

Curse, Cure-All,

ONE of the common symptoms of the "bandwagon" era has been to look for a specific panacea for each real or perceived ailment. Such a perspective, of course, often blinds the searcher to the validity of situational variables, to the wisdom of balance, or to the adaptability of alternatives. The concept of management, as it applies to the curricular context, has been, and remains, a realistic example of "bandwagoning."

In our rush to dichotomize concepts, some persons label management as an inhumane, mechanistic blight imposed on educators by the disciples of Taylor and his crusade for scientific management through task analysis. At the other extreme, panacea-hunters have deified the concept of management as a long-awaited "cure-all." If one can press for the maturity of perspective which recognizes neither curse nor cure-all, but searches for both potential utility and inherent weaknesses, then it is possible optimally to use the management concept as a tool/technique in a constructive manner.

The life of a curriculum worker is filled with the processes of planning, organizing, communicating, and evaluating. If one can accept a definition of management as representing a method of operation which is orderly, rational, and systematic, it is not incongruent to think of wanting to plan, organize, communicate, and evaluate in

orderly, rational, and systematic ways. The underlying assumption is that management is a way of thinking and working that presses one to identify what he wants to do, specify how he intends to do it, and determine how he will assess the achievement of his goal.

An additional assumption is that management implies both a holistic and a synergistic quality. Thus all parts of the system are seen as being interdependent, and the system itself is greater than the sum of its parts. When fully considering these qualities, one does not "band-aid" one part of the system without careful analysis of the consequences to other parts of the system; neither does one make decisions while in a crisis-mode without assessing potential alternatives.

Curriculum Management Model

In order to plan and organize in an orderly, rational manner, many curriculum workers will find an operating model to be a viable management tool. A useful model identifies the necessary components and clearly states relationships between such components. While the curriculum worker is primarily concerned with the development of "curriculum," the full model provides for the identification and relationships of the critical parts of the total system. (See Fig-

or Workable Concept?

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ure 1.) In the context of the whole system, the curriculum worker can then turn full attention to the design and production of usable segments of curriculum content. These are the micro-segments of artifacts which are infused with ideas, concepts, and activities to be used by the educational participants, and they prescribe the details of the learning event.

The curriculum development task is analyzed in Figure 2. Area 2.1 represents the planning tasks and area 2.2 the action tasks. In the planning phase, the person charged with the responsibility for developing curricular segments needs to be sensitive to the feelings, attitudes, and intuitions of those with whom he works, as well as of those in the environmental context within which he works. Before a development task can get under way, the curriculum worker also needs to have a realistic knowledge concerning a number of vital areas: (a) the social-cultural milieu in which he functions, (b) the universe of possible structures of people and things available with which to work, (c) the universe of values held by those individuals and groups with whom he works, (d) the universe of processes usable in operationalizing any potential plan of action, (e) theoretical constructs from the various subject disciplines, and (f) a broad base of research data.

From this preliminary information, a specific need or problem area will be identified, and formal appointment of responsibility made. A multidisciplinary team is suggested in order to take advantage of a wide range of specialties and abilities. This demands special care and concern on the part of the leader to establish supportive working relationships; common understanding of terms, concepts, and modes of inquiry; and consensus on the problem statement.

Once broad goals are agreed upon, optimum strategies can be selected for goal accomplishment, the target population can be identified, and the second round of need assessment can take place, verifying or modifying the original problem definition. The next task is that of data gathering. This process assumes that collection procedures are made explicit, criteria for screening data are stated, and procedures for processing and utilizing data once collected are specified. At the completion of the data-gathering sequence, management networks, control tools, and evaluation techniques can be specified.

There are four major functions in the action phase: (a) the design of the components, (b) the demonstrating and testing cycle, (c) the dissemination activities ac-

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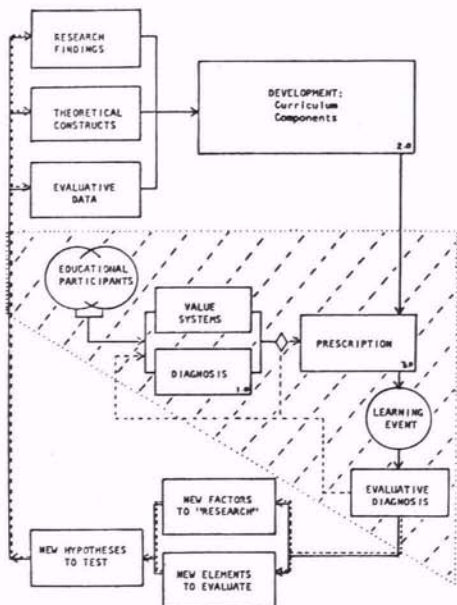


Figure 1. Curriculum Management Model

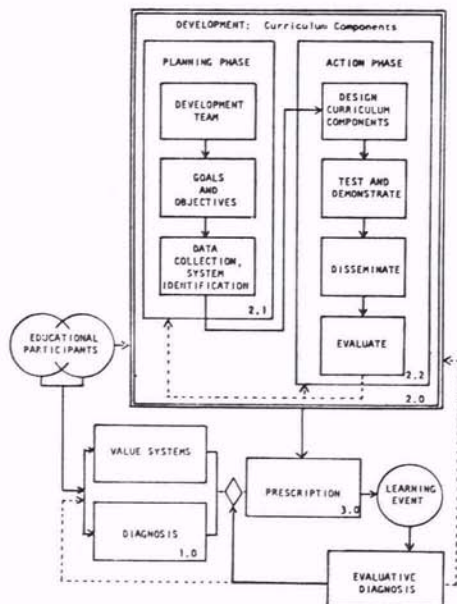


Figure 2. Breakout of the Curriculum Component Development Process (2.0)

completed through training and materials production, and (d) summative evaluation for present-project accountability and for future-project redesign data. It is assumed that formative evaluation for the purpose of continual diagnosis and internal design modification is ongoing throughout the entire action phase of development.

The design of the components is a task that draws on the expertise of a variety of specialists. Curricular generalists and discipline specialists can select the "larger learnings" related to the goals of the project that are supportable by a variety of substantive, organizational, and instructional alternatives. Instructional system designers then select an adequate variety of micro-segments for actual development. They identify the major functions and related subtasks necessary for such development, allocate tasks and resources to designated personnel, and follow the production process through to the completion of the prototype materials. In the meantime, personnel are being trained for the demonstration-testing cycle.

This includes the planning of the demonstration subsystem, during which the prototype is tested and modified as often as necessary. Once the team has sufficient confidence in the prototype, the material is finalized, produced, and disseminated to the users.

The evaluation and redesign sequence is necessary not only for determining the results of the development project, but for the gathering of necessary data should the project be redesigned in the future.

Operational models are but one example of the potential utility of tools and techniques developed under the broad concept of management. As pressures increase for the assessment of learning achievements and for accountability to social and economic factions, other rational systematic ways of work are needed. The greatest curse for any workable concept is to be labeled as a "cure-all." The challenge is to adapt the tools and techniques of management to the special needs and requirements of the curriculum worker; to consider "management" as a tested and workable concept. □

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