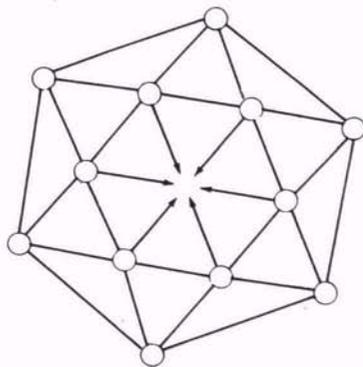


Guidelines for Curriculum Development



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FOR more than twenty years there has been widespread consensus that the curriculum is best developed and installed by the cooperative group method. The 1951 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development stated that, although a curriculum developed by a committee working alone provided much help to committee members who produced it, "the material has little value to teachers who have not participated in its development."¹

This cooperative group method of curriculum development consists of giving to all teachers opportunities to contribute to the evolving curriculum, but centering the greater responsibility in the hands of a smaller group referred to as the curriculum committee. The method is effective because when teachers contribute to the development of the curriculum—or when they know they have a genuine opportunity to contribute to it and affect it—they are much more likely to accept it and to use it.

Even though the cooperative group method for curriculum development has been largely accepted, a comprehensive list of procedural guidelines has not been assembled by any one writer. Rather, different authors

state specific procedures that they consider to be important.

Guidelines for Change

A search of the literature in curriculum development was made by the writer to discover guidelines and their use in developing curriculum guides. There seemed to be agreement on the fourteen listed here. Explanations of the guidelines are given and the relationship of each to curriculum development is considered.

Guideline 1. *Teachers should first be aware of a need for change.*

If the curriculum is to be improved, there must first be a desire for change, according to writers in the field. As Miel says, "dissatisfaction with existing conditions seems to be a prerequisite for intentional change."²

Caswell and associates agree, as they state, "When city-wide curriculum planning comes as a natural response to expressed

² Alice Miel. *Changing the Curriculum, A Social Process*. New York: D. Appleton Century Company, Inc., 1946. p. 40.

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¹ Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Action for Curriculum Improvement*. Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1951. p. 90.

needs in the local school, it automatically becomes a part of the local school program, and it needs no artificial stimulation."³

If a program of curriculum improvement is to be successful, many teachers and staff members must be sensitized to the need for change. The leadership in the program may well capitalize on minor complaints of teachers and direct these immediate dissatisfactions into a positive direction so that teachers may see curriculum revision as a solution.

Guideline 2. *The central office should provide leadership in coordinating the activities of various instructional workers so that a unified curriculum is developed.*

Central office leadership should be available as curriculum development begins, and should help to originate the process. As Anderson states, "Some have made the mistake of believing that a democratic leader waits for the teachers to ask to initiate a program of curriculum study."⁴

According to Caswell and associates, it is the job of the central office to "provide leadership in a continuing analysis of curriculum programs and needs and in the formulation of a comprehensive program to meet them."⁵

Guideline 3. *Adequate resources should be provided.*

Resources provided by the central office should be of different types. As Abrams suggests, "The organization will make available to its members the necessary material facilities, time, human resources, and financial aid."⁶

Material facilities may include professional books, courses of study from other places, textbooks and reference books, meet-

³ Hollis L. Caswell and Associates. *Curriculum Improvement in Public School Systems*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1950. p. 281.

⁴ Vernon E. Anderson. *Principles and Procedures of Curriculum Improvement*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1965. p. 168.

⁵ Caswell and Associates, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁶ Solomon Abrams. *Principles of Human Relations in Curriculum Development*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1952. p. 258.

ing rooms, and secretarial supplies and equipment. Time may refer to the provision made for personnel to work during the school day. Human resources may be staff members, teachers, consultants, leaders, and secretaries. Financial aid may include provisions made for substitute teachers who free regular teachers during the day so that meetings may be held on school time, for payment for time spent after school hours or Saturdays in meetings, for payment during summer months for writing, for consultant service, and for materials and books needed.

Guideline 4. *The guide should be prepared by a group of teachers, principals, and other personnel, working cooperatively.*

This principle, expressed almost universally by writers in the field of curriculum development, is the converse of the method used at the turn of the century, when a specialist was directed to write a course of study.

Working groups should consist of personnel who are invited and who want to work on the problem. A permissive, experimental atmosphere must exist if the guide is to reflect the committee's best efforts.

All who are concerned with the program should have a chance to participate in the process of change to some degree. However, "there is a greater chance for success if smaller groups are used," as pointed out by the Metropolitan School Study Council.⁷

Guideline 5. *All who are concerned with the program should have a part in the group planning.*

Writers on curriculum development state that as many teachers as possible should participate, because such involvement will give teachers a stake and an interest in curriculum change, will strengthen the movement toward change, and will eventuate in changed classroom practices.

But too large a group is unwieldy. According to Nault⁸ and others, even though a

⁷ Metropolitan School Study Council. *Better High Schools Faster*. Second Report. New York: the Council, 1955. p. 3.

⁸ William H. Nault. "Can Curriculum Guides Be Effective?" *Educational Leadership* 12(7): 410-14; April 1955.

teacher does not contribute an idea, he usually feels that he is involved if he has been invited to make suggestions, and may therefore be inclined to accept it.

Some writers advise that the entire community—the school staff, lay citizens, and pupils—should assist in determining the nature of the curriculum, each according to his background and qualifications. Yet as Krug says, “professional educators have received special training for their work and may legitimately be expected to contribute more than might be possible for other citizens.”⁹

While pupils could not be expected to participate in curriculum planning as experts, they should have opportunities to affect the curriculum—they can advise from the standpoint of the learner.

Guideline 6. *Activity should be at the local level.*

Curriculum changes may be planned by the curriculum committee, but must be tested in classrooms. Conversely, the committee responsible for planning must develop ways of discovering and using ideas that have originated or have been developed in classrooms.

Curriculum planning must be intimately related to classroom practices. The teacher must be placed in the center of the improvement program, because the curriculum, although planned centrally, is never fully determined until the pupils have appeared in the classrooms. As Anderson says, “The teacher is the most important of the ‘curriculum makers.’”¹⁰

Guideline 7. *Experimentation should be done by teachers.*

Without ideas from teachers in the school system, the curriculum would tend to become barren. According to Douglass, Bent, and Boardman:

Many teachers attempt innovations in their teaching methods, trying new techniques and devices in the endeavor to find one which will have more satisfactory results. This tendency

⁹ Edward A. Krug. *Curriculum Planning*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1957. p. 14.

¹⁰ Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

opens to supervisors the opportunity to introduce the experimental methods as a means of assisting teachers to try out new practices or procedures under controlled conditions. . . .¹¹

Guideline 8. *Use should be made of the best practices in effect locally and elsewhere.*

The curriculum should be based on both theory and practice. Furthermore, it should be based on practices that have been successful locally. As is stated in the 1953 Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators, “Findings of scientific research should be respected and incorporated into curriculum plans.”¹²

However, this cannot be done blindly. The results of such research must be tried locally to see whether they are workable in the local situation. For, as Abrams says, “The curriculum . . . will not be transplanted successfully from one school system to another.”¹³

Guideline 9. *Channels of communication should be maintained and used.*

The effectiveness of the cooperative group process of curriculum development depends on how closely the central planning group relates to the entire group of teachers who will use the curriculum. Communication between them must be a two-way affair. As Abrams recommends: “Effective communication will be established between individuals, between individuals and groups, and between groups engaged in committee work.”¹⁴

The committee must be acquainted with local experimentation and with the best practices in effect locally. Conversely, Abrams suggests that, in order to let teachers know of progress being made, “The groups will keep records and will publish summaries of meetings.”¹⁵

¹¹ Harl R. Douglass, Rudyard K. Bent, and Charles W. Boardman. *Democratic Supervision in Secondary Schools*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961. p. 163.

¹² American Association of School Administrators. *American School Curriculum*. Thirty-first Yearbook. Washington, D. C.: the Association, 1953. p. 82.

¹³ Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Guideline 10. *The new curriculum should be introduced gradually, if teachers are to feel reasonably secure.*

The new curriculum should be introduced to teachers, little by little, as it is being developed. It is brought to the attention of teachers through the use of various communication media. Every issue of a news letter, every bulletin, every teachers meeting, every statement about the new guide helps to prepare teachers for it.

Even after the new curriculum is ready, its introduction into classrooms should continue to be gradual. As Alberty says, "The 'new curriculum' is not something that is 'installed' completely at a given time, but rather is put into effect as decisions are made and as conditions as to staff and resources can be worked out."¹⁶

The security of teachers must be considered in the introduction of new courses. Teachers' individual growth rates should be considered, and the new curriculum should be installed in each classroom when the teacher in that classroom is ready for it. However, there is a reciprocal responsibility on all supervisory and teaching personnel for putting into effect the new course as early as is feasible.

Guideline 11. *Changing of the curriculum must be accomplished by changing the values, skills, and/or understandings of teachers through an educational program.*

The curriculum is dependent upon what happens in classrooms. If the curriculum is to be changed, the activities in the classrooms must be changed. If these activities are to be changed, teachers must be changed. As Evans states, "The notion that changing the curriculum means changing people has apparently taken firm root in the thinking of educators."¹⁷

As has been stated previously, the primary means of changing teachers is through

¹⁶ Harold Alberty. *Reorganizing the High School Curriculum*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953. p. 442.

¹⁷ Hubert M. Evans. "Organization for Curriculum Development." *Review of Educational Research* 27(3): 287; June 1957.

participation in the changing of the curriculum.

Guideline 12. *Many means of curriculum improvement should be used.*

A well-planned in-service education program should be a part of curriculum development. In fact, as Hugh B. Wood observes, "Curriculum improvement as a process has become synonymous with supervision and in-service education, for many technics have grown out of good supervisory practices and in-service training."¹⁸

Thus, curriculum improvement is seen to be dependent upon in-service education which may utilize many means. Abrams concurs as he says, "The procedures will stimulate the use of many varied means of improvement including: action research, clinics, in-service courses, surveys, cooperative studies, and workshops."¹⁹

Guideline 13. *Evaluation of the process of curriculum development should be made continuously.*

The process of curriculum improvement is viewed as change in human relationships, and thus is affected by changing group relationships.

As Abrams says, "The organization will be continuously evaluated to determine its effect on the improvement of human relations, and its contribution to the establishment and maintenance of the requisite healthy conditions for the improvement of the curriculum."²⁰

It therefore becomes the function of the administration and the curriculum group to evaluate the process being used, the material being introduced, and the teachers for whom the course is being developed. Changes in the process must then be made in the light of the evaluation.

Guideline 14. *Curriculum revision should be a continuous process.*

The organization for curriculum development should not pass out of existence

¹⁸ In: A. Harry Passow. "Organization and Procedures for Curriculum Improvement." *Review of Educational Research* 24(3): 227; June 1954.

¹⁹ Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

when the new curriculum is ready. The work should be continuous, rather than sporadic. As Caswell and Campbell state, "A course of study should be mimeographed, rather than printed, until it has been through several revisions."²¹

Although the process of mimeographing is not the essential point, the statement does emphasize that the publication be temporary in nature. During the early stages of the new course, teachers should try it out in pilot studies organized for that purpose. Sug-

²¹ Hollis L. Caswell and Doak S. Campbell. *Curriculum Development*. New York: American Book Company, 1935. p. 9.

gestions should then be submitted to the curriculum committee so that the revision will incorporate the best thinking of all teachers.

As soon as the revised course is completed, evaluation is begun in the classrooms, and another cycle is started.

Although the superiority of one method of curriculum development over another probably cannot be shown experimentally, there is consensus that the cooperative group method of curriculum development is the best method. Certain procedural guidelines noted above have been agreed upon by writers in the field. □

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