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MEANING AND NATURE OF CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is the heart of schooling, the education process. Education and curriculum are two sides of the same coin. While education is a process, curriculum is a means to the process. While education is learning, curriculum signifies situations for learning. While education deals with how and when, curriculum deals with what. While education is the product, curriculum is the plan. All resources available at school i.e. the school building, equipment, varieties of instructional materials including books, equipments, software, hardware exist for just one purpose-for supporting effective implementation of the curriculum. The entire set of educational activities-the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities as well as the organization of teaching learning strategies and the evaluation schedule flow from the school curriculum. In education it is generally identified with a course of study, subjects prescribed for a course. In fact subjects form only a part of curriculum and they do not constitute the whole of it. The term curriculum stands for the totality of planned learning experiences offered to students in a school. Thus, curriculum means the total situation selected and organized by the institution and made available to the teacher to operate and to translate the ultimate aim of education into reality. Curriculum can be called the pivot around which various classroom activities and entire school programmes are developed. When people talk about curriculum, they use various phrases such as meaning of curriculum, concept of curriculum, definition of curriculum, structure of curriculum, dynamics of curriculum, changing concepts of curriculum, foundations for curriculum, open curriculum, hidden curriculum, models of curriculum development, determinants of curriculum, curriculum process, curriculum design, approaches to curriculum development, curriculum transaction and curriculum evaluation. All these have been discussed in the course of knowledge and curriculum. The unit-VI provides a conceptual framework regarding the meaning, definition, concept, structure and dynamics of curriculum.

MEANING OF CURRICULUM

Curriculum is one of the most important items in the educative process. The curriculum, in fact, is the fundamental problem which determines the *what* and *how* of the process of education. What to do and how to do is the very essence of curriculum. Etymologically, the term curriculum is derived from the Latin word *currere* which means run or run-way or to run a course. Thus curriculum means a course to be run for reaching certain goal. The curriculum refers to a specified course of study at a school, college, or university or the aggregate of the courses of study given in a school, college or university. The stated curriculum of a programme constitutes a small part of the total learning milieu, but it is obviously the most tangible one, and reflects the philosophy and objectives underlying the educational programme.

A survey of the following definitions of 'curriculum' by various educators reflects the modern concept of curriculum and their classification. A curriculum means, the total situation (all situations) selected and organized by the institution and made available to the teacher to operate and to translate the ultimate aim of education into reality. In the words of Cunningham, curriculum is a tool in the hands of the artist (the teacher) to mould his material (the pupil) according to his ideal (objective) in his studio (the school). The material is highly self active, self-determining human being who reacts and responds consciously. Curriculum may be defined as the 'social environmental in motion'. It is the sum total of all the activities and experiences provided by the schools to the learners for achieving the desired objectives. The course of studies is merely a suggestion for curriculum activities and procedures, a guide for teaching to follow.

DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM

Curriculum refers to the means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes. Curriculum definitions fit five categories:

1. Curriculum as a product - program, document, electronic media, or multimedia
2. Curriculum as a program of study - usually courses offered, curriculum sequences of study in standards as benchmarks, gateways,
3. Curriculum as intended learning - goals, content, concepts, generalizations, outcomes
4. Curriculum as experiences of the learner - activities, planned and unplanned.
5. Hidden curriculum - what students learn that isn't planned - unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school.

CONCEPTS OF CURRICULUM

There is available a multiplicity of concepts of curriculum since educationists give their own different interpretations of the content and functions of curriculum. Let us discuss three such concepts by three different thinkers, which represent three major contributions to the body of knowledge on curriculum. The first concept, stated by Albert Oliver, refers to curriculum merely as the educational program consisting of three important elements, such as studies, activities and guidance. The second concept is based on a carefully thought out scheme of values which constitute the aims and objectives, or purposes of education. The third concept looks at curriculum as the function of the public school, she list the three functions as preserving and transmitting cultural heritage, serving as an instrument for transformation of culture, and working as a means for individual development.

STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum system is a set of components, for achieving broad educational goals. These components comprise plans for a program of learning opportunities arranged within curriculum domains (aims, goals and objectives) and include suggestions for subject matter,

curriculum design, instructional modes (methods and organization) and evaluative procedures. These concepts are briefly defined in the following paragraphs.

(I) CURRICULUM DOMAINS: The curriculum domain is defined as a grouping of learning opportunities planned to achieve a single set of major educational goals. Thus the identity of the domains for which plans are made for a particular school centre is dependent upon the major educational goals selected by the planners. We recognize, of course, that many factors determine the goals of a particular school centre, and it is to be expected that goals will differ among centres. Nevertheless, we suggest as a broad classification of goals or objectives by domains for our reference in this and other chapters of this book, three sets of goals or objectives that seem to us to be of great present and future significance: intellectual development, value development and skill development. Aims refer to ultimate goals which are proposed by the education system. The term goals refer to the long-term end. Objectives are the milestones to achieving the aims or endpoints of the educational system of a country. Educational objectives are desired learning outcome of education; sometimes it refers to explicitly worded statements specifying the behaviour the learners should be able to exhibit in some measurable form. The learning outcomes refer to the knowledge, attitude, skills, etc., that a learner acquires as a result of some learning experience. These often include intended as well as unintended results of learning.

(II) SUBJECT MATTER: Subject matter in each discipline consists of facts, concepts, rules and generalization. Facts are based on observations of events that have either occurred in the past or exist in the present. Concepts are the name given to the categories formed as a result of classifying factual data. All learners form concepts and give them names in order to make sense of the various stimuli in the world. Rules and generalizations are statements that link two or more concepts. They are predictive in nature contain more than one element.

(III) CURRICULUM DESIGN: Curriculum design is the process of drawing up curriculum proposals including what to include and how to present in such a manner as to advance the changes of implementing the curriculum with understanding and success. Learning experiences facilitate change in behaviour and as a result of this attainment of aims and objectives. Various learning experiences deal with the human being's functioning in particular situations, their interests of problem solving. These learning experiences provide cognitive (mental) affective (emotional) and conative (physical) experiences or their mix. The curriculum designing is the creative aspect of curriculum development. The planning group responsible, for example, for developing plans in the human relations domain for a population of middle school children, having collected and analysed essential data and identified goals, would need to create or select a general pattern - a design - for the learning opportunities to be provided. The design plan ultimately anticipates the entire range of learning opportunities within the domain for this population, or at least the points of further planning. The curriculum system, as we have viewed and presented it includes the implementation of the curriculum design, or instruction. Each learning opportunities involves some mode, that is, way of happening.



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(iv) EVALUATIVE PROCEDURES: The curriculum system also includes a plan for evaluation of the curriculum in relation to its goals. Our treatment of evaluation recognizes both formative and summative evaluation. Formative procedures are the feedback arrangements which enable the planners and implementers of the curriculum to make adjustments and improvements throughout the planning or implementing, process. The summative evaluation comes at the end and deals directly with the evaluation of the total curriculum plan; this evaluation becomes in effect feedback for the planners to use in deciding whether to repeat, modify, or eliminate the plan with another population.