to the current curriculum field. Of course, I have also found some issues that I would like to comment on. Hence, in this section I will briefly reflect on some of the positions of the two authors that were addressed in the article.

On the Strengths of the Article

The way the authors described the crisis of the curriculum field, from its formative years to the present, is quite interesting, convincing and in line with the history of the field. Many prominent scholars of the field too indicated that, the field of curriculum, at the outset, has been characterized by debates, controversies and conflicts among different educational groups, both inside and outside (Young, 2013; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Pinar, 1978). Hence, I contend that the curriculum field in the US, and elsewhere, has been under unresolved educational crisis.

The authors' evaluation of contemporary curriculum issues, in line with Schwab's six signs of crisis, in my view, is also persuasively and satisfactorily undertaken. Though, the authors said nothing about why they used these six ideas of Schwab, and why other problems of the field were not investigated, I believe that, the use of the six issues as a framework of evaluation is appropriate, as it is vital to have an in-depth understanding of the status of contemporary curriculum field. Most importantly, there has been a growing interest to examine the current state of the curriculum field by using Schwab's *the practical I* as a framework. The works of Deng (2013), Connelly (2009) and Reid (2006) are just few examples in this regard. In all these studies, Schwab's *the practical I* (the six signs of crisis in the curriculum field) was used as a framework in investigating the state of the curriculum field in different settings. Surprisingly, all of these studies came up with the finding that the curriculum field has been characterized by most of the problems that were identified by Schwab.

I also contend that the authors' position concerning the failure of the reconceptualists in solving the crisis they identified and promised for many years is somewhat convincing. As the authors have clearly indicated, the crisis that Schwab identified, and the reconceptualists echoed for many decades, is still prevalent, of course with a higher magnitude. Many studies conducted using Schwab's *the practical I* as a framework also came up with quite similar findings. For instance, Deng (2013), who tried to investigate the state of curriculum inquiry in China, concluded that "all the flights except the third one can be seen in the curriculum field in China" (p. 86). Reid (2006) too explored that the contemporary curriculum field had been preoccupied with different conceptual issues (e.g. social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.) to the neglect of major curricular issues and practices. This, according to this educator, had made curriculum invisible to researchers and policy makers. Likewise,

Connelly (2009) not only strengthened the rightness of Schwab's 'flights', but also confirmed the preponderance of that crisis in the current state of the US curriculum field. Supporting this, the author wrote, "If Joe Schwab thought there were flights from the field by curriculum scholars in the 1970s he would now think they had now been shot off into space in a rocket" (p. 104).

The four ideas that Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) proposed to overcome the long-standing problems of the curriculum field are also issues that I would like to reflect on. Of the four solutions that the authors proposed, I would like to focus on the two. First, as Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) have proposed, I believe that making a clear boundary for the curriculum field is vital to mitigate the crisis that the field has experienced for many years. That is, it is very important to determine the issues that are highly curricular and those that are less curricular. Considering each and every issue related to school as the province of curriculum studies, instead of alleviating the crisis of the field, will lead to further crisis, and even to its collapse.

Many curriculum theorists are also in favor of this idea. For instance, Beauchamp (1975) had convincingly suggested that the curriculum field should focus exclusively on the question "what shall be taught in schools? rather than "how shall it be taught?" For this curriculum theorist, the latter could be best addressed by the field of instruction. Michael Young too has a similar position. In one of his notable articles, this curriculum theorist has indicated that curriculum theory must start not from the learner but from the learner's entitlement to knowledge. Young further indicates the major responsibility of a curriculum theorist as follows:

What is the important knowledge that pupils should be able to acquire at school? If as curriculum theorists, we cannot answer this question, it is unclear who can, and it is more likely that it will be left to the pragmatic and ideological decisions of administrators and politicians. (Young, 2013, p. 103)

From Young's position it is not difficult to understand that, the more important for the curriculum theorist is the knowledge (what the student should learn) than the student him/herself. So, school issues, especially those that could be dealt with by sister fields such as educational psychology, gender studies, citizenship education, special needs education, global studies, instructional design, and many others need to be less emphasized in the curriculum field. By so doing, curriculum theorists could have better opportunities to devote their time and energy to one of their sensitive and highly crucial intellectual responsibilities, i.e. the responsibility to logically address the question '*What knowledge is of most worth?*' or what the important knowledge that pupils should be able to acquire at school is.

The second idea that I would like to add is the authors' proposal to link curriculum theory and curriculum practice. As already indicated, in Schwab's *the practical*, much attention was given to the practical aspect of curriculum. The underlying cause of the crisis of the curriculum field, according to Schwab (1969, p. 287), was "inveterate, unexamined, and

mistaken reliance on theory.” Due to this, he had explicitly indicated that curriculum inquiry should be considered as a practical undertaking concerned with curriculum practice or the inner work of schooling in context. Unfortunately, the curriculum scholars, both before and after Schwab, had failed to emphasize the practical aspect of the curriculum (Deng, 2013). Their interest to align curriculum theory with curriculum practice seems not worth mentioning. As it can be clearly seen in their works, the reconceptualist curriculum theorists (e.g. Pinar, 1978), have been much concerned with the theoretical/conceptual nature of curriculum. The attention they paid to curriculum practice at its grassroots level is scanty.

Hence, it is worthwhile to emphasize the practical aspect of the field. In this regard, making schools and school problems at the center of curriculum inquiry will possibly minimize the curriculum theory-curriculum practice dichotomy. This again implies that curriculum professors and theorists need to work collaboratively with school practitioners. It is through this approach that curriculum professors and theorists can meaningfully contribute to the advancement of the field and schooling in general.

The authors’ position concerning the use of ‘renaissance’ in the curriculum field, in my view, is something that should be appreciated. By its very nature, the term ‘renaissance’ implies the re-birth or re-emergence of something good after its destruction or decline for a long period of time. It is also understood as a revival of something after some period of difficulty. Like the authors, I believe that, reconceptualists are not legitimate enough to use the term renaissance to refer to their period. As already indicated, the curriculum field has been in crisis, both before and after the reconceptualist period. Moreover, the crisis of the field that was identified by Schwab is still in existence. To put it briefly, the reconceptualists did not solve the crisis of the curriculum field in a tangible manner. So, their desire for the term *renaissance*, to refer to the reconceptualist period (1970s to 1990s), I argue, is not appropriate and realistic.

Some concerns

Though, I agree with the above-mentioned positions of Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003), I have also concerns with some of their views. To begin with, in the article Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003) have clearly showed anti-reconceptualist positions. Even though, the way they demonstrated their positions were based on sound scholarship, and the evidence they presented was convincing, they tended to deny the contributions of these curriculum theorists. In my view, the reconceptualists have contributed a lot to the development of the curriculum field. They have helped the community of curriculum to have an in-depth understanding of the multi-faceted issues of the field. A good example in this regard is the profound work of Pinar, the well-known reconceptualist curriculum theorist. In the introduction part of his recent book, (Pinar, 2015, p. 1), this curriculum theorist has convincingly indicated that he had made the following seven major contributions to the field of curriculum studies.

One of his contributions, according to Pinar (2015), was the concept of *currere*. In line with this he writes, “I invoked it first during the 1970s to denote a shift from curriculum defined as syllabus (or objectives or outcomes, or from any of its conceptualizations as a static entity, implied by the noun) to curriculum conceived as the educational experience of “complicated conversation” (p. 1). *Theorization* of reconceptualization, establishment of the *queer theory* in education, and the reconfiguration of *anti-racist education* were also his contributions. Furthermore, showing that curriculum development is *an intellectual, not bureaucratic* undertaking, introducing the conception of *place*, and initiating the *internalization* of curriculum studies were other major contributions of this reconceptualist curriculum theorist (Pinar, 2015).

Hence, I contend that, though the curriculum field is still characterized by many problems, the ideas that reconceptualist theorists introduced, discussed, and developed have substantially contributed to the advancement of the field. They were, particularly important in broadening our understanding of the concept curriculum, the role of curriculum theorist, the focus of curriculum inquiry, and the research approaches that are useful in advancing the field. It is my conviction that their work has helped many members of the curriculum community to conceptualize qualitative research approach, particularly phenomenology, and hermeneutics appropriate and relevant for curriculum research, and to understand that the focus of curriculum inquiry should not be measurement, but understanding its complex nature.

Another point that I would like to make is the authors’ tendency to rely heavily on past achievements of the field. In my view, they considered the history of the field as a panacea for all problems that contemporary curriculum field has faced. Put differently, many of their ideas imply that the ills of the contemporary curriculum field could be cured by the application of past educational/curricular ideas and theories. Some of the suggestions they forwarded in the article, for example, “The US curriculum field in general and reconceptualist theory in particular, needs to come to terms with curriculum history” (p. 430) and “To propel the field progressively and inventively into the future, we must build upon past accomplishments...” (p. 431) epitomize this contention. ‘The past is never dead. It’s not even past’, an idea quoted by the authors (p. 430), also implies their overemphasis on curriculum history. Though it is not appropriate and logical to deny the importance of some old curriculum thoughts and theories in mitigating contemporary problems, it is hardly possible to generalize that all contemporary problems could be solved without due consideration of some emerging theories and ideas. It is clear that we are living in a dynamic world. Hence, we need to seek for alternative theories that are compatible with contemporary societal issues and problems of schooling.

The State of Curriculum Studies in Ethiopia

As I have tried to indicate in the introductory section, this article tries to make a brief analysis on the state of curriculum studies in contemporary Ethiopia. The analysis, however, is based on my personal experience and observation so that it is not rigorous enough to be generalized.

Of course, the intention here, as indicated earlier, is to trigger interested educators and institutions and show directions for a thorough investigation into the status of the field in the country's education system.

As far as my knowledge is concerned, no study has been conducted with the purpose of understanding the state of the current curriculum field in Ethiopia. However, based on personal experience and critical observation of the country's education, it is possible to understand that the current curriculum field in the country is characterized by most of the signs of curriculum crisis discussed earlier. For instance, the first sign of curriculum crisis, i.e. a 'translocation' of curriculum problems and solutions from curriculum specialist to experts of other fields (flight of the field) is one of the problems that everyone can easily observe in the current curriculum field of Ethiopia. The following situations epitomize this contention.

First, in contemporary Ethiopia, it is not uncommon to see non-curricular professionals taking responsibilities for diverse issues of the curriculum process. In the country, consulting curriculum professionals at the time of initiating different curricular issues, both at national and institutional levels, is not a common tradition. At Bahir Dar University, for instance, curriculum professionals did not take active part while the university had been expanding its programs, both undergraduate and graduate, in the past few decades. Surprisingly, the university had no formal administrative unit responsible for curriculum design, development, implementation and evaluation. It is through different related offices such as the 'quality assurance office', 'academic affairs directorate', 'university curriculum council' and other ad hoc committees⁵, that the university delegates major and sensitive curricular responsibilities.

Second, due to the low value attached to the curriculum field and its professionals, universities in Ethiopia are closing their graduate programs in curriculum studies. For instance, Addis Ababa University, the oldest and the most prestigious university in the country, had already stopped admitting students to its regular MA program in *Curriculum and Instruction*. The same story is true for Bahir Dar University. This university, the second university in the country to open a Master's degree program in *Curriculum Studies*, have not accepted students for this program for the last few years⁶. The reason behind this problem is the decline of student enrollment in curriculum studies.

Likewise, the department of *Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies*, at Bahir Dar University, which is the only department to offer an undergraduate program in curriculum studies, seems on the verge of closing this undergraduate program because of employment problem of its graduates. Based on the needs assessment study conducted before the opening of the program, it was understood that there was a need for curriculum experts who could

⁵ Most of the time, the members/staff of these units and committees are from a non-curriculum background.

⁶ Of course, after a long period of interruption, in the 2015/16 academic year, the department was able to admit three students in its MEd Program. However, this story was not repeated in the coming academic year.

work in *woreda*⁷ education offices and zone education departments, all over the country. In these institutions there are vacant positions that should be filled in by curriculum professionals. Despite the availability of many vacant positions for curriculum graduates, the requirements asked for these positions are open for every graduate of education (e.g. teaching, EDPM, psychology, and the like), so the positions are held by non-curriculum experts.

Therefore, based on the above personal experiences and observations, it is possible to conclude that the first sign of crisis of the curriculum field, which was identified by Schwab nearly fifty years ago, is prevalent in the current Ethiopian curriculum field. This is because, in the country, as with what was observed in the USA in the 1960s (Pinar, 1978; Deng, 2013; Young, 2013), there is a general propensity to consult and delegate non-curriculum professionals for major curricular issues and practices.

One can also confidently speak of Schwab's second sign of curriculum crisis, *a flight 'from use of principles and methods to talk about them'*, in contemporary Ethiopia. In the current education policy of the country, progressive educational issues such as active learning, continuous assessment, effective teaching, multiculturalism, action research, gender responsive pedagogy and many others are given due attention. Nevertheless, many studies conducted to assess the implementation of these educational ideas reported that their practices in classrooms have been at their lowest stages. For instance, Derebssa (2006), one of the prominent professors of curriculum in Ethiopia, reported that "in Ethiopia learner-centered instructional approach is extensively written, but poorly understood concept in practice (p. 126). Other studies too (e.g. Amare, 2009; Mulugeta, 2017) which tried to investigate teachers' practice of *knowledge application* and action research reported that the practice of these educational issues was very low.

On the other hand, the above mentioned educational issues are at the forefront of educators' academic discourse. In the weekly *Friday Forum* of Bahir Dar University, for instance, many papers that deal with the essence, importance and strategies of different progressive educational ideas were presented by many faculties. However, many of these educators openly reported that they themselves did not satisfactorily practice the educational issues they propagated and advised. Moreover, based on my personal experience and observation, I contend that many educators/curricularists in Ethiopia, including myself, are more successful in discussing/talking about diverse educational issues than properly implementing them in the classroom. Therefore, what can be deduced at this juncture is that, in contemporary Ethiopia, instead of using and implementing diverse educational principles and methods in the classroom, there is a tendency to repeatedly 'talk about them'. This implies that the second sign of curriculum crisis that was identified by Schwab (1969) is prevalent in the current education system of Ethiopia.

⁷ It is an administrative unit in Ethiopia that is equivalent to district.

A retreat of curriculum specialists to “the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic of contribution of others to the field”, the fourth sign of crisis, could also be observed in contemporary Ethiopia. The discussion on the second crisis presented above could partly support this contention. That is, there is a tendency of observing and critically commenting on others’ works, instead of searching for practical alternatives. Put succinctly, in contemporary Ethiopia, educators’ criticisms outnumber their efforts and commitment to generating practical solutions to diverse educational problems of the country.

Another sign of curriculum crisis that one can easily observe in Ethiopia is the fifth curriculum crisis. The fifth curriculum crisis, according to Schwab, is *flight of perseveration*, i.e. a repetition of old and familiar knowledge in new language. In this regard, most of the studies that were conducted in the curriculum field and other related fields gave much emphasis to the Tylerian technical and behavioral curriculum discourse. In Ethiopia, it is not unusual to conceptualize and practice teaching, curriculum, assessment, planning, and other related issues from this perspective. Hence, it seems possible to generalize that no significant attempts have been made by the country’s curricularists to broaden educators’ understanding of the curriculum field.

However, in Ethiopia one cannot clearly observe the sixth sign of curriculum crisis. That is, the tradition of making deliberations about curriculum, critique of the views of others, and frequent debates on the field is not developed among Ethiopian curricularists. The reasons for this, I believe, are the following. First, as I have tried to indicate earlier, many curriculum professionals in Ethiopia still seem proponents of the pre-reconceptualist curriculum thinking. This idea reverberates well in the teaching learning process of curriculum programs of the country’s universities. Due to this, there is a tendency to accept earlier curricular thoughts without any questioning. Second, in the country, the curriculum field as a field of study has not yet well developed. As a result, there is no formal association for curriculum professionals. Furthermore, there is no scholarly academic journal on curriculum studies. Thus, there is no fertile ground to make useful discussions and debates on diverse issues of the country’s curricular problems.

Concluding Remarks and Lessons to be Learned

In this paper, attempts are made to review and critically analyze Wraga and Hlebowitsh’s views and positions with regard to the crisis and renaissance of the curriculum field. In doing so, it was indicated that the field of curriculum study has been engulfed by too many conceptual disagreements, debates, conflicts and confusions. Put succinctly, the field has been characterized by crises that had attracted the attention of different scholars, both inside and outside. This in turn has resulted in the instability of the field and absence of adequately agreed upon theories that explain, describe, predict and guide various issues in the field.

It was due to this general situation that new generation of curriculum scholars, usually known as reconceptualists, had promised and proposed new ideas that aimed at reversing the challenges of the field. However, their proposals to overcome the crisis of the curriculum field were not found to be successful. The works of this group of curriculum scholars, instead of mitigating the problems that the curriculum field had faced, had aggravated some of the issues. In this article, it was also learned that many of the signs of the curriculum crisis (except the sixth one) are prevalent in the contemporary curriculum field of Ethiopia.

From this article, it is implied that, since the field of curriculum, as of its inception it has been engulfed by too many challenges; those concerned with the issues should give due attention to its problems. Curriculum scholars particularly need to exert unreserved efforts that could rescue the field from its collapse. They, instead of magnifying their differences, should work hand in hand to create a conducive environment for the progress of the field. As proposed by Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003), the crisis of the curriculum field could be alleviated provided that due attention is given to such issues as demarcation of the field's boundaries, reconsideration of curriculum history, searching new ideas rather than ideologies, and linking theory and practice in the field.

As far as the current state of curriculum studies in Ethiopia is concerned, it seems vital to give attention to the following. As already indicated, the curriculum field in Ethiopia is not yet well developed. Hence, scholarly work that aims at developing the profession and mitigating its problems need to be undertaken. In line with this, attention needs to be given for a rigorous investigation of the state of curriculum studies in Ethiopia. Schwab's *the practical I*, I believe, could serve as an important framework in this regard. Of course, the investigation should also give adequate place for other contextual factors. It is also imperative to professionalize the curriculum field through different approaches. This might include, the establishment of curriculum professionals' association, the launching of scholarly academic journals in curriculum studies and the organization of national and international conferences and forums focusing on diverse issues of the field.

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