



Educating the

THE process of curriculum planning can be viewed as systematic problem solving related to the instructional program of a school. This problem-solving framework has been widely advocated in the literature of the past 20 years. Curriculum theorists and researchers have also proposed several guidelines for ensuring successful adoption of the results of the planning process. Essentially, they suggest that changes in the curriculum require corresponding changes in the people and systems which are to be affected, and hence their involvement in the planning process is required.

This paper presents an approach for equipping the prospective curriculum specialist with many of the skills for performing tasks germane to successful implementation of the problem-solving curriculum planning process. First, it defines some specific functions of the curriculum specialist, delineates some requisite skills for performing the functions, and suggests activities for developing and practicing these skills on an individualized basis. Next, experiences beyond those suggested, but of common concern to all curriculum specialist preparatory programs, are proposed. Finally, various organizational possibilities for offering these experiences are considered.

Functions, Skills, and Activities

Basic to the preparation of the curriculum specialist are knowledge, skills, and activities pertinent to this professional re-

sponsibility. Specific functions of the curriculum specialist within a problem-solving framework include: (a) the assessment and analysis of existing curricula for the purpose of identifying needed improvement (the problem); (b) the determination of appropriate directions in which to move in order to solve the problem (the goals or objectives); (c) the devising of strategies for achieving the goals or objectives (hypotheses and implementation); and (d) the evaluation of progress toward the problem solution (evaluation and testing).

1. Assessment and Analysis

The curriculum planner is expected to be capable of involving other educators in a continuous process of assessing the curriculum for the identification of realistic problems and areas of needed improvement. With the help of expert knowledge in the area, these problems must be recognized as significant by all those involved in implementing the curriculum. The assessment of a situation (the curriculum) for the purpose of identifying needs requires that there be sufficient data about what *should* exist in order that what *does* exist can be compared against the yardstick. This necessitates the consideration of pertinent information about the society concerned, individual needs, and the nature of man.

Skills. Some skills requisite to problem identification in curriculum, then, are the

Curriculum Specialist¹

JAMES E. EISELE*
LUTIAN R. WOOTTON

ability to: (a) interpret data from sociology, psychology, and philosophy; (b) translate these data into an "ideal" curriculum; (c) gather data about the existing curriculum; (d) recognize disparities between what is and what should be; (e) continually clarify and refine the problem; (f) coordinate the efforts of group members in the assessment; and (g) identify and utilize expert knowledge in the areas under assessment.

Activities. Experiences which may provide opportunities to practice these skills are to be found as close to an actual field exercise as possible. Short of this, the prospective curriculum specialist may well gain competency from experiences which: (a) apply knowledge of the foundations to the development of conceptual models of the curriculum; (b) use surveys of schools and school districts to gain data on existing curricula; (c) assume responsibility for actual group problem identification; and (d) draw conclusions about the existence of actual problems and needs and consult expert help in confirming or rejecting the conclusions.

2. Goal Selection

Curriculum planners are also expected to be capable of coordinating a group toward the specification of behavioral objectives which are commensurate with the actual needs of the curriculum. An important condition of these objectives is that they reflect a clear and direct relationship to the needs

which the group members have identified. They must also clearly show the direction in which the group intends to move in solving the problem.

Skills. Several skills essential to the accomplishment of this task are similar to those mentioned in the preceding section and are not repeated here. Unique competencies for specifying need-related goals include ability to: (a) recognize alternative directions in moving toward problem solving; (b) specify these directions in ways which can be readily observed by the participants; and (c) translate statements of vague, general objectives into behavioral objectives which are specific and observable. Attempts to "train" teachers to write and use behavioral objectives often create more resistance than positive attitudes toward their use. These attempts are often viewed as irrelevant, unimportant, simplistic, and insulting to the intelligence. Yet the task is a necessary one, and experience is the only recourse to prevent inept handling of the process.

Activities. Activities which may exercise skills in specification of behavioral ob-

¹ The term "specialist" is used rather than "generalist" in the conviction that curriculum planning requires the assistance of persons with special skills unique to this process.

* James E. Eisele, Associate Professor, and Lutian R. Wootton, Professor, Department of Curriculum and Supervision, College of Education, University of Georgia, Athens

jectives include: (a) determining goals at all levels of students' own programs just as they will be expected to do as curriculum workers; (b) evaluating objectives stated in proposals which have won external funding and those which have failed to receive funding, discussing and criticizing them from the standpoint of their relationship to the stated needs in the proposal, and judging them on their ability to be observed and their degree of specificity; (c) developing a curriculum project proposal utilizing some available school population; and (d) providing opportunities to work in groups with fellow graduate students, undergraduate students, and other educators to formulate behavioral objectives. The recent stress on behavioral objectives has frequently been to the detriment of teacher creativity because of poor communication between the curriculum specialist and those writing the objectives. This shortcoming must be offset by involvement of students in relevant situations.

3. Goal Achievement Strategies

Curriculum revision involves identification of goals for curriculum changes as prerequisites to goal achievement. The number of ways to achieve stated objectives is nearly unlimited. However, the success of any curriculum project depends upon the choices which are made and implemented. Increasing the number of likely choices for attaining the desired goals increases the probability that the best choice is among those presented.

Skills. In order to identify and carry out goal achievement strategies, the curriculum specialist must possess several behaviors not previously listed. He should possess: (a) a thorough knowledge of curriculum strategies which have been previously employed; (b) the ability to interpret data about the success or failure of previously tested strategies; (c) the ability to create new strategies in light of the goals; (d) the ability to help others create new strategies; and (e) the ability to make judgments about which of the alternative strategies is most likely to be successful in achieving the stated goals.

Activities. The behaviors listed above might be acquired through such activities as: (a) making extensive surveys of the literature and the field to ascertain the extent and kind of innovations (solution strategies) which have been developed for an educational setting; (b) reviewing other fields and professions for change models and attempting to adapt these to an educational setting; (c) reviewing data about various attempted solutions to determine their effectiveness (This could be in the form of direct involvement in the collection and interpretation of data about a real project; this, of course, would require a field exercise.); (d) practicing the creation of solutions to given problems, using criteria about both quantity and quality of proposed strategies (One excellent strategy may be better than one poor one; but ten excellent ones are superior to one excellent strategy because this allows for adjustments and alternatives for implementation.); (e) conducting group sessions for inventing creative approaches to problem solution, using techniques such as buzz sessions, role playing, and simulation to encourage production of creative ideas; and (f) designing a pilot study and specifying the steps for its implementation, considering the use of a management technique, such as PERT or PPBS, for this purpose.

4. Evaluation

Evaluation has always been considered integral to the curriculum planning process but has not always been utilized effectively. Recently, due at least partially to requirements for federal funding, the importance of evaluation has been recognized, and this recognition has necessitated that the curriculum specialist be as skilled with evaluation as with other aspects of the curriculum. Stating objectives behaviorally as a part of evaluation should be accomplished immediately after the identification of the problem. Standards of performance for the behavioral objectives, as a related aspect of evaluation, should be established in order to permit adequate observation of progress.

Selection and/or construction of instruments which will measure actual progress

against the performance standards is necessary. Measurement instruments must be carefully used, data must be collected and treated, and interpretation must be made. Some action must be taken in regard to findings before evaluation can be considered complete.

Often the curriculum specialist will seek expert help with evaluation, although he should be capable of bringing much expertise to this task himself. Nevertheless, evaluation is far too important to be left to evaluation specialists alone.

Skills. The following are listed as some of the more important skills required for effective evaluation. The curriculum specialist should be able to: (a) gain sufficient knowledge about the problem to set minimum standards of performance for the behavioral objectives; (b) select available instruments, or construct new ones, which will measure progress against performance standards; (c) administer the instrument; (d) collect the appropriate data; (e) give appropriate treatment to the data; (f) interpret the findings; (g) make evaluative judgments from the interpretations; and (h) take appropriate action (continue, halt, or adjust) based upon the judgments.

Activities. Opportunities which may develop the skills necessary for evaluation might include: (a) setting performance standards, for statements of behavioral objectives, which are acceptable in terms of a knowledge of the aspects of the field under consideration; (b) judging stated performance standards from projects, curriculum packages, resource units, and so forth, for their adequacy in terms of the literature in the field; (c) reviewing the literature for available instruments designed to measure the specified performance against the criteria; and (d) constructing, and validating through pilot studies, an instrument to measure specific behavioral objectives and performance standards. The last mentioned experience should be suitable for practicing several skills, since using the instrument, collecting and treating the data, and interpreting the data are all part of a pilot study.

Furthermore, the conclusions reached call for evaluation decisions about the use of the instrument or about the instrument itself.

Common Experiences

Obviously, the activities described in the preceding sections are far from a complete preparation program for the prospective curriculum worker. The list is incomplete for at least three reasons: (a) It is impossible to project, even within the framework of problem solving, all the possible experiences which could contribute to the development of necessary skills for effective curriculum planning. (b) Individual needs and characteristics of students require that creative approaches be taken to provide them with unique opportunities in keeping with their needs. (c) The list excludes many experiences which are common to all aspects of problem solving, some of which are presented here.

Field Experience. Providing *only* classroom and campus-bound experience for the student of curriculum planning is no longer justifiable, if it ever was. Frequently, the last place where curriculum planning is to be found is on the university campus. At any rate, the "field" for the curriculum planning practitioner is in the public schools, not on the campus or in the university classroom. Internships must be established which will provide the student with all the experience necessary in a realistic setting, including appropriate and adequate supervision by university faculty. The practical experience should be the first order of business for those responsible for the preparation of curriculum specialists.

Simulation. Either as a supplement to field experience, or in place of it where one is not available, simulated field experiences offer rich opportunities for developing curriculum planning competencies. Simulated experiences may make use of undergraduate classes or graduate students, films, story situations, and role playing to create settings where planning processes can be carried out to some extent. Next to an actual field ex-

Instructor

Magazine and INSTRUCTOR Curriculum Materials especially for the elementary teacher . . . Providing ideas and programs on up-to-date topics such as: Environmental Studies—Reading and Language Arts—Humanizing—Early Childhood—Individualizing—Learning Disabilities—Multi-Media.

The Instructor Publications, Inc.  Dansville, N.Y. 14437

perience, simulation probably offers the most realistic experiences for practicing planning skills.

Communications Training. Because of its central importance to curriculum planning, communications training should be an integral part of the education of the curriculum specialist. By communications training is meant opportunities to develop skills of interpreting incoming verbal and nonverbal messages and sending out messages which are supportive and encouraging. This skill is extremely important because the curriculum planner works at problem solving with people, not laboratory equipment. Thus, he must be as skillful at working with people as the scientist is at working with apparatus. However, the curriculum planner's task, in this way, is even more demanding and difficult than is the work of the laboratory-bound scientist.

Human Awareness (Sensitivity) Training. An essential component of curriculum planning is that it be a cooperative venture. Changing the curriculum requires more than changing the written version of an instructional plan. Since the actual curriculum includes all the experiences of the learner, it cannot be changed without a change in the total system surrounding it—or a social system. Social systems are not altered by commanding their alteration; they are changed only when the members of the system want it changed. This necessitates involvement of those persons who are to be affected in the planning of change.

To achieve the necessary involvement of people, the curriculum planner must be sensitive to the needs of others, of the group, and of himself in order effectively to coordinate efforts at planned change. Therefore, opportunities for development of this kind of awareness should be an essential part of the curriculum specialist's training.

Organization

Activities such as those described for the development of skills necessary for effective curriculum planning may not fit neatly into packages called "courses." In fact, the most likely organization for such a program would consist of field studies, with simulated exercises running a distant second. Very few of the actual skills necessary can be successfully acquired through traditional course organization.

Possibilities for organizing such a program within a university are unlimited. Providing field experiences under university guidance is a feasible alternative. However, with or without this provision, several alternate choices seem possible. For example, graduate students could plan their individual programs, in terms of acquiring necessary skills, with a committee of faculty members. Where needs exist, the student or committee could request assignment to a particular instructor who is uniquely suited to work with that student on his particular problem. The assignment could be made for any appropriate duration determined by the student and the chosen instructor. Credits, likewise,

could be determined in the same way. When the student and instructor are satisfied with skill acquisition, the student could seek assignment with another person or persons. A series of these assignments, determined by the student and his advisory committee, would constitute the requisites for the entire degree-granting program.

The persons to whom the students are assigned for professional experiences and skill development may also retain much flexibility. Where several students are assigned with common needs, the instructor may well offer seminars or classroom experiences appropriate to the needs. Most of the experiences provided the student, however, could be in connection with the ongoing activities of the instructor. His field of work, research, publication, and other professional activities should provide the setting for teaching-learning situations with the students.

With appropriate adaptation, this plan seems feasible within the present organizational structures of most teacher education institutions. Certification can be accounted for by granting course credit for equivalent experiences. In the meantime, universities need to help state departments to see the wisdom in this approach to preparing curriculum specialists.

Effecting Change

Effective curriculum planning utilizes the problem-solving approach in bringing about desirable changes in what is taught. A model is set forth here to provide for the appropriate preparation of curriculum specialists, key agents in curriculum planning. This model includes the assessment of existing curriculum to determine needs for improvement, the specification of goals for necessary changes, the selection strategies for achieving the goals, and evaluation of progress. These steps constitute a procedure which has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness for planned change.

In utilizing this model, the curriculum planner operates within a social system; his laboratory is the group, since changing the

curriculum requires changes in the group or system. Therefore, the curriculum planner must observe certain demonstrated principles of change within groups. He must recognize that: (a) People change only what they want to change, therefore they must be involved in deciding what is to be changed. (b) The problem must be realistic to the members of the group. (c) Once begun, change is a continuing process because the recognition and solution of one need will require changes that will cause other needs to become manifest. (d) Expert knowledge is necessary to effectively create desirable change.

The curriculum specialist preparation model calls for the utilization of several suggested activities for the development of specific skills which are also presented. Optional activities for developing these skills are also offered. The major purpose of the model is to propose a framework for planning a program for the preparation of curriculum planners which is consistent with the responsibilities of the position. It suggests that the program be heavily field experience oriented, realizing that desirable preparation activities do not fit neatly into existing packages known as "courses." The activities suggested here might form the nucleus of a curriculum specialist preparation program. However, their maximum utilization will necessitate change in the total educational system which, in turn, requires effective curriculum planning at all levels, especially in the universities where students learn to become curriculum planners.

References

- Warren Bennis, Kenneth Benne, and Robert Chin, editors. *Planning of Change*. Revised edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969.
- R. R. Goulet, editor. *Educational Change: The Reality and the Promise*. New York: Citation Press, 1968.
- Hilda Taba. *Curriculum Development, Theory and Practice*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962.
- Ralph Tyler. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950. □

Copyright © 1971 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.