

Curriculum Design: Inception to Execution

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ABSTRACT : This module attempts to look into the nuances of Curriculum, Syllabus and Course Designing and its importance in today's modern world. In a nutshell, the sequence of the life experiences through which an academic institution attempts to promote a pupil's growth is known as a curriculum and here we have tried to look into the fact that any curriculum should focus on learner's needs, interests, abilities and deficiencies in order to make the process of Teaching-Learning effective. Curriculum is an organised course of study undertaken by a student in or under the aegis of a school, college, university or any other institution of learning and more commonly, the set of studies organised for a particular group of students by a school, college etc. It is the set of desired learning outcomes or the structured set of learning experiences aimed at achieving such outcomes. It is a very tricky process as it involves philosophical, social and administrative factors of a programme and as result one should be aware of various perspectives and its impact upon the learners (that to a successful and a positive one) after the completion of the programme. Any curriculum should be holistic in its significance and purpose in order to inculcate in the learner the knowledge, attitudes, values, and techniques that have cultural relevance. Course and curriculum design is continuously evolving and changing. There are escalating social and economic pressures on higher education to generate a wider range of knowledge, skills and attitudes for coping with the demands of our 'super complex age'. The current velocity of technological and social change is impelling teachers to think in terms of educating students not for today's problems but for those of tomorrow.

Keywords: Curriculum, Curriculum Design, Course Design, Accountability

1. INTRODUCTION

The term "curriculum" is derived from the latin word "currere", which means "run". Thus curriculum means a course to be run for reaching a certain goal or "destination" here education is imagined as a race, with its aim as the goal and curriculum as the course leading to that goal. So the term "curriculum" came to signify a group of subjects or courses of study, arranged in particular sequence, for instructional purpose in school. A curriculum is more than just a syllabus or a statement of content. A curriculum is about what should happen in a teaching programme-about the intention of teachers and the way they make this happen.

1.1 Explaining it in depth

Curriculum is based on a philosophy and indicates the direction in which we channelize our efforts in the process of teaching and learning using approaches, methods and techniques appropriate to the learners, subjects etc. It is an organised programme of study undertaken by a student in any school, college, university or any other institution of learning. It offers a framework for study activities and experiential learning based on a specific goal it is designed to achieve. It has to have a plan of instruction which specifies what the students

are to know, how they are to learn it, the role of the teacher in it and the context in which the teaching-learning process will take shape.

According to the history of education, the term 'curriculum' was originally related to the concept of a course of studies followed by a pupil in a teaching institution. In recent decades, the concept of curriculum has evolved and gained in importance. Increasingly, it is used universally within the framework of globalization, the theory of pedagogy and the sociology of education. At the same time, the concept acquired such an importance that since the 1990s certain authors underscored the risk of an invading epistemology (i.e. the concept being used to indicate all dimensions of the educational process, without allowing any differentiated analytical approach to its complexity).

In fact, the term curriculum is mostly used to refer to the existing contract between society, the State and educational professionals with regard to the educational experiences that learners should undergo during a certain phase of their lives. For the majority of authors and experts, the curriculum defines: (i) why; (ii) what; (iii) when; (iv) where; (v) how; and (vi) with whom to learn.

Using educational concepts, we can say that the curriculum defines the educational foundations and contents, their sequencing in relation to the amount of time available for the learning experiences, the characteristics of the teaching institutions, the characteristics of the learning experiences, in particular from the point of view of methods to be used, the resources for learning and teaching (e.g. textbooks and new technologies), evaluation and teachers' profiles. In a more holistic way, the sequence of life experiences through which an institution attempts to promote students' growth is known as a curriculum. Psychologically, curriculum design should take into account the learner's needs, interests, abilities and deficiencies. For effective learning to take place, the learning ability of the learner has to match the learnability of the subject matter. Curriculum design, on the other hand, should not neglect the social context (that is, the needs and norms and the demands of the contemporary society).

Curriculum should always aim to modify the behavioural tendency by experience. As George Mouly (1968) observes,

The experiences incorporated into the curriculum are simply the vehicle through which desirable learning takes place and it is the learning that counts rather than the experiences through which it is achieved. It should enable the learner to do something purposeful. The question is not of teaching the child a given subject but rather of choosing the sequence of experiences that will promote his/her maximum self-realization.

A. Curriculum is a term used to denote

1. (An) organised course of study undertaken by a student in or under the aegis of a school, college, university or any other institution of learning
2. more commonly, the set of studies organised for a particular group of students by a school, college etc
3. variously, the set of desired learning outcomes or the structured set of learning experiences aimed at achieving such outcomes.

Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) point out that a curriculum is an educational programme which states

1. the educational purpose of the programme (the ends)
2. the content, teaching procedures and learning experiences which will be necessary to achieve this purpose (the means)
3. some means for assessing whether or not the educational ends have been achieved.

The third one strikes us instantly and poses a serious question on whether or not it is being taken into consideration.

This module would focus on the designing of a curriculum capable of transmitting the vital properties and features of education effective both in theory and practice. It looks into its dimensions and its general principles which would make it applicable in any circumstance providing us with satisfactory outcomes.

1.2 Dimensions of a curriculum

They are inclusive of the relationship between the learner and the society, its aims and objectives, content and subject matter. It is defined through selection, scope and logicity, methodology and evaluation pattern that would govern the curriculum. What is important is also its breadth and depth. Breadth involves contact with major divisions of knowledge, problems of mankind and their solutions, values and culture, distinctive methodology etc while the depth focuses on concentration of these attributes, prerequisites, sequences and integration.

Bent and Kronenberg (1961) suggest that it must 'involve a continuous process of design and monitoring. The curricular activities should be selected on a valid basis. The curriculum should be flexible: allowing selection, organisation, and evaluation on a continuous basis.' Nothing of this kind is practised due to the rigidity of the curriculum which ends up in producing people who would be absolute failures in the world outside the classroom.

1.3 Language Curriculum

The focus is therefore on the planning of a 'Language Curriculum' with reference to the second language programmes.

Johnson (ed) (1989) suggest that in order to plan a curriculum, those involved should

- (a) Analyse the learners' target language proficiency and the present language needs and
- (b) Survey the resources in the institution and the community (eg people, places, materials)

Then

1. Select: Language functions for emphasis
2. Choose: Relevant social/academic/vocational situations
3. Identify: Topics of interest to students at the relevant age
4. Specify: Appropriate communicative expressions and formulae, structural patterns and notions (stemming from 1-3 above)
5. Determine: Exponents: (a) of high frequency, (b) those generalisable (stemming from 1-4 above)
6. Gather/Prepare: Audiovisual materials that would be useful in teaching better
7. Provide for the use of: school, community, other resources to ensure an interdisciplinary approach
8. Prepare/Adapt: Dialogues and mini-dialogues for unambiguous presentation and oral practice of exponents, functional expressions, structures and notions.
9. Grade (text or teacher-prepared materials: Tasks and activities for learner interpretation and performance in the class – for the whole class, group, pair or an individual work. (This is very crucial for the structuring of learning experiences and most of the curricula fail to specify and grade such materials, and may not be very effective as a result.
10. Evaluate: Student growth (as one clue to the efficiency of a given plan and the strength of your materials.

Then

Divide 1-10 into units and/or modules.

1.4 STAGES, DECISION-MAKING ROLES AND PRODUCTS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Developmental Stages	Decision-making Roles	Products
1. Curriculum planning	Policy makers	Policy document
2. Specifications: Ends, Means	Needs Analysts	Syllabus
	Methodologists	
3. Programme implementation	Materials writers	Materials
	Teacher trainers	Training Programmes
4. Classroom implementation	Teacher	Teaching acts
	Learner	Learning acts

[Adapted from Table 1 in RK Johnson (ed) (1989), *The Second Language Curriculum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.3]

In his discussion on 'Curriculum Development', Johnson (1991) offers the following line of argument

1. Specifications: end specifications and means specifications. End specifications are the exact characterisation of the target proficiency, whereas means specifications are the specified methods by which the target proficiency will be achieved.
1. End specifications depend on (a) the specification of objectives in verifiable behavioural terms, (b) the changing view of language learning from one of the mastery of grammatical system to communicative language ability. Means specifications will help decide Language Teaching methodology in the context of Second Language Acquisition or the learning of a Foreign Language.
2. Programme implementation relates to the availability of resources and the kind of teacher training facilities that have been provided as a part of the system.
3. Classroom implementation consists of the structuring of the teaching and learning acts.
4. Needs analyses use a process that involves (a) perceptions about the learner, (b) perceptions about their needs, (c) identification of the areas to be emphasised, (d) educational rationale, (e) the type of information available/collected, (f) the method of information collection, (g) the purpose for collecting the information, (h) the time of information collection, and (i) the manner in which these analyses are going to be used.
5. Orientation given to these needs will be decided on the basis of: (i) Language proficiency, (ii) Psychological/Humanistic, and (iii) language for specific purposes.
6. Curriculum evaluation would involve an assessment of (1) objectives (2) content (3) materials (4) activities planned both inside and outside the classroom (5) teachers (6) texts (7) tests and (8) the entire range of strategies planned/used.

Explanatory Notes

1. Policy is a term referring to any broad statement of the aims of education at the national level. *Policy makers* (generally the government of the day as well as the civil servants in the bureaucracy) are the ones thought to be responsible for framing policies as per the philosophy of the political party in power, and their own assessment of the needs of various sections of the people in the country as a whole. They determine the overall aims on the basis of party perceptions of the national goals and priorities.

National language policies are based on socio-political pressures in the context of culture and the socio-political situation obtainable at a given point in time. These vary from culture to culture. Policies are used by the government of the day to maintain and even extend their power-base, influence, and acceptability. These policies may often tend to be utopian, for they are based on perceptions of what is thought to be desirable by those in power. However, the thinking in the bureaucracy that is largely responsible for fine-tuning these policies tend to have a far greater impact on the success of curriculum development, eg the UGC diktat in 2002 to Universities to implement the model curricula in various disciplines on the pain of having their grants slashed in case they failed to comply.

Policies are in the form of directives and it is left to favoured needs analysts and methodologists to formulate specifications that help implement the policy goals at any given point in time.

David Nunan (1984) says that 'the curriculum is concerned with the planning, implementation, evaluation, management and administration of education programmes' one can therefore believe that there are numerous syllabi within a curriculum which has to have a link in order to make it more fruitful and result oriented wherein learning-teaching is at the centre and everything else revolves around this process.

As a faculty member, you can undertake few activities that will have greater impact on your students than active involvement in the design of a curriculum or a course you teach. As a direct result of these efforts, learning can be facilitated, and your students' attitudes toward their own abilities can be significantly enhanced; they will be better prepared for the challenges they will face after graduation/ Major course and curriculum design initiatives also tend to have an impact for many years after the project has been completed, and, as a result, the number of students these efforts affect is substantial.

As important as these activities are, we are seldom prepared to carry them out. Although you may have been fortunate enough to have participated in a strong, well-conceived program for teaching assistants, few faculty have had the opportunity to explore the process of course and curriculum design and to read the research that provides a solid base for these initiatives. This book is designed to help you go through the process.

No Easy Task

Designing a strong course or curriculum is always difficult, time-consuming, and challenging. It requires thinking about what material you will cover, then about what your students will learn, and finally about how you as their teacher can facilitate this process. This demanding task forces you to face issues that you may have avoided in the past, to test assumptions with which you are comfortable and that are rarely challenged, and to investigate areas of research that are unfamiliar to you. You may become frustrated and wish to end the entire project. At times like this, keep in mind how important the activity is and press on. Most faculty who have used this model report that they found the process of design and implementation challenging, frequently exciting, and when completed, most rewarding.

Although curriculum development is always a team activity, course design is not. In both instances, however, the process can be facilitated and the end result, improved if someone not directly involved with teaching the course or program serves as a facilitator. The facilitator may be a faculty member from another department or a staff member from the faculty development, instructional development, or learning centre on your campus. The facilitator, who has no vested interest in the project, asks key questions, challenges assumptions, and helps you explore options, getting the big issues out in the open. The importance of the facilitator cannot be overstated.

1.5 Interrelationship of Course and Curriculum

One major problem we will highlight is the tendency to design courses that have little or no relationship to the curriculum that is in place or to the critical skills students need to acquire. Most observers and researchers agree that the sequence of courses our students take is more serendipitous than planned. These scholars frequently describe the educational experience of our students as disjointed, fractured, and totally unstructured. But if the curriculum, the courses, and the process of learning are not carefully integrated to produce clearly conceived learning outcomes, what else can we expect?

The research, too, suggests that in many cases college and university curricula do not produce the results we intend. Curricula that are not focused by clear statements of intended outcomes and that permit naive students broad choices among courses can result in markedly different outcomes from those originally imagined: by graduation most students have come to understand that their degrees have more to do with the successful accumulation of credits with the purposeful pursuit of knowledge.

Every institution should aim to ensure that by graduation all students will have reached those goals that the faculty agree are appropriate and will have the skills, attitudes, and competencies associated with their major

and minor. Your challenge, as you design a curriculum or develop your course, is to ensure that these goals can be attained by those students who meet the requirements. As Rudolph Weingartner in his book *Undergraduate Education: Goals and Means* (1993) observes, "The educational payoff of a coherent curriculum is that students come to understand the connections in theme that convert a diversity of curriculum parts into a whole. It is the job of text and teachers to make such relationships visible, but they must be there to be pointed out in the first place".

1.6 Course Design and the Delivery of Instruction

Although faculty, employers, and governmental leaders agree that graduates need critical-thinking and complex problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills, research shows that the lecture is the predominant method of instruction in U.S. higher education (Gardiner, 1996, pp. 38-39).

To ensure that students develop the higher-level competencies that you determine to be essential will require thinking about how time is spent both inside and outside the classroom and perhaps, rethinking what your role as a faculty member should be.

1.7 A Basic Reference Library on Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Although most of our personal libraries are extensive, they also tend to be rather narrow, focusing as they do on our discipline and our particular field of specialization within it. Few of us spend much time reviewing what is known about teaching and learning or exploring the various methods of student assessment available to us. Nevertheless, our working knowledge in these areas will help to determine our effectiveness as teachers and the quality of our courses and curricula.

1.8 Accountability

A serious problem that institutions of higher education face is the perception by business leaders, governmental leaders, and the public at large that they have enthusiastically avoided stating clearly what competencies graduates should have and that as a result they have provided little evidence that they are successful at what they are expected to do. Unfortunately, these perceptions are not far from the truth. The public demands for assessment of programs have, for the most part, fallen on deaf ears, and as a result of this inattention and also of major budget problems, higher education in general receives increasingly less support from the public and private sectors.

1.9 Rationale, evidence and criteria

Rationale

- Requires a high level of disciplinary expertise
- Can have major impact on student motivation, learning: retention, and attitudes toward the field of study; can also increase interest of high-quality students to major in field
- By improving learning, meets the stated goals of department, school, college, and institution

Evidence

- Descriptive essay-includes statement of needs and rationale for design
- Syllabi or student manuals
- Newly created course materials
- Video of class presentation (of innovative teaching strategies)
- Student ratings
- Student performance data (tests and test results); focus, if appropriate, on specific population
- Comments regarding student preparation from faculty teaching high-level courses in the discipline
- Review of course and materials by experts in field (faculty and/ or other professionals)
- Results of field tests and revisions based on these data

- Comparative data on retention, class attendance, number of students selecting further study in the field

Criteria

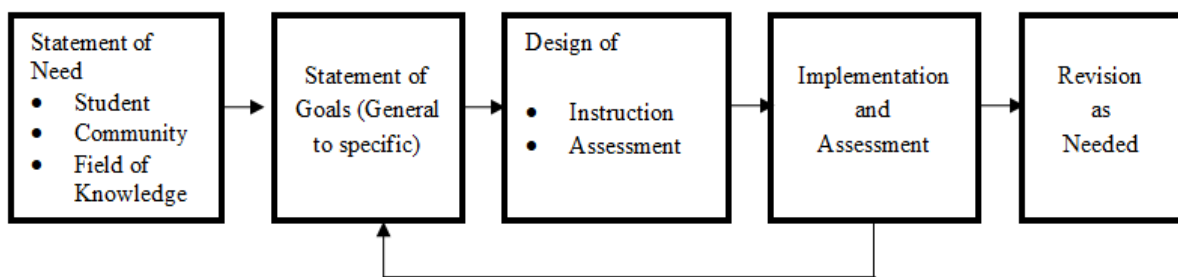
- Shows high level of disciplinary expertise
- Represents an innovation or new approach in design, delivery, or content that can be replicated
- Learning outcomes are clearly stated and match the course objectives
- Meets needs of student population being served and stated instructional goals
- Is approved by department and curriculum committee

The above mentioned approach has several additional characteristics that significantly affect its success. By using a person who is not a content expert to facilitate the design process, this model allows you and other faculty to focus on content and structure while ensuring that assumptions are questioned and alternatives are explored. The model also allows you to focus first on what an ideal program would look like, eliminating perceived limitations-many of which turn out to be more imagined than real. Furthermore, the model is data-driven, using information from a wide range of sources to help determine scope, content, effectiveness, and efficiency. This systems model places technology in perspective, using it where and when it is appropriate. Finally, and equally important, although this approach requires hard work, faculty find it exciting, challenging, and rewarding, and administrators remark on its efficiency and effectiveness.

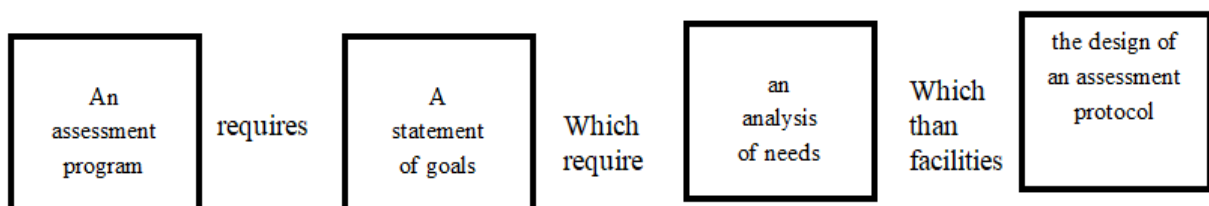
The model follows a specific sequence that begins with an assessment of need and a statement of goals (moving from the general to the specific), which is followed by the design, implementation, assessment, and revision of your course or curriculum.

As departments, schools, colleges, and universities under an external mandate to assess the quality of their academic programs are finding out, no matter where you begin in the process, you will need to go back to the statement of need before you can develop a statement of goals on which assessment must be based. For example, to assess your program you will need to know, first, where you are trying to go; and then based on this information, you will need to develop an assessment program that can help determine whether you are successful.

2. Basic Design and assessment sequence



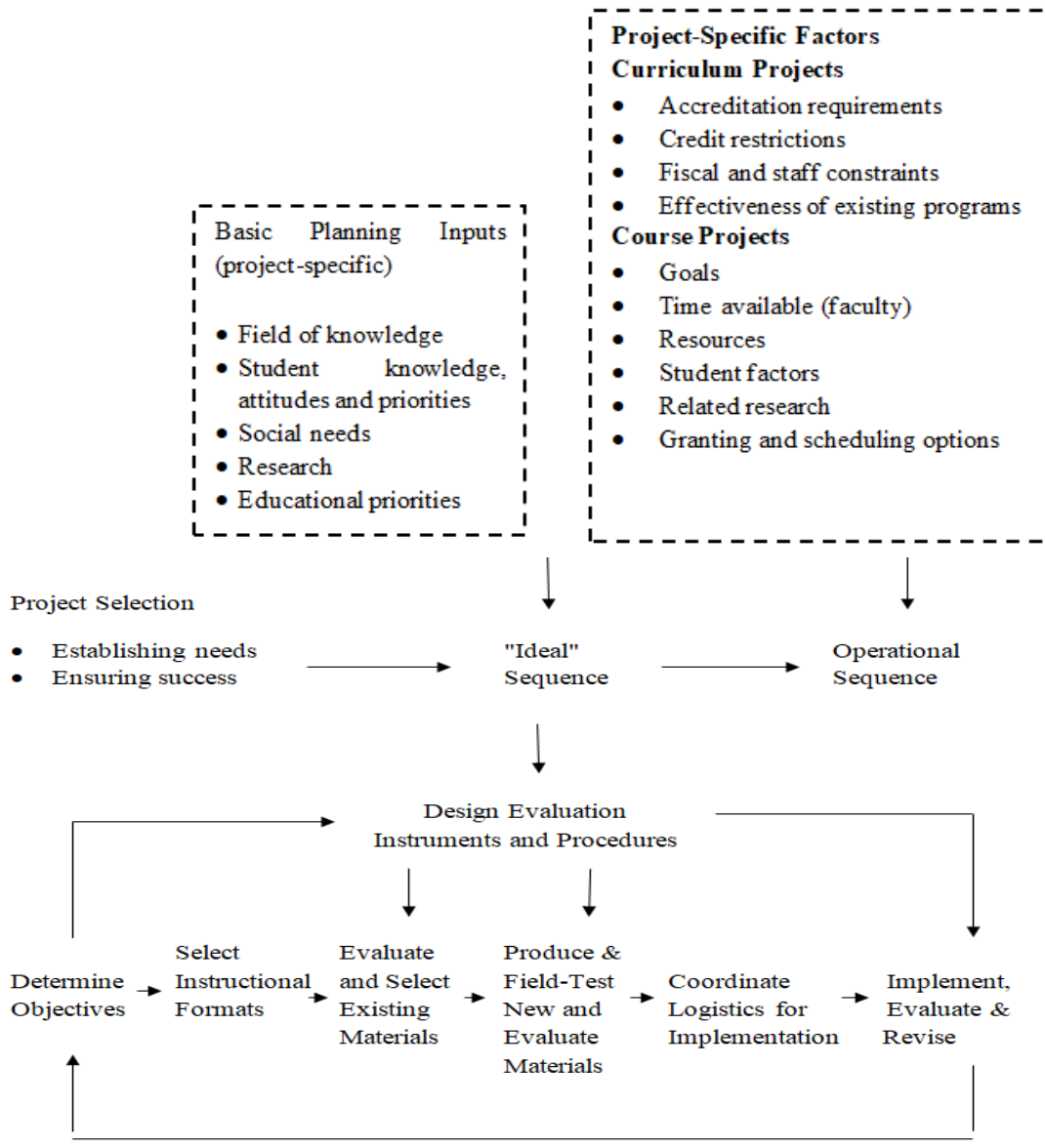
Assessment Sequence



- Statements of outcomes do not exist for many curricula and many courses.
- When outcome statements do exist, there is often a gap between stated performance goals and assessment (assessment tends to focus on recall and recognition).
- When outcome statements do exist, there is often a gap between stated goals and what is taught.
- When outcome statements do exist, they often focus on content and not on critical thinking and learning skills.

In other words, in course and curriculum design it is best to resist the pressure that many of us feel to discuss assessment before we have agreed on the goals for the program or course we will be reviewing. Obviously, we will need to identify goals before we can have a meaningful conversation about assessment or about content and structure. Furthermore, when the focus is on assessment, we often feel threatened, which can undermine the sense of common purpose that any effort needs. Starting with a consideration of how to facilitate effective learning will establish a rapport among every- one involved that makes for a successful team effort. This process reduces stress because it facilitates getting where we want to go in far less time and with much less frustration.

2.1 Process for the Development of Educational Programs.



The model is less complicated than most of its type and requires less time between inception and implementation than others. The costs involved are also less. In addition, it can be shown through a number of examples, it can be used to design and implement courses, curricula, and other instructionally related projects such as workshops and seminars.

The model has two basic phases: (1) project selection and design and (2) production, implementation and evaluation. Like most models, it is generally sequential, requiring that certain steps be completed before others begin. However, the linear nature of the process is somewhat deceptive. Ideally, some actions must precede others and certain decisions should not be made until all relevant facts are taken into account.

2.2 Linking Goals, Courses, and Curricula

As we teach our courses, we tend to lose sight of the fact that each course is but one element in a learning sequence defined as a curriculum. The closer the relationships are among courses, curriculum, and planned out-of-class activities, the more effective the learning experience will be for our students. So, whether you are working on the design of a single course or of a curriculum, it is imperative that you keep in mind the relationship between the two. A quality education does not happen by chance; it requires careful planning, skilled teaching, and an overall structure that ensures that every student has the opportunity to reach the goals of the program in which he or she is enrolled. A quality education requires a level of orchestration seldom found at colleges and universities and also the active involvement of a faculty that is paying a great deal of attention to structure, content, and process.

Goals of a Curriculum

In general the goals of a curriculum evolve from the total of the instructional outcomes associated with three elements, which all students should reach by graduation.

All students should have basic competencies no matter what program they are enrolled in.

The Underpinnings of a Curriculum.

<p>The Basics (all students)</p> <p>Those basic Survival competencies all students should have on graduation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Those discipline-specific competencies all students should have on graduation (required courses and experiences)</p>	<p>The goal: To ensure that each student on graduation will reach the identified level of proficiency in all areas</p>
<p>The Specifics (by individuals)</p> <p>Course specific instructional goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required • Elective 	<p>The challenge: How to ensure that the elements of the curriculum (courses and other student experiences) combine to make these goals attainable</p>

- Students should have discipline-specific competencies related to the core requirements (usually the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences).
- Students should also have discipline-specific competencies associated with major and minor concentrations and elective courses.
- To ensure that every student teaches the required level of proficiency in each area that has been identified, several major tasks must be accomplished:
- The basic competencies for all students must be developed and approved by the institution. These competencies must be stated in terms that are measurable and demonstrable.

- A comprehensive plan must be developed to ensure that the basic competencies are learned and reinforced throughout the time a student is enrolled in the institution:
- Each disciplinary area responsible for a portion of the core curriculum must describe learning outcomes for the relevant courses that are congruent with the required competencies. For these courses a common set of assessment techniques and instruments must also be developed.
- Appropriate learning outcomes and assessment techniques and instruments must be developed for each required course in the major and for all electives.

2.3 Developing a Cohesive Curriculum

A curriculum must be developed sequentially, beginning with an institutional statement of goals and ending with the assessment of each student prior to graduation and after. As you move through the design process from defining general goals to developing course goals and then unit-by-unit objectives, statements of the goals become increasingly specific. The design of each course, the selection of instructional methods, and student assessment will be based on these statements.

In the process of moving from a statement of goals to deciding on and implementing a program, relating individual courses to the curriculum requires careful planning. If, for example, speaking skills are identified as a basic competency that every student must have by graduation, public speaking must be initially taught and then reinforced: and no student should be able to graduate without receiving appropriate instruction and practice in this skill. Courses must be analyzed to identify where this skill is or can be taught, and the curriculum must be structured so that every student has the opportunity to acquire speaking skills. In this case the relevant courses will most likely be smaller ones or the small discussion sessions within courses with large enrolments.

Although certain instructional goals are long-range and focused on performance well after graduation, it is possible within an undergraduate program to identify the skills, attitudes, and understandings that are the underpinnings of these long-range goals. However, it is a major mistake to take any published list of basic skills or competencies and accept it for use on another campus without revision. Not only will the specific items on such a list vary from institution to institution but the definition of each item will vary as well. The final list of competencies, their definitions, and how they should be assessed must evolve on each campus. Faculty ownership in the process is an essential element for success.

2.4 Employability Skills Profile: The Critical Skills Required

Academic Skills Those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results	Personal Management Skills The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviors required to get, keep and progression a job and to achieve the best results	Teamwork Skills Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results
Employers need a person who can: Communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and speak the languages in which business is conducted • Listen to understand and learn • Read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs, charts and displays • Write effectively in the languages in which business is conducted 	Employers need a person who can demonstrate: Positive Attitudes and Behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem and confidence • Honesty, integrity and personal ethics • A positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health • Initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done 	Employers need a person-who can: Work with Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and contribute to the organization's goals • Understand and work within the culture of the group • Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes • Respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group • Exercise "give and take" to achieve group results
Think <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions. Understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results. Use technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively • Access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields (e.g., skilled trades, technology, physical sciences, arts and social sciences) Learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to learn for life 	Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life • The ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals • Accountability for actions taken Adaptability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive attitude toward change • Recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences • The ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done-creativity 	Seek a team approach as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance

This document was developed by the Corporate Council on Education, a program of the National Business and Education Centre, The Conference Board of Canada. This profile outlines foundation skills for employability. For individuals and for schools, preparing for work or employability is one of several goals, all of which are important for holistic development.

2.5 In a nutshell

Curriculum design is a very tricky process as it involves philosophical, social and administrative factors of a programme and as result one should be aware of various perspectives and its impact upon the learners (that to a successful and a positive one) after the completion of the programme. Any curriculum should be holistic in its significance and purpose in order to inculcate in the learner the knowledge, attitudes, values, and techniques that have cultural relevance. Therefore, prior to designing a curriculum one needs to look into the works of Stenhouse (1975), Breen and Candlin (1980), and Stern (1985).

At the end of it, i would say that it seems important to state that long-term goals of education, for example, ability to think clearly and independently, develop scientific temper, developing aesthetic sense, improving social competence and tolerance for and appreciation of other religions and cultures, should be a part of educational philosophy because it would be a stepping stone toward a more rigorous and holistic curriculum.

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