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Curriculum Development in Higher Education

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Abstract

The development of programs of study, learning and teaching resources, lesson plans and assessment of students, and even teacher education are all based on curriculum. Curriculum exists for students. It is concerned with both content and process. Content refers to what we want students to learn and process refers to how the content is managed. Curriculum must be characterized by a balance of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It must be organized in a logical and sequential manner while making provision for special interest development. It must encourage critical thinking and provide the student with opportunities to develop the ability to make reasoned judgments. The process of curriculum development in India lies between the two extremes of centralization and decentralization. From time to time, the national government formulates the National Policy on Education which includes broad guidelines regarding content and process of education at different stages. Curriculum development involves a variety of activities namely the creation of planned curriculum, pedagogy, instructional material, delivery methods and evaluation for making the student learning process effective. The curriculum development process systematically organizes what will be taught, who will be taught, and how it will be taught. Each component affects and interacts with other components.

Keywords: Curriculum, Evaluation, Pedagogy, ICT, Objectives, Models, Teaching-Learning process etc.

Introduction

“When teachers are asked to develop a curriculum, part of the requirement is to formalize that undertaking by writing it in the form of a curriculum document. The format of that document is almost invariably a statement of the objectives, content, method, and assessment in that order. Such a presentation may predispose teachers to adopt this format as a model for curriculum development, and thereby use an objectives model in the development stage. There would certainly be few, if any, curriculum documents where the objectives are presented at the end, even though this sequence might be a reflection of how the curriculum was developed. So the obvious logic in presentation need not parallel the method of development”.

(Brady, 1995, p 85)

Curriculum, from the Latin for ‘course’, is the content or subject matter that is taught. Curriculum is the foundation of the teaching - learning process. The development of programs of study, learning and teaching resources, lesson plans and assessment of students, and even teacher education are all based on curriculum. Curriculum and curriculum development at first glance appear to be of chief concern to educators, governments and parents, and both have relevance and impact on the development of communities and prosperity. Education should promote Values and Ideals in society, as well as help the learner develop a rational commitment to:

- Equality – of status and opportunity,
- Freedom – of thought, expression, beliefs, faith and worship; as a value in life
- Autonomy of mind – as independence of thinking, based on reason,
- Autonomy of action – freedom to choose, ability and freedom to decide and ability and freedom to act,
- Care and respect for others – going beyond respecting their freedom and autonomy, concern about well-being and sensitivity to all members of society,
- Justice: social, economic and politica

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The process of curriculum development in India lies between the two extremes of centralization and decentralization. From time to time, the national government formulates the National Policy on Education which includes broad guidelines regarding content and process of education at different stages. In India, the task of developing the curriculum in higher education is entrusted to the concerned university except the Autonomous colleges who designed their own curriculum following the model curriculum of UGC as far as possible.

The accepted models of curriculum design emerging from studies of school-based education last century, are classified as product (aka rational – Print 1993^[7], or objectives – Tyler 1949)^[10], interactive (Taba, 1962)^[9], cyclical (Print, 1993)^[7], or process (Wheeler, 1967^[12]; Stenhouse, 1975^[8], and Hawes, 1979)^[4]. Biggs' model of constructive alignment, written for the higher education sector, owes much to the work of these early school-based models.

The best known of these is probably the linear product model. The assumption underpinning this model is that there is an agreed body of knowledge that students need to learn. It starts with a statement of objectives, follows with descriptions of content and method (selection and organization of teaching and learning activities), and finishes with evaluation, which generally encompasses both assessment strategies and evaluation of the curriculum. In these models, objectives serve as the basis for devising subsequent elements, with evaluation (assessment) indicating the degree of achievement of those objectives. The focus is on teaching.

The cyclical models from the next stage in the evolution of curriculum design are similar in many ways to the linear and interactive models that preceded them. They incorporate the same or similar elements – initial situation analysis, identification of aims and objectives, selection and organization of content, selection and organization of learning activities, followed by an assessment / evaluation process (Wheeler, 1967^[12]; Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978). All of these product models – linear, interactive, and cyclical – are efficient, logical and clear. They probably don't reflect actual curriculum design practice for most teachers, but they serve as useful checklists and tools for documenting curriculum.

In the student-centred process models, the teacher's role is that of facilitator rather than content authority. These models assume curriculum design to be an ongoing process, dependent on emerging information and practice, shaped by the beliefs, experiences, theories and philosophies held by those planning the learning environment. These models go well beyond the core elements of objectives, content, method, and assessment / evaluation, although these are recognized as part of the process

Curriculum development involves a variety of activities namely the creation of planned curriculum, pedagogy, instructional material, delivery methods and evaluation for

making the student learning process effective. The curriculum development process systematically organizes what will be taught, who will be taught, and how it will be taught. Each component affects and interacts with other components. For example, what will be taught is affected by who is being taught (e.g., their stage of development in age, maturity, and education). Methods of how content is taught are affected by who is being taught, their characteristics, and the setting.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can enumerate the following core elements in the curriculum design:

Need Analysis

The first process in the formulation of the curriculum or the revision of the curriculum is the need analysis of the stake holders. The stakeholders include students, parents, industry and civil society. The institution must analyse the socio-economic and intellectual background of the learners for whom the curriculum is to be designed. Depending on the linguistic and general proficiency of the learners, the institute should develop a questionnaire to obtain the feedback from the learners. It is necessary to give a voice to those who are going to study the curriculum. Besides, the relevant industry expert needs to be involved in the process of the curriculum development. The prospective industry has some expectations from its future employees and the same needs to be incorporated in the curriculum. Moreover, education is the process of socialization and the curriculum must contribute in developing the responsible global citizen. The curriculum has to strive to imbibe the national values among the learners.

Objectives

A curriculum is designed as a response to the learning needs. The degree of precision of the objectives is thus related to needs. One may regard the needs as being expressed in the form of a demand by students, parents, employers, and so forth. Needs may also have remained unformulated because the individuals do not have the necessary information or the appropriate tools to become aware of them. The student must know precisely what is expected of him. He will thus devote his time to activities which will enable him to attain the course objectives. He will be in a better position to distinguish what is important from what is less important from among the learning tasks covered by the course. He will thus avoid dwelling on details of the subject-matter which he considers to be less relevant. He will not have to guess from the behaviour of his teacher what the latter considers important and what may be expected to be the subject-matter of the evaluation.

The levels of objectives go from the simplest to the most complex and each level assumes the preceding level. Thus, the cognitive domain comprises the following six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation. The objectives set the roadmap for the successful completion of the course. The objectives bind the teacher and learner in an untying note.

Content

As the student body becomes increasingly diverse, it's important to have faculty incorporate multicultural design into their courses regardless of discipline. Although it may not seem that all disciplines lend themselves to including multiculturalism as a learning goal. The content of the course

curriculum should be fine blending of knowledge, skill and experiential learning. Though the international and national standards are available, we should not undermine the local needs of the learners.

Besides the socio-economic and intellectual needs of the learners, the curriculum must contain the material that could match the international standards and availability of the resource or instructional material. The content should also include the e-learning sources to reinforce the audio-visual impact of the curriculum. This will not only make the curriculum effective but also create an interest among the learners to achieve the predefined objectives.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy, from the Greek words for 'boy' and 'guide', refers to the art or science of teaching or the techniques used to teach students. The notion of a teacher guiding students through a course of study. Pedagogy is the overarching concept; it refers broadly to the deliberate process of cultivating development within a given culture and society. From this point of view, pedagogy has three basic components: (1) curriculum, or the content of what is being taught; (2) methodology, or the way in which teaching is done; and (3) techniques for socializing children in the repertoire of cognitive and affective skills required for successful functioning in society that education is designed to promote.

Evaluation

The term "evaluation" generally applies to the process of making a value judgment. In education, the term "evaluation" is used in reference to operations associated with curricula. Evaluation is the process of making value judgements about the merit or worth of a part or the whole of a curriculum. The nature of a curriculum evaluation often depends on its audience and purpose. Evaluation of curricula is typically concerned with the:

Impact of the curriculum:

- on individual students, their needs, their level of engagement and their performance;
- on society, including the appropriateness of values communicated and attitudes fostered, and the level of public satisfaction;
- recent social, technological, economic or scientific changes;
- recent advances in educational research and educational paradigms;
- Possible future directions for curriculum change.

Curriculum evaluation aims to examine the impact of implemented curriculum on student (learning) achievement so that the official curriculum can be revised if necessary and to review teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Curriculum evaluation may be an internal activity and process conducted by the various units within the education system for their own respective purposes. Curriculum evaluation may also be external or commissioned review processes. These may be undertaken regularly by special committees or task forces on the curriculum, or they may be research-based studies on the state and effectiveness of various aspects of the curriculum and its implementation. These processes might examine, for example, the effectiveness of curriculum content, existing pedagogies and instructional approaches, teacher training and textbooks and instructional materials.

The ultimate goal of curriculum evaluation is to ensure that the curriculum is effective in promoting improved quality of student learning. Student assessment therefore connotes assessment of student learning. Assessment of student learning has always been a powerful influence on how and what teachers teach and is thus an important source of feedback on the appropriateness implementation of curriculum content. The evaluation of a student or a group of students should be on the basis of the objectives of the curriculum and the student or students' opportunity to learn. The teacher is the professional who understands the factors in the measurement of learning and has a thorough mastery of subject matter to be tested, of written communication and of assessment techniques. The teacher translates the learning goals into course objectives and selects assessment procedures to reflect the curriculum content designed to achieve those goals and objectives. The teacher uses a variety of procedures to recognize differences in teaching methods, and students' abilities, needs and learning styles.

ICT

Emergence of information and communication technology has ushered a new era in our civilization in which digitalization has almost become a better alternative, because it has influenced every facet of human life including education. Transformation should take place in the way our teachers teach and students learn. The efforts of ICT is generally of sporadic nature in the education program. 21st century is the age of Information and Communication Technology. All over the globe, there is a trend to use ICT in the teaching learning process. The teacher and learner must gain access to technology for improving learning outcomes. Educational reforms include successful designing and implementation of ICT in teaching learning process, which is the key to success. It involves use of computers, computer software and other devices to convert, store, and process, transmit and retrieve information and includes the services and application associated with them. Through ICT students can experience various stages of learning, such as critical thinking, problem solving, guided instruction, extra connect, cooperative learning and group monitoring.

Guest Faculty

Inviting guest speakers into your classroom is a classic teaching strategy. Welcoming other voices into the classroom provides students with access to other perspectives, adds variety to the classroom routine, and demonstrates that learning is a collaborative enterprise. At the same time, however, presentations by guest experts are often plagued by a variety of design flaws that hinder their educational effectiveness. Guest experts, being unfamiliar with the mastery level of the students in the class, may speak over the heads of the students, or they may present their material at a level that is inappropriately introductory. Because they are generally unfamiliar with the class curriculum, they may repeat information that the students have already learned, or their comments may not connect in any clear way with what the students already know and what they are currently learning.

Field work

Field trips have long been used as a context for teaching and learning. Fieldwork experience is an integral element of developing research skills in several disciplines. By participating in fieldwork, students can apply the research

skills they have developed during their classroom learning. In addition to building research skills, fieldwork is an important means to help students feel more involved in their discipline. The often informal nature of fieldwork allows students a chance to engage more informally with their lecturers and can help create strong communities of learning. Learning outside the classroom can be used to facilitate Education for Sustainable Development. This includes short visits into the school grounds and local community, as well as visits to farms, factories, offices, neighbourhood science centres and natural settings such as a forest, a beach or a national park. Providing students with high quality learning activities in relevant situations beyond the walls of the classroom is vital for helping students appreciate their first hand experiences from a variety of different perspectives. Experiences outside the classroom also enhances learning by providing students with opportunities to practice skills of enquiry, values analysis and clarification and problem solving in everyday situations.

Field trips are commonly used to engage students in authentic experiences that help them get the most out of interacting with the places, experts, or artefacts that field trips provide – even though these authentic experiences are key to working toward larger goals of social studies education such as student tolerance and democratic citizenship.

In essence, curriculum development projects are designed to solve complex problems of bridging education policy aims to outputs, such as programs of study, assessment, and learning and teaching resources. To achieve high quality outputs, curriculum developers need to combine iterative design and development processes. This iterative approach can be termed as the “prototyping approach” (Plomp & Nieveen, 2007, pp. 90–91). This entails the development of a preliminary version of what is being envisioned, and then testing and refining it before committing to full development and implementation of the final product. Prototyping can be especially useful for curriculum projects that are both complex and innovative, as each prototyping cycle contributes to curriculum design and outputs. A curriculum development model based on prototyping to enable ongoing and synchronous development of curriculum could be as follows.

To conclude, Consideration should be given to the goals and objectives of education as a whole and in relation to a particular curriculum specifically. The end users of the curriculum, teachers and students, must be considered in its development and should be considered as key stakeholders in the engagement process. It cannot be assumed that the roles of any users will remain static over time so consideration must be given to ensure that ongoing changes in the roles of various users and stakeholders are accounted for at every step of the development process.

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