



Recent Initiatives in Curriculum Design and Development

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Abstract:

The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. Curriculum is also defined as the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning. In many cases, teachers develop their own curricula, often refining and improving them over years, although it is also common for teachers to adapt lessons and syllabi created by other teachers. It is important to note that while curriculum encompasses a wide variety of potential educational and instructional practices, educators often have a very precise, technical meaning in mind when they use the term for learning acquisition and classroom management. The design and goals of any curriculum reflect the educational philosophy and related strategies such as community – based learning and authentic learning. Curriculum also comprises of planned and unplanned concept, content, skills, work habits and a variety of school activities in and out of class that influence present and future academic, social, emotional and physical growth of students. It is a comprehensive plan for an educational programme, designed to offer new ideas & information to fulfil the needs of a dynamic society.

Keywords: Curriculum design, Initiatives

1. Orientations to Curriculum

The orientation of a curriculum may be-

- Child-cantered,
- Society-cantered,
- Knowledge-cantered, or Eclectic

2. Educational Philosophy of a Curriculum:

The educational philosophy of a curriculum may be the answer to questions such as:

- What is knowledge and understanding?
- What is worth knowing?
- What does it mean to learn?
- How do you know that learning has taken place?
- What should be the role of a teacher?
- What should be the role of the student?
- What is the ultimate purpose of education?
- What are your core educational values?

3. Approaches to Curriculum

Various approaches to curriculum based on educational philosophies may be:

- Idealism
- Realism
- Essentialism
- Experimentalism
- Existentialism
- Constructivism
- Reconstructivism

4. Idealism

4.1 *This approach may include*

- **Subjective Idealism** which suggests that only ideas can be known or have any reality.
- **Transcendental Idealism** argues that all knowledge originates in perceived phenomena which have been organized by categories.
- **Absolute Idealism**, believes that all objects are identical with some idea and the ideal knowledge is itself the system of ideas.
- **Platonic Idealism** suggests that there exists a perfect realm of Form and Ideas and our world merely contains shadows of that realm.

Idealism believes in refined wisdom; reality is a world within a person's mind; truth is in the consistency of ideas and goodness is an ideal state to strive to attain. As a result, schools exist to sharpen the mind and intellectual processes. Students are taught the wisdom of past heroes.

5. Realism

Classical realism held universal ideas, such as "man" has an independent, objective existence, either in a realm of their own or in the mind of God.

Realism asserts that objects in the external world exist independently of what is thought about them. Realism believes in the world as it is. It is based on the view that reality is what we observe. It believes that truth is what we sense and observe and that goodness is found in the order of the laws of nature. As a result, schools exist to reveal the order of the world and universe. Students are taught factual information.

6. Essentialism

Essentialism is a uniquely American philosophy of education which began in the 1930's and 1940's as a reaction to what was seen as an overemphasis on a child-centered approach to education and a concern that students were not gaining appropriate knowledge in schools. The two origins of essentialism are idealism and realism. Essentialists believe that there exists a critical core of information and skill that an educated person must have.

7. Experimentalism

Experimentalism believes that things are constantly changing. It is based on the view that reality is what you experience. It believes that truth is what works right now and that goodness comes from group decisions. As a result, schools exist to discover and expand the society we live in. Students study social experiences and solve problems.

8. Existentialism

Existentialism believes in the personal interpretation of the world. It is based on the view that the individual defines reality, truth and goodness. As a result, schools exist to aid children in knowing themselves and their place in society. Students learn what they want and discuss subjects freely.

9. Constructivism

Learning is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. Learning is a search for meaning. Meaning requires understanding the whole as well as parts. In order to teach well, we must understand the mental models that students use to perceive the world. The purpose of learning is for an individual to construct his or her own meaning, not just memorize the "right" answers and regurgitate someone else's meaning.

10. Reconstructivism

Focus is on providing students the critical tools to be agents of social change. Students explore controversial issues, analyze world events.

11. Types of Curriculum

The different types of curriculum may be:

- Overt, explicit, or written curriculum
- Societal curriculum
- The hidden or covert curriculum
- The null curriculum
- Phantom curriculum
- Concomitant curriculum
- Rhetorical curriculum
- Curriculum-in-use
- Received curriculum
- The internal curriculum
- The electronic curriculum

12. Overt, explicit, or written

12.1 Curriculum

Overt curriculum is that which is written as part of formal instruction of schooling experiences. It refers to a curriculum document, texts, films, and supportive teaching materials that are overtly chosen to support the **intentional instructional aims** of a school. It is usually confined to those written understandings and directions formally designated and reviewed by administrators, curriculum directors and teachers, often collectively.

12.2 Societal curriculum

This curriculum is defined as the massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighbourhoods, churches organizations, occupations, mass, media and other socializing forces that "educate" all of us throughout our lives.

12.3 The hidden or covert curriculum

The hidden curriculum is that which is implied by the very structure and nature of schools, much of what revolves around daily or established routines. The "hidden curriculum," refers to the kinds of learnings children derive from the very nature and organizational design of the school, as well as from the behaviors and attitudes of teachers and administrators. The emphasis is on sequential room arrangements; timed periods of formal instruction; an annual schedule that is still arranged to accommodate an agrarian age, sitting up straight and keeping quiet; students getting in and standing in line silently; students quietly raising their hands to be called on; the endless competition for grades, and so on.

12.4 The null curriculum

The null curriculum includes that which we do not teach, thus giving students the message that these elements are not important in their educational experiences or in our society. The null curriculum is

simply that which is not taught in schools. Somehow, somewhere, some people are empowered to make conscious decisions as to what is to be included and what is to be excluded from the overt (written) curriculum. Since it is physically impossible to teach everything in schools, many topics and subject areas must be intentionally excluded from the written curriculum. The "null curriculum" is that when certain subjects or topics are left out of the overt curriculum, school personnel send messages to students that certain content and processes are not important enough to study.

12.5 Phantom curriculum

The enculturation of students into the predominant meta-culture, or acculturating students into narrower or generational subcultures.

12.6 Concomitant curriculum

It includes what is taught, or emphasized at home, or those experiences that are part of a family's experiences, or related experiences sanctioned by the family. Lessons on values, ethics or morals, or social experiences based on the family's preferences are also included.

12.7 Rhetorical curriculum

It comprises of ideas offered by policymakers, school officials, administrators, or politicians. It comes from professionals involved in concept formation and content changes; It is also derived from those educational initiatives resulting from decisions based on national and state reports, public speeches, from texts critiquing outdated educational Practices and also from the publicized works offering updates in pedagogical knowledge.

12.8 Curriculum-in-use

The formal curriculum (written or overt) comprises those things in textbooks, and content and concepts in the district curriculum guides. However, those "formal" elements are frequently not taught. The curriculum-in-use is the actual curriculum that is delivered and presented by each teacher.

12.9 Received curriculum

This curriculum includes those things that students actually take out of classroom; these concepts and content that are truly learned and remembered.

12.10 The internal curriculum

This curriculum comprises of processes, content, knowledge combined with the experiences and realities of the learner to create new knowledge. While educators should be aware of this curriculum, they have little control over the internal curriculum since it is unique to each student.

12.11 The electronic curriculum

This curriculum is developed through searching the Internet for information, or through using e-forms of communication, either formal or informal, and inherent lessons. It may be overt or covert, good or bad, correct or incorrect depending on ones' views. It is constructed both for recreational purposes (as in blogs, chat rooms, list serves, through instant messenger on-line conversations, or through personal e mails) and for research and Information. This curriculum includes lessons on how to be wise consumers of information, how to critically appraise the accuracy and correctness of e-information, as well as the reliability of electronic sources. It includes *inherent lessons to be learned about appropriate and acceptable "netiquette" and online behaviour.*

12.12 Structure of a curriculum

The structure of a curriculum may comprise of-

- Introduction
- Scope

- Aims & Goals
- Courses of Studies: Part I, Part II, Part III Major, Ancillary, Part IV Alternative studies
- Methodology
- Materials
- Media
- Evaluation scheme
- Outcome
- World of work or Vista of life

13. Curriculum Development

The curriculum may be developed by relating the units of the subject matter to learning resources; choosing the appropriate strategies for curricular transaction; suggesting the suitable media; exploring relevant learning experiences; progressive testing of the achievement of objectives through these experiences.

14. Structure of a syllabus

In order to prepare the structure of a syllabus the following concepts have to be taken into consideration:

- Role of the subject in the overall development.
- General & Specific objectives (Competences)
- Content table: Unit No., Unit objective, transactional strategies, learning experiences, using the media, progressive self-testing items, time proposed for each unit,
- Knowledge, Skill and Attitude proportion for materials
- References,
- Linking with the other subjects in the curriculum

15. Implementation of the curriculum

The implementation of the curriculum may include the following steps:

- Instructional scheme of each subject to be completed in the semester.
- Planning the lessons as per the timetable.
- Using the transactional strategies.
- Using the appropriate media.
- Providing the learning resources.
- Promoting classroom learning experiences.
- Progressive testing.

16. Curriculum Evaluation

Evaluation describes how to assess the nature, impact and value of an activity through the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information with a view to making an informed decision. Evaluation involves 3 activities- outlining clear purposes, gathering evidences and judgment. Evaluation is part of development rather than apart from it. Curriculum evaluation broadly conceived, is a stock-taking process. A curriculum may be structured on the basis of-

- an assembly of courses that are deemed necessary to meet certain job requirements;
- it can be formed from the basics of a particular discipline in a faculty or department;
- it can be designed to meet the needs of a professional or technical programme,
- or it can be developed based on a systematic specification of outcomes.
- It must therefore be periodically evaluated.

17. Approaches to curriculum evaluation

- Determining whether pre-stated goals of educational or training programs were met.
- Goal-free

- Uncovering and documenting what outcomes were occurring in educational or training programs
- Responsive (contingency-unforeseen event)
- Comparing what was intended for instruction to what actually was observed.
- The decision-making
- The collecting information about educational or training programs for the purpose of decision-making.
- The accreditation
- It is for forming professional judgments about the processes used within education or training programs.

Curriculum evaluation ranges from estimating the performance of a single child in a course through the evaluation of specific instructional materials, methods, activities and techniques to the evaluation of an entire curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum evaluation is concerned with the worth wholeness of the curriculum components, and the information provided is for the sake of facilitative decision making at the various stages of curriculum development .

18. Three paradigms or world views about evaluation

- Melrose (1996) grouped existing models into three paradigms or world views about evaluation, these are:
 - The functional model
 - The transactional model; and
 - The critical paradigms of evaluation.
- The functional paradigm of evaluation usually measure the programme
- Outcomes against pre-stated goals;
- The transactional paradigm focus is on whether or not the current, expressed needs of stakeholders, especially students as customers or clients have been met and whether the negotiated learning events have met the participants' satisfaction;
- The critical paradigm of evaluation involves dialogue and collaborative investigation whereby a focused question is agreed upon by the group for each cycle of evaluation which may be small or broad in scope. Evaluation thus become the systematic community learning process for the collaborative review, improvement and development of polices, programmes and practices.

19. Alade's Six Models

1. The Classical Model
2. Research and Development Model
3. Illumination Model
4. Briefing Decision-Makers Model
5. Teacher as Research (Professional) Model
6. Case Study Model.

20. Olaitan's Four Models

In respect of vocational-technical education evaluation, Olaitan identified the following evaluation models which had been employed by a good number of researchers.

- They include:
 - The Illumination Model,
 - The Goal-Free Model,
 - The Context, (C) Input (I), Process (P) (CIPP) Model, and
 - The Transactional Model.
- They had been found reliable as a guide for collecting evaluative data in curriculum evaluation.

21. Conclusions

In order to bring about curricular changes, the national aspirations and needs; cultural changes; social changes; technological development; economic changes; changes in values have to be taken into account. A simple six step approach may be followed to bring about curricular changes.

22. A six-step approach

Step 1: Problem Identification

- Identify and characterize the SOCIAL problem
- Know what we are talking about

Step 2: Needs Assessment of Learners

- Know
- Who our target audience is and
- What our target audience needs

Step 3: Goals and Objectives

- Identify the end toward which an effort is directed
- Goals
- Objectives –specific and measurable (ASK)
- Direct the choice of curricular content
- Clearly communicate the purpose
- Suggest what learning methods will be most effective

Step 4: Educational Strategies

- Identify the educational strategies by which the curricular objectives will be achieved. Involve both content and method.
- Provide the means by which curricular objectives are achieved.

Step 5: Implementation

- Identify sufficient resources, support, and others to successfully implement the curriculum

Step 6: Evaluation and Feedback

- Describe the plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum
- Closes the loop
- Provides information about continuous quality improvement

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