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The Concept of Curriculum and Its Aspect

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Abstract

Curriculum is one of the important and recent branches of knowledge. Curriculum development requires a creative and innovative vision to foresee and plan to meet the existing needs. It should provide a comprehensive view of the social and political context of the society and system of education. The present research paper has made an attempt to share the thoughts with the intellectual forum and extend help to the student community. It will be helpful for students and teachers at undergraduate and post graduate levels.

Keywords : pedagogy , assessment , Achievement , Objectives , Child-Centred.

Concept of Curriculum

The word '**curriculum**' has been derived from the Latin word '**currere**' which means '**a race**' or '**the course of a race**' or '**to run**'. In 1576, Petrus Ramus, Professor at University of Paris, in his work, *Professio Regia*, was first to contribute in the field of education. Later in 1582, the term '**Curriculum**' appeared to be used in University of Leiden. By the 17th century, the University of Glasgow also named its "course" of study as "**curriculum**". By the 19th century, European universities routinely referred to their curriculum to describe both the complete course of study (as for a degree in surgery) and particular courses with their content. In the early years of the 20th century, the traditional concept of the curriculum was that "it is a body of subjects or subject matter prepared by the teachers for the students to learn". It was synonymous to the "course of study" and "syllabus". Curriculum is the key reference point for teachers, particularly in developing countries, where it is encoded in the official textbook, and teacher guides, often the sole resource used by teachers. Teachers' pedagogic approaches, strategies, and practices serve to enact the curriculum. The curriculum links the macro (officially selected educational goals and content) with the micro (the act of teaching and assessment in the classroom/school). It is best seen as 'a series of translations, transpositions, and transformations. The official curriculum is transacted and in the process gets transformed, as 'teachers and students interpret, modify and add to the meaning' embodied in the official specification. Thus, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment are interrelated and mutually influence one another in the day-to-day classroom interaction.

Meaning and Definitions of Curriculum

Curriculum is the heart of education. It is the totality of all the learning to which students are exposed during their study in the school. For student, it is the thing that the teacher makes us to learn, for teachers courses of study provided us to follow, for principal the courses for which units of credit are given, and for parents the fact that is in the textbooks.

Curriculum may be defined as “The planned and guided learning experiences, and intended learning outcomes, formulated through * the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences, under the auspices of the school, for the learners’ continuous and wilful growth in personal social competency”.

According to Cunningham, “Curriculum is a tool in the hands of the artist (teacher) to mould his material (pupils) according to his ideas (aims and objectives) in his studio (school). According to Brubacher, “Curriculum is a runway which one has to run to reach a goal or a course of study”.

According to Modaliar Commission, “Curriculum includes all the loam”
expaicsinoroutsidediatareincludedinaprogrammewhichhasbeq devised to help him develop physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually all morally”.

Characteristics of Curriculum

Nature of a curriculum may be explained on the following grounds:

Curricula as a Set of Objectives: Curriculum can be seen as a means of achieving specific educational goals and objectives. In this sense, a curriculum can be regarded as a checklist of desired outcomes. In the curriculum development process, generally speaking, the objectives are clear and specific in behavioural and observable terms.

Curricula as Courses of Study or Content: Curriculum can be understood as a process of selecting courses of study or content. In this sense, a curriculum also either describes or prescribes the content and goals of formal instruction but lays the means of instruction out of the foreground of focus. Although this use of the curriculum appears similar to the above-mentioned ‘definition -Cunicula as a Set of Objectives in terms of the inclusion of goals, in fact, there is a different focus.

Curricula as Plans: A curriculum can be seen as a plan, or a sort of blueprint for systematically implementing educational activities. This sense of the term combines content with instructional methods and hence has a wider scope than the former two curricular paradigms because of the inclusion of methods. In this vein, Tom (1984) canvasses curriculum as “a plan for teaching or instruction”. Similarly, Pratt (1994) conceives it as “a plan for a sustained process of teaching and learning” with a specific focus on content and the process of teaching and learning. '

Curricula as Documents: Some people, view curriculum as a document, an outline of a course programme that is written on a piece of paper. Thus, curriculum “has become associated with the official written programmes of study published by ministries or departments of education, local authorities or boards of education, and commercial firms or teams of educational specialists working on specially funded projects”.

Curricula as Experiences: Instead of regarding curricula narrowly as ‘ formalised classroom content or prescriptive learning objectives, it may be useful to think of them more holistically as programmes for experiences.

Kelly (1999) identified three kinds of the nature of curriculum:

- 1.Planned Curriculum: It means what is laid down in the syllabus.
2. Received Curriculum: It refers to the reality of students experiences.
3. Hidden Curriculum: It is a knowledge that implicit knowledge students learn in school.

Objectives of Curriculum

Its main objectives are as follows:

1. To attain defined goals of education.
2. To provide essential and useful knowledge to the learners.
3. To provide creative and flexible approaches to learning and teaching. 4) More focus on environmental education.
- 5.To provide vocational text matter.
- 6.To offer an innovative curriculum developed with the aspirations and interests of the student at the centre.
- 7.To make effective use of ICT and new technologies to motivate and inspire students.
- 8.To nurture close partnerships with local and international organisations, giving students a wide range of opportunities to experience the world of work.
9. To provide opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the formal curriculum.

Importance of Curriculum

Curriculum provides several benefits, such as providing a structure for an educational course and having an end goal that teachers set for their students to reach. Curricula vary widely in structure and complexity, but they are valuable for many different areas of education, including linguistics, mathematics and science. Curriculum is in fact the ‘warp’ and woof of the whole educational process. Its importance may be summed-up as follows:

Achievement of Educational Aims: Merely defining the aims of education is futile. There should be well planned efforts to achieve the aims of , education. We must think of lnowledge, activities, experiences and other influences which help in the achievement of aims of education.

Useful for Teachers: The teacher is required to achieve the aims of education. For that purpose. he has to employ suitable instructional methods and procedures. But this he can do only when he knows what efforts he is to make and in what order. In other words, he should know the content or curriculum which consists of subjects, activities and experiences in the properly graded form.

Criteria of Suitable Teachers: It is curriculum which can show what types of teachers are required in the schools. We should know what type of work they are required to do and this is according to the requirements of curriculum.

Selection of Suitable Methods: Curriculum enables the teacher to select suitable methods of teaching. 'How to teach' will be determined by 'what to teach'.

Reflects Trends in Education: Curriculum is a means to achieve the aims of education which are dynamic and changes with the changing social requirements. Naturally, the curriculum will reflect the trends in education.

Providing Suitable Knowledge: Curriculum should include suitable knowledge which will help in the achievement of educational aims. **Providing Suitable Activities and Experiences:** Curriculum includes well selected activities and experiences needed for the development of pupils according to social requirements.

Providing Wholesome Influences: Curriculum should provide wholesome school programme to develop the desirable behaviour patterns in the pupils.

Thus, we see that curriculum is an important instrument or means to achieve the ends of education. It is important:

In Elementary Schools: In elementary schools, the curriculum is primarily drawn by the educational boards or some central society. They study the needs of the kids and all other feasibilities before selecting courses and drafting a curriculum. Here, the students have least choice in their subjects and study based on a universal curriculum, which works on all sections of the students' psyche and aid in the total development of the student. No area is left untouched. Hence, the curriculum aids in the proper development, while the child comes to terms with his or her own inclination. Therefore, at primary school levels, the curriculum aims at providing a structured platform. which gives every child an equal opportunity to excel.

In High Schools: At high school levels, teenagers can take their own liberty in choosing their path. Though complete autonomy does not rest with a student, a level of choice is very evident. This helps in the development of the teenager, with added importance of being given the field of his own choice. At this stage, the development is more focused and rampant, enhanced through a proper curriculum. Without an effective curriculum, a student would not be able to understand or meet the challenges of the society.

At College and Higher Education: At a higher stage of education, an unprecedented autonomy is provided to the students. The students can opt for a more focused curriculum, based on their choice of subjects. A student will graduate, post-graduate or attain a doctorate based on the choice of his subjects and the mode of his study, both or either one determined by him. The curriculum here is reduced to just a framework that is very flexible yet very important. The curriculum chosen by the student will determine the shape of his career. A curriculum prepares an individual with the knowledge to be successful, confident and responsible citizens.

Types of Curriculum

There are various types of curriculum which are used in the schools. These types of curriculum depend on the organisation of curriculum. There are different philosophical views on these curricula organisation. Having based on these views, various curricula have been prepared for the learners. Some of them are as follows:

1. Core Curriculum: The simple definition for the word core is 'central', and this perfectly describes the intention of core curriculum. The core curriculum is the set of common courses required of all undergraduates and considered the necessary general education for students, irrespective of their choice in major. The communal learning with all students encountering the same texts and issues at the same time and the critical dialogue experienced in small seminars are the distinctive features of the core. A core curriculum is a curriculum, or course of study, which is deemed central and usually made mandatory for all students of a school or school system. This is not an independent type of curriculum. It refers to the area of study, course or subjects that students must understand in order to be recognised as educated in the area. The learner has no option but to study the prescribed course or subjects.

2. Activity-Based Curriculum: Active learning is anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture. This includes everything from listening practices which help the students to absorb what they hear, to short writing exercises in which students react to lecture materials, to complex group exercise in which students apply course material to real life situations or to new problems. According to Tanner and Tanner, "Activity curriculum is an attempt to treat learning as an active process. Activity curriculum discards the boundaries and the curriculum was centred largely on areas of child interest. The objective of curriculum was child growth through experience." Activity-based curriculum includes a definite beginning and ending, a clear purpose, completed, contain and understandable directions, feedback mechanism and description of technology or tools being used in the exercise.

3. Interdisciplinary Curriculum: It curriculum is a knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic or experience. Skills and knowledge are developed and applied in more than one area of study. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive.

4. Subject-Centred Curriculum: It is founded upon the belief that the curriculum is composed of separate and distinct subjects, each of which embraces a body of content and skills which will enable the learner to acquire knowledge of himself and his world. Traditionally, the "subject" in the subject centred curriculum referred to what has popularly become known as "the 3 R's" and the goal has centred on the acquisition of tools of literacy. Frequently and often sincerely come the cries, "the elementary school is not teaching children to read"; "children in the elementary school cannot write or spell"; "we must return to the old standards for promotion where children must attain a definable achievement in each basic subject before moving onto the next grade".

5. Learner-Centred Curriculum: It is that curriculum which revolves around the interests, needs, abilities, development level and life of the learners. A learner is considered as the focus point much stress has been laid on child study and child psychology which helps to find out the various problems faced by the learners. Students enjoy the primary place and rest of the things have been treated as secondary so it places more emphasis on student rather than the subject. It is accordance with the individual difference which exists among the children. It touches all

aspects of the life of the pupil and holds the opinion that education is life. The need and the interests of the pupil facilitate their learning. The environment which is congenial to them, ways, manner producer and approaches which cause affective learning among them have

been utilised under this curriculum. So, it is based on the activity and actions of the child.

6. Child-Centred Curriculum: It emerged from the extensive research carried on in the early twentieth century by John Dewey and followers. Laboratory centres such as that established at the University of Chicago under John Dewey's direction became the spur to the establishment of a number of private schools committed to the child-centred philosophy. While few public schools were committed whole-heartedly to the new experimental approach in the education of children, many were vitally influenced by the child centred philosophy. Nailed-down furniture began to be replaced by movable furniture; learning by doing rather than passive absorption of subject matter assumed new significance. First-hand experiences in neighbourhood and community enlarged the book-bound world of the child. The "activity programme", the "unit of work", the recognition of need for using and exploring many media for self-discovery and self-direction became common characteristics of programmes founded upon the new philosophy.

7. Problem-Centred Curriculum: It curriculum is conceived as the framework in which the child is guided toward maturity within the context of the social group. It assumes that in the process of living, children experience problems. The solutions to these problems enable children to become increasingly able to attain full development as individuals capable of self-direction, and to become competent in assuming social responsibility. It attempts to guide children in the recognition of problems and in seeking solutions problems children in the recognition of problems and in seeking solutions. Problems

8. Hidden Curriculum: It is which knowledge that implicit the knowledge students learn in school. It is implied by the very structure and nature of schools, much of what revolves around daily or established routines. Longstreet and Shane (1993) offer a commonly accepted definition for this term-the "hidden curriculum," which refers to the kinds of learning children derive from the very nature and organisational design of the public school, as well as from the behaviours and attitudes of teachers and administrators... " The hidden curriculum may include both positive and negative messages, depending on the models provided and the perspectives of the learner or the observer.

Process of Curriculum

In the process of curriculum, the following steps are involved:

Step 1: Curriculum Planning: It is a process in which participants at many stages make decisions about what the purpose of learning ought to be, how these purposes might be carried out through teaching learning situations and whether the purpose and means both are appropriate and effective. This is the process of gathering, sorting, selecting, balancing, and synthesising relevant information from various sources in order to design those experiences that will assist learners in attaining goals of the curriculum.

Step 2: Curriculum Design: William M. Alexander stated that the school curriculum has a framework or structure which is known as 'design'. The curriculum design provides a basis for

classifying and organising the curriculum Opportunities offered by the school. It is the pattern or structure of a curriculum. It is the arrangement or organisation of the components of the curriculum.

Step 3: Curriculum Development: It is a specialised area of work which expects a teacher to have a deep understanding of the underlying concepts of curriculum, and also the skills to systematically design learning experiences to achieve socially desired goals. It is continuous and never ending process.

Step 4: Curriculum Implementation: it is the process of proper management of ‘ the curriculum. it is the basis of curriculum implementation and transaction. It consider the social philosophy of the society. nature of course of study, type of . examination system, growth and development of the students, and recommendations of commissions and committees related with curriculum.

Step5: Curriculum Evaluation: It is a process of delineating, obtaining and providing information which are useful for making decisions about curriculum development and umplementation. This process of evaluation is undertaken in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of an existing or an under construction curricuiumsothatimprovementscanbe made. his noone shot affair. It is dynamic and cyclic process There are different bodies which are involved m the preparation of curriculum. These are curriculum administrators, principles, school boards communities, law makers, educational researchers, teacher educators, non-schooi educators, and publishers, state department of education, parents, students, pmjw‘ directors, autinrs, testers, aocreditors, lobbyists, and philanthropists.

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