

Curriculum Content and Experiences: A Comparative Survey

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What trends are emerging in curriculum offerings and opportunities? A national survey reports significant changes since 1965 and 1969, when earlier studies were made.

A RECENT national survey of teacher education institutions revealed pertinent findings regarding curriculum content and curriculum experiences offered educators—administrators and teachers in public schools and curriculum professors in college. This survey provides a means of viewing and comparing data with similar surveys. In 1965 data from 27 selected institutions with professional preparation programs were utilized.¹ Thirty-three such institutions were surveyed in 1969.² Forty-five institutions provided data in 1973.

The 1973 survey of curriculum offerings revealed significant expansion of the curricu-

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

² Lutian R. Wootton and Robert W. Selwa. "Curriculum: A Changing Concept." *Educational Leadership* 27 (7): 692-96; April 1970.

lum field. In 1965 there was an average of 4.6 curriculum course offerings per institution; in 1969, 5.7; and in 1973, 7.8 courses per institution.

Classification of Courses

When course listings were grouped into categories (Figure 1) changes in the nature of offerings became obvious. The largest percentage of offerings in 1965 (39%) and 1969 (47%) fell into the general curriculum category (for example, elementary curriculum, secondary curriculum) while this category dropped to 20% in 1973. Curriculum development continued to be the second largest category of offerings in 1965 (30%), 1969 (17%), and 1973 (20%). The 1973 survey showed courses more evenly distributed indicating more attention is being given to several aspects of curriculum than in 1965 and 1969.

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Dates of Studies	1965	1969	1973
Curriculum Development or Planning	30%	17%	20%
General Curriculum	39%	47%	20%
Laboratory Experiences in Curriculum	7%	6%	10%
Curriculum Foundations or Fundamentals	1%	3%	7%
Special Curriculum	9%	5%	12%
Curriculum Theory	5%	6%	7%
Curriculum Trends	0%	2%	9%
Curriculum Problems	10%	14%	7%
Curriculum Research and Evaluation	0%	2%	6%

Figure 1. Classification of Courses by Reporting Institutions

Dates of Studies	1965	1969	1973
Studies History and Development of Curriculum	45%	40%	42%
Explores Bases for Curriculum Content	50%	51%	69%
Studies Curriculum Theories and Principles	54%	54%	64%
Studies Curriculum Plans of Organization	59%	60%	53%
Guides Students in Planning Courses in Content Areas	37%	40%	33%
Studies Scope and Sequence of Skill Areas of Curriculum	44%	40%	39%
Develops Skill in Problem Solving	21%	40%	51%
Examines Trends and Issues Influencing Curriculum	69%	75%	64%

Figure 2. Content in Curriculum Courses and Experiences as Classified by Reporting Institutions

Curriculum Content

In classifying the content studied in all offerings according to categories (Figure 2) the most significant finding was that teaching of problem solving has increased from 21% in 1965 to 40% in 1969 and to 51% in 1973. Two other categories of content which have increased significantly are exploration of bases for curriculum content and the study of curriculum theories and principles. In 1965, 69% of those responding said the curriculum course offerings examined trends and issues influencing curriculum. In 1969 this category increased to 75% but dropped to 64% in 1973.

Materials, Media, Techniques

The gradual decline in requiring students to purchase a textbook (1965, 66%; 1969, 56%; and 1973, 49%) indicates that less attention is being given to a single source of course content and that a variety of media are being utilized. However, use of a specific textbook for a course continues to be required in approximately half the situations reported.

The use of materials, media, and tech-

niques (Figure 3) showed a significant increase in five categories from 1965 to 1969 and then a drop in percentage of use in 1973. One category, provision for experiences with children, showed a gradual increase.

The predominant approach to teaching or experiences encountered in curriculum courses in 1973, as reported by 46% of the respondents, was lecture-demonstration. The seminar was the second most used approach, with 35% indicating its use. Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated team teaching was used and 12% organized courses as a workshop. The relatively new means of utilizing performance or competency-based models was reported being used by 16% of the institutions.

Membership and Treatment of Content and Experiences

The offering of more courses in each institution in 1973 than in 1969 and 1965 allows for a greater spread of offerings to educators—teachers, administrators, curriculum directors, supervisors, and college professors. The most significant development in 1973 (Figure 4) is that 39% of the courses offered are for college professors; whereas only 1% were for these persons in 1969. Another significant fact is that 71% of the courses offered are available to teachers, administrators, curriculum directors, and supervisors; whereas in 1969 this cross grouping occurred in only 29% of the cases. With 81% of the curriculum courses open to teachers in 1969, it was evident that adequate curriculum courses were being provided for teachers. However, in 1973 this dropped to 71% but the additional courses for college professors (1% in 1969 and 39% in 1973)

Dates of Studies	1965	1969	1973
Students Required To Purchase Textbooks	66%	56%	49%
Utilizes Current Periodicals	22%	52%	44%
Provides Experiences with Children	4%	15%	20%
Provides Laboratory Experiences in Solving Curriculum Problems	12%	24%	21%
Designs Research To Determine Changing Needs of School Curriculum	19%	30%	28%
Examines Instructional Materials	31%	46%	45%
Evaluates Public School Curriculum	41%	55%	41%

Figure 3. Usage of Course Materials, Media, and Techniques Indicated by Reporting Institutions

Dates of Studies	1969	1973
Graduate	81%	76%
Undergraduate	15%	17%
Teachers	52%	66%
Teachers, Administrators, Curriculum Directors, and Supervisors	29%	71%
College Professors	1%	39%
Total of Courses Open to Teachers	81%	71%

Figure 4. Membership in Courses as Classified by Reporting Institutions

could very well account for this change.

Due to the difficulty of separating curriculum from method, many courses and experiences were listed in the survey in addition to those identified in the nine stated categories. Seventy-five such courses were listed in the survey by thirty institutions with all containing a disciplinary name in the title such as Music in the Secondary School and Secondary Science Curriculum. Such a listing of offerings indicates that much more curriculum is being encountered in teacher education institutions by educators than can be objectively classified.

It is encouraging to note that attention is being given to developing some sequence in curriculum course offerings as was reported by 26 institutions. Five of these institutions offered the basic curriculum course with any sequence of courses permitted after this first course. The other 21 institutions offered a three or four course sequence.

Curriculum courses and experiences are expanding beyond the main campus of institutions according to 25 institutions. Five of these offered the same courses off-campus as they did on the main campus. Approximately three-fourths of the institutions entitled their off-campus curriculum experiences either workshop, field course, in-service course, or current curriculum issues.

Changes in the Past Five Years

The 1973 survey indicated that since 1969, 23 institutions have provided additional curriculum courses for on-campus and off-campus students. Many of these additional courses were concerned with field work, seminars, and internship programs in curriculum. New courses in theory and analysis, research and development, and curriculum

evaluation were added. Thirteen respondents indicated revision of course content in their institutions. The most significant factor concerning revision of courses was the emphasis on courses being updated and strengthened through such means as systems analysis, competency-based criteria, and simulation.

Changes Being Projected

It is exciting to note the increased contemplated changes in curriculum offerings from 1965 to 1973. Institutions projecting new curriculum courses and experiences increased from 3 in 1965 to 32 in 1973. Eight institutions planned field experiences for both undergraduate and graduate students. Five institutions expect to develop competency-based courses for graduate degrees and certification programs. Additional courses and field experiences projected include statistics for curriculum, educational futurism, open classroom curriculum, history of curriculum, practicums for curriculum research, technology, and curriculum models. At least eight of the institutions are in various stages of reorganization with their faculties developing curriculum courses.

Emerging Trends Recognized

Responses by those providing data for the survey indicate emerging trends which seem to be influencing curriculum. These trends are as follows:

1. Many varied curriculum services are being offered to local public school systems.
2. Field centered experiences for both graduate and undergraduate students are increasingly becoming the focus of many curriculum courses.
3. Competency-based programs for teachers, curriculum directors, and supervisors are on the increase.
4. A stronger emphasis on psychological and sociological foundations is emerging in many curriculum courses.
5. Attention is being directed to the strengthening of educational objectives by expressing them in behavioral terms.

6. A closer relationship between curriculum specialists and administrators is emerging.

7. Cooperation between universities and the public schools is increasing and expanding through cooperative curriculum projects and programs.

8. A greater variety of research studies in curriculum is being observed.

9. The tightening of fiscal resources and change of educational climate are resulting in curriculum studies based on alternative organizations.

10. More emphasis on individual learning and less emphasis on nationally supported curriculum programs are being noted.

11. The study of curriculum as a discipline is steadily increasing.

12. There is an increasing emphasis on futurology in curriculum planning.

13. Curriculum priorities are being continually evaluated and revised by curriculum leaders.

14. Curriculum that is open, humanistic, and individualized is gaining recognition.

15. More relevant content and concrete experiences are being provided to students at all levels.

Manuscripts Needed for "Research in Review"

Manuscripts for the "Research in Review" column are being solicited by the coordinator. The column is devoted to providing a *summary* of research completed in an area of interest. The column is *not* designed to report on one particular research study (such manuscripts are best sent to the "Research Supplement").

Manuscripts should be 1,400 words in length (approximately five typewritten double-spaced pages), including references. Submit manuscripts in duplicate and with return envelope and postage. Decisions on materials will be made as promptly as possible.

Materials for "Research in Review" should be addressed to: Dr. Marcella L. Kysilka, Associate Professor, College of Education, Florida Technological University, P.O. Box 25000, Orlando, Florida 32816.

In summary, the 1973 Survey of Curriculum Courses and Experiences shows that courses in curriculum per institution have nearly doubled since 1965, indicating that curriculum as a field of study is making significant gains. This supports the position that curriculum courses should be provided for all teachers and administrators and there should be specific preparation for college persons to teach curriculum as a field of study.

The largest increase in course membership was in offerings for persons preparing to teach curriculum courses—the curriculum professor. It is significant that a number of institutions reported they are now utilizing performance or competency models. The fact that many curriculum courses for specific subject disciplines were listed separately from the curriculum field indicates the need for more coordination between the curriculum field of study and the separate subjects.

The greatest change in curriculum content was the increased attention to developing skill in problem solving. It is of concern that the categories (a) Study of Trends and Issues Influencing Curriculum and (b) Use of Materials, Media, and Techniques reflected a strong effort to modify the learning processes in 1969, then declined in 1973. The year 1969 may be characterized as the height of educational expansion—the period when education was in strong favor by the public and by legislative bodies. The decline in 1973 in these areas, therefore, no doubt reflects the current press of economic recession and accompanying emphasis on accountability. Even though more attention is being given to curriculum as a field of study with more curriculum courses listed, one is still unable to precisely separate method and curriculum. More emphasis on field-centered curriculum experiences and courses off-campus reflects greater cooperation of the public schools and teacher preparation institutions. The fact that considerable attention is being given to revision of curriculum offerings utilizing competency or performance-based models indicates that curriculum educators are keeping abreast of current developments and processes. □

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