

Chapter 3

All Roads Lead to Curriculum Inclusive of Social Justice and Democracy

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ABSTRACT

Developing curricula requires instructors to take into account several factors. These factors can be viewed as critical components of curriculum development for education instructors. Without adequately addressing critical components such as curriculum history, curriculum theory, curriculum philosophies, curriculum processes, curriculum implementation, and evaluation, education instructors will fail to develop sound/meaningful curriculum(s). This chapter sheds light on relevant information from curriculum on its history, theory, philosophies of development, processes, implementation, and evaluation. The value of such a review is to assist those individuals seeking a teaching credential in education to have confidence to blend curriculum development with their prior occupational knowledge and skills. The chapter also examines caveats and dangers when social and political constructs are overlaid in compartments.

INTRODUCTION

Education is about preparing people, young and old, for the world of work, and to ambulate within their environment or particular social, cultural, or political niche. Those who seek an educational teaching credential plan to teach their own occupational or knowledge-based skills to younger generations of learners. Therefore, this naturally

links to setting a learning environment in which a sound and meaningful curriculum exists. Curriculum knowledge then, theoretically, should be the very first step toward securing a teaching credential. However, given a prior occupational experience, those with occupational knowledge, skills and attitudes may not be necessarily successful instructors in education. As noted by Mager (1997), “though it is a remarkable accomplish-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-5872-1.ch003

ment to have developed the skills and knowledge needed to be considered competent in one's craft, those skills are not the same as those needed for teaching that craft" (p. vii). Mager (1997) further analyzes that "just as an ability to make a tuba is not the same as an ability to play one, an ability to play one is not the same as an ability to teach someone else to do likewise" (p. vii).

The special characteristics of education require curriculum developers to follow as many models as possible to design sound and meaningful curricula. Simply putting together instructional materials violates instructional design. Instructional design aides the process of learning rather than the process of teaching (Gagne, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2005). Indeed, a curriculum is aimed at "intentional" or "formal" learning as opposed to "incidental" or "informal" learning or nonformal learning. "Formal education is highly institutionalized, bureaucratic, curriculum driven, and formally recognized with grades, diplomas, or certificates" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 29). Formal learning is structured in terms of objectives, time and learning support.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) also state:

The term non-formal has been used most often to describe organized learning outside of the formal education system (e.g., such as continuing education or learning a skill with guidance). These offerings tend to be short-term, voluntary, and have few if any prerequisites. However, they typically have a curriculum and often a facilitator." (p. 30)

Non-formal learning can have intentional learning in it from the learner's viewpoint and can have both learning objectives and learning support, but not in a planned program of study leading to a degree but rather through some guided experience generally outside of a formal school structure.

Informal learning there is no formal curriculum and is not in a credit system such as reading a book. Informal learning can be both intentional

and unintentional. Many people advance in using technology with informal learning. According to Gagne et al. (2005), the target goals and desired learning outcomes guide the design and selection of learning activities. Learning, defined by Gagne (1985), is a process that leads to a change in a learner's disposition, capabilities, and ultimately is reflected in behavior. Based on these views, curriculum development must aid this process so students may acquire skills valued in the world of work by studying a sound and meaningful curricula created and taught by professional teachers with prior occupational skills and knowledge.

Curriculum does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation. Not only is curriculum linked to instructional delivery, learning styles, and learning processes, it is inextricably linked to state standards, and ultimately textbook companies that often produce the learning material that learners are exposed to. In terms of state standards, the community within the state and the political nexus that exists will likely impact the content of the curriculum. In addition, the linkage is important when we examine curriculum, which should drive valid and reliable assessment practices.

In the Wang-Russo model, inputs to learning are considered to be curriculum and instructional delivery, while the learner outputs are dependent on learning styles and the variables within the learner's cognitive processes. This is a rather simplistic design in that these variables may have fairly large or small effect sizes in terms of correlations, could be explained in terms of definition and measurement decisions, and may only give a snapshot in time since all of these constructs operate within a dynamic sense. Having said this, the model only provides one type of simplistic approach for the dance between the learning and teaching process.

What should be gleaned from any model however, is the construct of curriculum. Curriculum, data, information, or whatever label curriculum is given, is the essence and the pre-cursor to formal learning. It is the plan, roadmap, and ideology,

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