

The Business Management Role of the Curriculum Director

ALFRED L. PAPILLON

Associate Professor of Education
DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois

SEVERAL reforms in the position of the Curriculum Director seem to be called for today. While the position is growing statistically in the number of instances that it is established, there is apparently wide dissatisfaction with its past and present operation. The obvious problem associated with the curriculum directorship is a lack of sense of direction due to confusion in the definition of the position. There is no clear concept of whom the curriculum director ought to be, or of what he ought to do.

A second and more important problem relating to the curriculum directorship is the sense of frustration which too often affects the curriculum development officer and his sphere of action, as many curriculum directors will testify. This frustration may not be externally manifested, and even at times it exists without being fully realized. The mood is caused by a conflict between administrative concept and practice in regard to the office. Specifically stated, the curriculum director often finds himself in an impasse because the authority given him is not commensurate with his responsibilities.

Assumptions

This article presents a plan for reorganization of one aspect of the curriculum directorship. Two assumptions form a basis for this contention.

A first assumption is that the superintendent of schools delegates his functions relative to the curriculum of the schools to the curriculum director. In terms of sound administrative thinking, the interpretation of the delegation of functions is that the curriculum director is empowered to act for the superintendent in this area of responsibility within the limitations set by the true concept of delegation.

These limitations are, essentially, that the curriculum director is to act within a framework of philosophy and educational policies set by the superintendent, that he is to refer all matters not covered by declared policy to the superintendent for decision by the superintendent, and that the decisions and the actions of the curriculum director are subject to review and rejection by the superintendent.

A second assumption basic to the argument that according fuller management

status to the curriculum directorship will improve its effectiveness is that sound business management in support of a good program is a *sine qua non* for achieving educational goals. This assumption is accepted and practiced almost axiomatically in education as a whole, but it can be and is often lost sight of in regard to subsidiary enterprises in the field of education, such as curriculum development.

Implementation

With these assumptions in mind, it is safe to delineate the main implications which result from according fuller management status to the curriculum director.

The most discernible implication is that the curriculum directorship should be made an operating budget unit. As an operating budget unit head, the curriculum director should participate in constructing the budget to the same degree that other budget unit heads participate so that he can plan an effective educational program for the schools with full knowledge of what budgetary resources are at his command. If there is long-range budget planning in the district, the curriculum director needs to participate in it equally with other unit heads so that he may keep the educational program of the schools in focus with enrollment increases, building construction and other developments in the district.

Once the budget is adopted, the curriculum director needs to have the same management role as other unit heads in budget control and accounting. He is entitled to periodic reports showing total budget, amount spent to date, amount encumbered to date (or, if encumbering the budget is not practiced, whatever other form of reporting budget committed but not yet disbursed), and remaining unspent and unencumbered balance. Finally, in regard to budget, the curriculum director needs a certain amount of flexibility for minor revision and/or transferring funds within his budget.

Competence in School Finance

If the curriculum director is to be invested with authority and responsibility in school finance, he must develop within himself the corollary knowledge and skills in school finance. He must know the customary school funds, the five basic types of accounts, the intricacies of budgetary coding, the labyrinth of the chart of accounts and the basic concepts (debiting, crediting, double entry and the accounting equation). Theoretical knowledge must be acquired in a setting of meaningful laboratory experiences, observation and internship.

In another aspect of business management, the curriculum director must develop competencies in regard to purchasing for the area of curriculum development. Competence in purchasing is of unusual importance for the curriculum director at the present time. Urgency in this area arises from the recent federal legislation which makes available relatively large sums of money for innovation, compensatory programs and research in school districts. The curriculum director carries great responsibility for meeting this challenge squarely. He faces problems in the matter of what materials and equipment qualify for funding under the law, and, more important, what materials and equipment will best fulfill the purposes

and test the hypotheses of the programs or projects which he plans to initiate. Rules of thumb are not sufficient in dealing with these problems; judgments and evaluations must be made.

Basically, questions of purchasing may be grouped as questions relating to *where* (the district) materials are being bought, for *whom* (personnel) they are being bought, *why* (purpose) they are being bought, *when* they must be bought and *how* they must be bought. If the curriculum director elaborates and implements a sound set of guidelines for purchasing, his decisions can make important differences in terms of the quality of education and the cost of education.

Cooperative Relationships

An important element in fuller management status for the curriculum director is empowering him cooperatively to make decisions relative to space and space utilization for curriculum development. Cooperative relationships would evolve under this rubric with the district superintendent by housing a curriculum development center in some central location, and with building principals by housing decentralized curriculum development activities in individual school buildings. The curriculum director must be enabled to participate in planning for future space needs and space utilization for the district so that adequate housing will be assured for curriculum development in the future.

In a similar vein, to the same extent that other administrators in charge of district-wide activities administer their own personnel, the curriculum director should have authority to hire, fire and supervise curriculum development personnel.

Also, there is an implication for cooperative decision making in the delegation of power to the curriculum director by the superintendent. Specifically from the viewpoint of management, such delegation places decision making near the source of the problem, a good sequence is established, quicker action is taken because the curriculum director is the best informed person on the curriculum scene and the span of control for curriculum is narrowed.

A final implication for granting fuller management status to the curriculum directorship is recognition of it in the administrative structure of the school district. This implication is fulfilled by an attitude reflected in day to day administrative behavior. It is essential to guard against recognizing the position in writing, but ignoring it in action. In this respect, the business officer plays an important role. The effort which he puts forth to understand curriculum development, to feel its importance, and to grant it all the management support he can must be commensurate with the managerial thrust he generates for the other departments and levels in the school district.

As possessor of the authority and the decision-making power for curriculum development, the director will meet his position as a challenge rather than take it as a command. What the curriculum director stands most in need of today is a clearly defined and strongly supported administrative base from which to discharge his responsibilities. ☛

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