

Curriculum: A Changing Concept

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A 1965 SURVEY of curriculum course offerings in teacher education institutions raised serious question as to the status of curriculum content and opportunities for experiences offered the professional educator.¹ A second survey was made in 1969 to determine the present status of curriculum offerings and changes that have taken place in this area since the original study was made. A modified form of the 1965 instrument was sent to the 27 institutions which responded to the original survey. Fifty additional institutions similar to the original 27 were asked to provide data. From this group of 77 institutions, 33 institutions, including 14 of those who had responded in 1965, returned the completed survey instrument. Data provided through this new survey give some indication of the nature of courses and content being offered and identify some changes that are taking place in teacher education institutions.

Course Listing

The survey of curriculum offerings in 33 institutions in 1969 revealed 186 courses as compared to 116 courses listed by the 27 institutions that responded in 1965. The 1969 survey indicates that there is an average

¹ Lutian R. Wootton. "The Curriculum: Is the Concept Changing?" *Clearing House* 42 (3): 143-45, November 1967.

of 5.7 curriculum courses per institution, whereas the 1965 survey showed an average of 4.6 courses per institution. When courses listed in the 1969 survey were grouped into eight major categories, it was noted that nearly one-half of these courses were classified as general curriculum. The next largest number of courses were classified as curriculum development with 17 percent and curriculum problems with 14 percent. A comparison of these factors in the two surveys indicates a decrease in the curriculum development category and an increase in the general category (See Table 1).

Curriculum Content

A significant finding in regard to course content is that about the same number of courses in both surveys give major attention to bases for curriculum content, curriculum theory, curriculum principles, and curriculum plans of organization. These areas of content are provided in more than 50 percent of all courses.

In addition, it is found that 40 percent of all classes provide students with the opportunity to study history and development of

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curriculum, to study scope and sequence in content areas, to plan courses in content areas, and to develop skill in problem solving. It was found that trends and issues which influence the curriculum were examined in three-fourths of the courses listed. This is classified as a medium of instruction but may very well be an indication of the actual content of courses (See Table 2).

These aspects of content in curriculum as specified seem to be included in a variety of course titles with none specifically for any one set of courses. From the data received, it is impossible to be assured by a title of a course what specific body of content it embraces. For example, ten institutions listed the course "Elementary School Curriculum." Of the eight possible content topic choices, the range is none to six.

Total number of courses	116	186
Curriculum development	30%	17%
General curriculum	39%	47%
Laboratory experiences	7%	6%
Foundations	1%	3%
Special curriculum	9%	5%
Curriculum theory	5%	6%
Curriculum trends	0%	2%
Curriculum problems	10%	14%
Research and evaluation	0%	2%
(Included in other titles)		
	1965	1969

Table 1. Classification of Courses

Studies history and development of curriculum	45%	40%
Explores bases for curriculum content	50%	51%
Studies curriculum theories and principles	54%	54%
Studies curriculum plans of organization	59%	60%
Guides students in planning courses in content areas	37%	40%
Studies scope and sequence of skill areas of curriculum	44%	40%
Major attention to developing skill in problem solving	21%	20%
Examines trends and issues influencing curriculum	69%	75%
	1965	1969

Table 2. Course Content

Materials, Media, Techniques

The practice of requiring students to purchase textbooks in curriculum courses has decreased from 66 percent to 56 percent or a drop of 10 percent. However, textbook purchase is required in one-half of the courses.

Other significant findings include a 10 percent increase in courses which employ team teaching and a slight decrease in lecture-discussion as a class procedure. The most significant change noted is that current periodicals are listed as major sources of content for 52 percent of the courses in 1969, as contrasted with only 22 percent in 1965. Usage of practically all facets of course materials, media, and techniques showed a marked increase over the 1965 survey (See Table 3).

For those who are concerned as to whether curriculum and methods can or should be taught separately, this survey shows that more than 50 percent of the courses listed teach both curriculum and

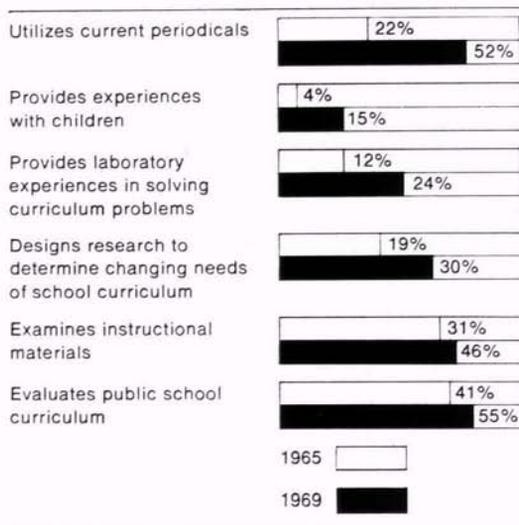


Table 3. Course Materials, Media, and Techniques

methods in the same course. Respondents were specifically requested not to include any methods courses in the survey as a safeguard to the confusion of the two. We must conclude, therefore, that at least half of our respondents have difficulty in separating curriculum and method as content for teacher education courses, or it may be that they see content as something different from that which we have previously considered as such.

Course Memberships

It is recognized that the population for which a course is offered is a strong determinant of course content. An examination of the groups for which the courses are being offered shows that 81 percent of the courses are for graduate students, 15 percent for undergraduates, and 4 percent for undergraduates and graduates. A more important factor is that 52 percent of these courses are planned for teachers only. Twenty-nine percent are open to teachers, administrators, and curriculum directors or supervisors. This means that 81 percent are open to teachers. Eighteen percent are for administrators, curriculum directors, or supervisors only. Only two courses (one percent of the listing of

courses) are primarily for professors of curriculum in college (See Table 4). One might ask how many curriculum courses do teachers normally take? Could it be that they take only one or two? If so, this is part of the reason for half of the courses being in the general category and for content topics not being confined to certain course titles.

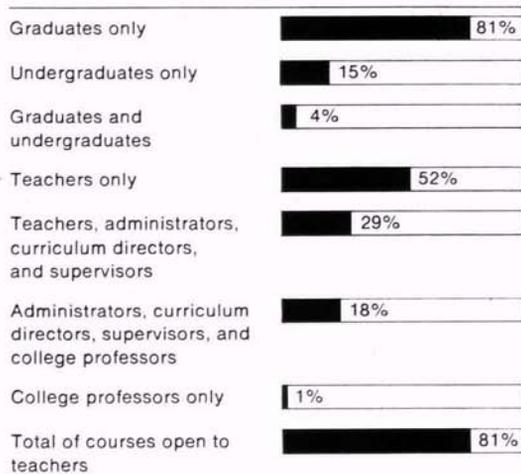


Table 4. Course Membership 1969

Changes in the Past Five Years

The survey of 1969 revealed that changes have been made in curriculum offerings in 20 of the 33 institutions within the past five years. Courses have been added such as Curriculum Theory, Fundamentals of Curriculum, Curriculum Trends, and many courses in curriculum for specified separate subject areas. Most of these courses added appear to be similar to curriculum courses which have been listed in teacher education institutions for some time. However, some different titles such as Early Childhood Education, The Middle School, and Counseling and Curriculum have been added.

Revision of course content indicates that content is being modified in terms of the changing scene in education. These revisions include such relatively new aspects of curriculum as Structure of Knowledge, Educational Technology, Behavioral Objectives,

Social Trends, and Practicum Experiences. Curriculum experiences being added other than regular college courses seem to center on college student involvement in public school experiences through field trips, field studies, and field problems.

Projective Changes Being Planned

It is exciting to note the contemplated curriculum changes in 1969 as contrasted with those recorded in 1965. Only three institutions in 1965 expected any change in curriculum offerings. One of these institutions planned to add three to five courses. Another expected to add an internship. The third institution planned to add some laboratory experiences.

In the 1969 survey, 25 institutions indicated that they expect to make changes in curriculum offerings. Two institutions plan to develop a doctoral program in curriculum. Several other institutions are adding courses to their graduate programs in curriculum.

Some indicate that they are restudying their total offerings in curriculum. One institution has developed a new organization with an area of specialization in curriculum, and its faculty members are presently considering the development of 15 new courses. Various other anticipated changes were indicated.

Emerging Trends Recognized

Responses by those providing data for the survey indicate several emerging trends which they believe are influencing the curriculum.

These trends are as follows:

1. Teacher education is gaining recognition as a university function.
2. Cooperation between universities and schools is increasing through cooperative curriculum endeavors.
3. More curriculum service is being offered to public school systems.
4. Changes in social institutions and ma-



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for social problems are being related to the role of schools.

5. The non-curriculum idea of approaching content development on the basis of questions of people in problem conditions is emerging.

6. Attention is being given to clarification of objectives by using behavioral language.

7. Attention is being given to principles and or process as the necessary basis of curriculum.

8. An interdisciplinary emphasis in curriculum is growing.

9. Subject matter is being restructured.

10. National curricular patterns in math, science, and social studies are developing.

11. Individual curriculum programming is increasing.

12. Educational technology and continuous pupil progress curricula are altering elementary and secondary curricula.

13. Hardware and software companies are merging.

14. More emphasis is being placed upon work done in public schools with children rather than in university lecture classes.

15. There is an increase in staff members of a school system assigned to curriculum planning and supervision.

16. More supervisors and administrators are required to take substantial work in the area of curriculum.

17. Various kinds of experimental programs are being established for preparing teachers and administrators for work in ghetto and inner city schools.

18. Teachers are becoming more specialized.

Our survey of curriculum offerings in 33 teacher education institutions indicates that more courses are being identified and

offered as curriculum courses. Approximately half of the curriculum courses may be identified as general curriculum. The major aspects of curriculum content in courses are about the same in 1969 as they were in 1965. Approximately half the courses explore bases for curriculum content and study curriculum theory, principles, and curriculum plans of organization. Three-fourths of the courses examine trends and issues which influence curriculum. There is a significant increase in the use of current periodicals as a major source for content. Curriculum and method are taught in the same course in half of the courses. Four-fifths of the curriculum courses are open to teachers, with one-fifth open only to administrators, curriculum directors, and supervisors. Two-thirds of the institutions have made changes in curriculum offerings within the past five years. Various trends are emerging which seem to influence the curriculum.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to identify any body of curriculum content to which every student of curriculum should be exposed. The generally accepted areas (or the identifying topics of history, bases, theory, principles, plans of organization) remain about the same. What *are* changing are the process and terminology. It would appear that the process is becoming content for curriculum learnings (courses and other appropriate experiences). Examining trends and issues, analyzing curriculum research studies, designing research to determine changing needs of school curriculum, and guiding students in evaluating public school curriculum are being given more emphasis. These concepts are supported both in what the curriculum respondents checked as being included in the present courses and in what they indicated are the trends influencing curriculum today. □



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