

## A SENSIBLE, FACULTY-DESIGNED MODEL FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

ELAINE ATKINS, *Community College of Philadelphia*

Although many educational theorists have attacked technologically oriented curriculum development models in the last two decades, they remain the dominant mechanism for generating and framing curriculum at the Community College of Philadelphia, a large, urban institution employing hundreds of instructors. Until recently, the college insisted that all new courses follow a model closely paralleling Tyler's rationale. Although two other models appear in the college's course development booklet as alternative formats, they are actually slightly modified versions of the original. All three versions structure new courses around the delineation of predetermined, carefully specified objectives, although the second and third versions do not insist on stating these objectives in behavioral terms.

Since the establishment of the college 25 years ago, many teachers have complained, at department meetings, in the halls to each other, and to the instructional staff about the officially approved models. Although their complaints have varied, the chief problem stems from the artificiality of drawing up arbitrary end-points (objectives) for courses conceptualized in terms of intellectual processes or environments. Disgruntled instructors basically have had two options. They could decide not to play the game and therefore refuse to develop a new course, or they could take the more common route of developing their courses without much guidance, as best they could, and then consulting the college's instructional development team for help in writing them up as approved courses. This solution has often involved a last-minute attempt to hunt for pseudo-objectives and matching evaluation procedures.

This article presents a curriculum development model designed by a group of experienced teachers to serve as a genuine alternative to the officially approved models. As of this writing, the model is available to interested faculty who come to the college's Instructional Development Office for help in writing up new course proposals; staff developers and faculty in a large General Studies curriculum project also use the model.<sup>1</sup> The administration has indicated that it will place the new model in its course development booklet

---

<sup>1</sup>This project's early history is described in some detail in my paper, "From Competing Paradigms to Final Consensus: A Case Study of the Deliberations of a Conflict Prone Curriculum Group," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 5 (Summer 1990): 308-327.

alongside the other models at some as-yet-undesignated date after learning how well the new model is working. Although it has not been officially accepted and is still considered experimental by the administration, the model has already shaped both curriculum deliberations and resulting curriculum documents for at least 10 new courses at the college. Most of these courses have been officially approved and are now being taught.

Model 4 (the college's title) rests on a distinct set of value-laden assumptions that places it within the deliberative and interpretive traditions in curriculum theory. (There is no such thing as a value-free curriculum development model). Although it was designed to help faculty from various backgrounds and to apply to all disciplines and programs at the institution, it was nevertheless designed by a group of experienced teachers who already shared a similar, if inarticulate and vague vision about education. It arose in response to dissatisfaction with technologically oriented approaches. Therefore, I offer this article in the spirit of sharing the model and its rationale in the hopes of helping faculty at other institutions develop strategies for designing new courses based on their own vision and academic agenda. The article's purpose is to present an exemplar of one type of curriculum development process for teachers and administrators interested in looking at alternative ways for deliberating about, designing, and documenting new curriculums.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE MODEL

About eight years ago, a historian named Barry Grossbach wanted to develop a new course on the American labor movement but was dissatisfied with Models 1 through 3. He spoke of his problem to me, an English teacher at the college interested in curriculum deliberations and in curriculum theory, especially its philosophical foundations. Together, we intuitively mapped out what seemed like a sensible, simple format to follow; at the time, we were more concerned with getting the new course on the books than with developing a carefully articulated alternative curriculum model for the institution. Our conversations were informal and relied heavily on Barry's negative experiences with the old models and on my strong identification with the reconceptualist movement, especially the numerous critiques of the Tyler rationale by theorists such as Macdonald, Huebner, and Kliebard.

Barry was most interested in using an approach focused on the desired intellectual environment and consequent classroom experiences and assignments rather than on delineating prestated course objectives. We decided that, in its simplest form, a course outline should contain four components:

- *course overview and rationale*—a general description of what to teach and why
- *an extensive set of classroom activities and written assignments*—what the course would look like, based on why to teach it

- *sample texts*—based on criteria for choosing content
- *evaluation tools*—predominantly qualitative ways to assess what students were experiencing and learning

The course was never officially approved, but the administration did show some receptivity to the new format and to the course itself.

Soon after, in collaboration with two other colleagues, I developed a new course, *Advanced Writing and Revision*. Basically, the team used the format already initiated by Grossbach, this time to shape deliberations about the course as well as to write it up as an official proposal. The administration approved the course as a pilot, although it did not meet the criteria set out in Models 1 through 3. The course has since been approved officially.

The strongest impetus for fleshing out, improving, and institutionalizing Model 4, however, came when the college began a large-scale project for the new General Studies curriculum. The new project made various demands on the course development model, as the following brief description of its vision and its pedagogical foundations reveals.<sup>2</sup>

#### A NEW GENERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

In recent years, the faculty and administration at the college had become increasingly uncomfortable with its General Studies program. Instead of being a coherent, unified curriculum, it offered a set of unrelated courses that did not add up to an integrated educational experience. As a result, the president asked for proposals for a new curriculum. She rejected the subsequent proposals submitted by three competing faculty groups and instead funded a workshop in summer 1987 so that all three factions could work together to develop one unified, coherent General Studies curriculum.

During the first week of deliberations, the reconstituted deliberation team proposed a set of six core courses (two in writing and literature and one each in humanities, physical science, life science, and business). Despite this early agreement about the general domain of the core courses, the deliberations soon turned into an argument between two vocal groups, one embracing a Deweyan commitment to inquiry and problem solving and the other a hermeneutic commitment to text-based interpretive approaches. One of the most vocal participants of the second faction was a philosopher with an extensive background in Continental philosophy, and one of the most vocal members of the other side was a curriculum researcher with an equally strong interest in Dewey and the progressive education movement.

Therefore, deliberations took a distinctly theoretical turn, with the final proposal explicitly stating a dual commitment to both inquiry and interpretation as the guiding vision of the new curriculum. It did not stipulate in any

---

<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed account, see *ibid.*

detail how these two agendas would work together in the courses yet to be developed but rather spoke in general terms. A key sentence resulted from the effort to merge inquiry and interpretation. "[The goal of the new curriculum is to] create an intellectual environment that would enable students to enter, move within, and contribute to academic and professional communities as educated citizens."<sup>3</sup> This sentence served as a temporarily stabilizing goal and enabled the group to continue working together, but it still represented an uneasy compromise.

The interpretive contingent was primarily concerned with pedagogical strategies that would enable students to fit in, to become part of an interpretive community. Interpretation was the key operating concept for them. To borrow from Harris's definition of interpretive communities, the emphasis was on getting students to share "certain habits of mind" that characterize scholars working within a given paradigm.<sup>4</sup> They envisioned a community where students learned how to speak the language of the various disciplines; to ask questions that characterized inquiry in each discipline; and to move back and forth between theoretical conflicts, between opposing theories, within a given discipline. In short, they wanted their students to learn how to think and talk as academics think and talk.

The inquiry group took the sentence about entering and moving within an academic and professional community and added the part about contributing to that community as educated citizens. Dewey stood in the background as they tried to conceptualize curriculum in terms of educating good citizens who knew how to solve problems in a democratic environment. They wanted the new General Studies curriculum to shape courses around intellectual problems that students would need and want to formulate and solve. These problems would emerge from previous intellectual inquiry and would reflect the human quest to formulate and seek answers to social, physical, aesthetic, and moral questions. So, they let the part about entering and moving within communities remain, so long as they could put in some words that suggested meaningful participation in and reconstruction of that community. Their concept of community was much closer to what literary and writing theorists call a "speech community"—it referred to specific groupings like neighborhoods, colleges, or classrooms. The Deweyan contingent had in mind a community that would be formed when the students and teachers met in a specific classroom on a specific day and began their intellectual inquiries together.

The new General Studies proposal offered several examples each of interpretation- and inquiry-based activities in various disciplines, but it did not

---

<sup>3</sup>Jenny Albany et. al., "Proposal for a Pilot Project for the Development of a New General Studies Curriculum" (unpublished manuscript, Community College of Philadelphia, June 1987)

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Harris, "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing," *College Composition and Communication* 40 (February 1989): 14.

give examples of activities that would fuse the two agendas. Individual teams developing their own courses had to combine the dual framework. The differences over community were never resolved, either. Instead, the individual teams were left to develop new courses that shared a dual "interpretive-inquiry" framework, some teams perhaps leaning more heavily on interpretation, others on inquiry, some on interpretive communities, others on speech communities.

If the new curriculum was somewhat unclear about what it embraced, about what kind of community it was trying to create, it was certainly clear that it did not include a group of instructors handing down an agreed-upon body of knowledge in their disciplines. Nor did it include a faculty team packaging a set of isolated skills for their students to acquire. Either approach would be missing the point of both inquiry (skills are learned in the process of inquiring into a problem) and interpretation (skills are acquired in the process of learning to critically read and respond to the issues raised in a text). The dual commitment to interpretation and inquiry, however muddy its conception, clearly emphasized learning how to think in specific intellectual contexts, how to respond in writing and discussion to issues emanating from problems in textual interpretation, and how to use a text to inform an intellectual problem (social, literary, scientific, etc.).

So, despite its still unresolved differences, the 1987 deliberation team proposed a pedagogical mandate for active learning and for a socially constructed conception of knowledge. Thus, this conception of knowledge was inherently characterized by continuously emerging theoretical differences not only across but within disciplines. The old course development models (1-3) were clearly irrelevant to the task of developing courses in such an open-ended conception, predetermined objectives had no place here. The fourth model was waiting to be improved and called into play.

As the initial staff developer for the project, I took the primitive model developed with Grossbach and introduced it as a tool for helping course developers deliberate about what they wanted to do and for framing their tentative proposals. Rather than being used as a sequential set of steps or rules, the model served as a loose heuristic for conducting and recording deliberations.

However, as subsequent staff developers in the General Studies project began to use the model with participating faculty groups, they made significant changes and improvements, sometimes revamping or building up whole sections. For example, they added criteria for designing classroom experiences when they realized that the teaching teams they were working with needed, and were asking for, more help in generating activities that directly flowed from the course rationale. These criteria, in turn, considerably aided the task of developing and articulating a strong rationale. So, as the model kept developing, the relationship between its parts became less linear and more dynamic. Within a few years, the primitive new model looked quite different.

## THE IMPROVED MODEL

As Grundy has aptly noted, when curriculums are constructed in different ways, the results do not have the same theoretical foundations.<sup>5</sup> The model's close ties to both the deliberative and interpretive traditions in curriculum theory have affected not only the process for generating new courses but the ultimate character and shape of these courses as well. Although the model evolved through the interaction of at least six staff developers and department heads, most of whom had never even heard of the terms *deliberation theory* and *hermeneutics*, from its inception, Model 4 reflected a vision of education characterized as a combination of interpretive and deliberative perspectives.

Basically, the model depends heavily on deliberation and debate among course planners. In a recent book, *Curriculum: Product or Praxis*, Grundy speaks of curriculum development as the "dynamic interaction of action and reflection" and expresses a vision of curriculum construction as the "dynamic interaction between members of critical communities."<sup>6</sup> The General Studies project was structured so that individual teams of teachers within a discipline would work together to develop courses that honored the program's commitment to interpretation and inquiry, however loosely defined.

The introduction and first section of the model reads as follows (the model appears as a whole in the Appendix):

The following model focuses on the intellectual environment that the course wishes to create and the intellectual processes that will characterize it. The emphasis is on maintaining coherence between the course rationale and its daily classroom activities.

A. *Overall Description of the Course*

The course description should provide the *rationale* for the course, defining what educational *concerns* or *problems*, in terms of student needs and the demands of the academic community, the course will respond to and what it is designed to achieve. In other words, it should explain *why the new course is needed*, what it will provide for our students. It should establish and explain the choice of the *major critical issues* or *questions* which function as the organizing principles of the course.

This brief introduction and first section set the stage for both the curriculum-making process and the resulting curriculum. The focus of the rationale is on concerns or problems. It asks course developers to consider the problems within the institution—for example, unmet demands of the academic community, unfulfilled student needs—that the new course would solve. The model insists that deliberators come to terms with their reasons for designing yet another course; the rationale should take into account failures in the existing situation.

This rationale, of course, is reminiscent of Schwab's *The Practical: A Language for Curriculum*, as well as the early work on deliberation by

---

<sup>5</sup>Shirley Grundy, *Curriculum. Product or Praxis* (Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1987), p. 1.  
<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 115, 13.

scholars such as Reid, Westbury, and Walker.<sup>7</sup> Although not at all explicit about the deliberation process, the model calls into play three of Schwab's four commonplaces—teachers, students, and subject matter—by reminding course developers that their search for defining their problem needs to consider their students' situations and the demands of the academic community (teachers and subject matter). The introductory statement about desired intellectual environments briefly raises Schwab's fourth commonplace, milieu. The choice of major critical issues or questions, which are the organizing principles of the course, flow from an analysis of the problem and the resulting rationale hammered out during deliberations.

So, new courses, instead of being framed in terms of how classroom activities are to meet initially stated objectives, as mandated in the three previous course development models, will be framed in terms of the consistency between the course rationale and the resulting classroom environment and experiences. The development of the course rationale is key here.

The model does not offer explicit guidance on how to conduct deliberations. The process chosen by individual teams will vary, and given the nature and structure of large institutions and individual preferences, some faculty members will choose to work alone (especially outside of the explicitly collaborative stance of General Studies). In such cases, deliberation will take the form of an internal dialogue. What holds for all types of deliberation, however, is an emphasis on carefully thinking through why a course is needed (what problems it addresses) and what it will offer students in a rigorous and challenging intellectual environment. No one should interpret the model as a linear sequence; rather, it is a tool for moving back and forth between components, for example, deliberation about evaluation might lead to rethinking the characterization of the problem.

The second part of the model reads as follows:

**B. Major Units, Components, Themes, and the Structure of the Course**

Identification of major units, components, and/or themes of the course should be accompanied by an explanation of how they relate to each other in an overall framework and to the large questions or issues named in the course description

The discussion on course structure (part B) is deliberately general, enabling faculty to choose their own organizational frameworks (e.g., selected topics, recurring themes, chronological schemes). However, here too, the basic agenda is clear. The structure of the course depends on the close relationship between its organizational components (units, themes, topics, etc.) and the

---

<sup>7</sup>Joseph J. Schwab, *The Practical. A Language for Curriculum* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1970), William A. Reid, "Practical Reasoning and Curriculum Theory. In Search of a New Paradigm," *Curriculum Inquiry* 9 (Fall 1979): 187–207, Ian Westbury, "The Character of a Curriculum for a 'Practical' Curriculum," *Curriculum Theory Network* 10 (Fall 1972): 25–36; Decker F. Walker, "A Study of Deliberation in Three Curriculum Projects," *Curriculum Theory Network* 7 (1971): 118–134.

course rationale. Regardless of how critical issues or questions are introduced, they must give life to the resulting themes or topics.

Although faculty embracing a more traditional approach, such as a cultural literacy agenda, could frame the "truths" of their disciplines in terms of critical issues or questions, the model does not invite a hunt for "essential truths" or universals but rather embraces a conception of knowledge that rejects the idea that curriculum deliberations can uncover impartial criteria inherent in academic disciplines. This rejection of essential truths is one key way the model differs from approaches aimed at pulling out undisputed principles or truths supposedly characteristic of established disciplines. A rejection of essential truths is central to discussions of epistemologic issues within the interpretive or hermeneutic tradition.<sup>8</sup>

In the third part of the model, this epistemologic stance becomes even more salient:

*C. Detailed Description of Each Typical Type of Activity Designed to Involve Students in Learning, with Significant Examples*

Discussions, seminars, lectures, writing groups, laboratory sessions, and other typical types of activity should be described and the role of this type of activity in the course explained. Whenever possible, course developers should explain briefly how such activities are designed to provoke increasingly sophisticated thinking and aid students in participating effectively in the intellectual/professional community represented by the course.

The following questions should serve as a *guide* here, and course developers should give each one serious consideration, although all do *not* need to appear in the proposal, since their relevance will vary across curriculums and disciplines.

1. How does the activity challenge and enable students to analyze, interpret, reflect on, evaluate, and/or integrate ideas?
2. How does it make students aware of theoretical positions or assumptions that characterize the field?
3. How does it open up consideration of the implications of alternative perspectives?
4. In processes of discussion and investigation, how is opportunity given for students to consider follow-up lines of inquiry?
5. How do activities engage students in careful attention to language?
6. How do the activities illustrate problems related to the use of experimental procedures?
7. How do the activities lead themselves to consideration of the relationship between theory, hypothesis, and data?

---

<sup>8</sup>For a discussion of the relevance of hermeneutics to curriculum, see Elaine Atkins, "Reframing Curriculum Theory in Terms of Interpretation and Practice. A Hermeneutical Approach," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 20 (September–October 1988): 437–448. This work, in turn, draws heavily on Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism. Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); and Richard Rorty, "Hermeneutics, General Studies, and Teaching," in *Selected Papers from the Synergos Seminars* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University, 1982).

This part of the model shows the most significant changes from the embryonic model first developed. Staff developers in the General Studies project soon discovered that faculty needed help in designing activities in a focused, organized fashion. In the struggle to develop concrete, specific activities, teachers would sometimes forget about the need to make sure that these activities flowed from the course rationale.

Part C asks faculty to describe typical classroom activities in terms of how such activities are designed to engage participants in intellectual and professional communities. Although the seven guiding questions kept changing right up to the time its designers submitted the model for institutional approval, and although these questions are neither inclusive nor exclusive, together they serve a clear mission: to encourage instructors to find ways of involving students in active, purposeful inquiry. Once again, the model makes no mention of teaching isolated skills or of transferring knowledge to passive recipients.

As part C suggests, each course represents an intellectual and professional community of thinkers; the challenge for the instructor is to find ways of engaging students in this community on the most active and sophisticated level possible. Inherent in this model is the conviction that, as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz says, "at base, thinking is a public activity."<sup>9</sup> The model thus shares a hermeneutic concern for dialogue and for enabling participants to develop criteria for the suitability and the persuasive power of a text's or speaker's argument.

Therefore, the seven questions all center on challenging students to make their own interpretations as participants in an intellectual community. The emphasis on language in question 5, the attention to problems stemming from the use of experimental procedures in question 6, the insistence on a critical analysis of the relationship between theory, hypothesis, and data in question 7, the acknowledgment of the importance of conflicting or alternative perspectives within a discipline in question 3 all fit together. To draw from Rorty, they reflect the hermeneutic conviction that we can view knowledge and its structuring disciplines as the development of successively better instruments for discovering and solving problems within a community.<sup>10</sup> The model also asks course developers to pay serious attention to what constitutes this knowledge community and to the factors that move members from one community to another. It asks course developers to think about ways to involve students in asking these sorts of questions.

Deliberations about course activities should not only flow from the rationale but should also function to clarify and even reshape that rationale. In the General Studies project, where all courses share a commitment to

---

<sup>9</sup>Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 360.

<sup>10</sup>Richard Rorty, "Hermeneutics, General Studies, and Teaching," in *Selected Papers from the Synergos Seminars* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University, 1982), p. 9.

interpretation and inquiry, each course rationale pays serious attention to the broader vision and agenda. The interpretive-inquiry agenda influences the perception and statement of the problem, which in turn affects and is affected by the choice of activities.

The fourth part of the model again reflects the interdependence of its components:

*D. List of Required and Optional Texts, with Comment*

If there is an agreed upon list, it should appear accompanied by a rationale for its selection. In cases where text selection will vary according to individual instructors, criteria for choosing texts, based upon consideration of the three previous steps (A–C) should be provided.

This brief section thus invites curriculum makers to work collaboratively on establishing criteria for selecting course texts rather than asking them to submit a list of readings. Once a course is officially approved, other instructors can then teach it.

Part D states that the criteria for choosing texts should flow from previous deliberations about the problem, rationale, and course activities. Where a faculty team stresses, say, a cultural literacy approach, where they are especially concerned with classic or widely accepted texts in their field, discussions about text selection will probably take place early on and will heavily influence the other components of the plan. Although the model does not explicitly work against this emphasis, it certainly discourages the use of text selection as the single fulcrum or source of activities.

The fifth and sixth sections (parts E and F on sample writing assignments and examinations) again ask instructors to develop their course in relation to purpose (rationale) and in relation to the key intellectual processes and foundational questions to be stressed throughout the course:

*E. Sample Writing Assignments and Examinations*

At least five writing assignments and examinations should be included. Each should be accompanied with an explanation of what it is meant to accomplish in terms of the course's aims and in relation to its foundational questions and key intellectual processes (steps A–D).

Given this requirement, it would be difficult to imagine a team submitting a course proposal that included only multiple-choice exams, even in math. Clearly, the emphasis here is on language use and on the processes involved in critical inquiry.

The final section is open-ended:

*F. Evaluation*

The proposal should include a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the course. This evaluation plan should answer the following questions:

1. How will assignments and exams be evaluated in order to ascertain what students have learned from the course in terms of the critical questions and issues mentioned earlier?

2. In addition to looking at student papers and exams, what other methods will the instructor use to determine the effectiveness of the course design? For example, what use might be made of ethnography, peer observation, standardized instruments, interteam critiquing?

Unlike the evaluation sections of previous models, this section does not and cannot ask for evaluation in terms of preset discrete objectives but rather encourages curriculum makers to design an evaluation plan consistent with the character of their courses. The model suggests that faculty teams look at qualitative approaches such as peer observation and interteam critiquing as well as more traditional instruments.

### CONCLUSION

In response to vocal complaints from their colleagues, and in response to their own needs for a more powerful curriculum development tool, the designers of Model 4 devised a model that is probably much more difficult to work with than the previous ones mandated by the administration. Most teachers with a little practice ca. learn to look at a set of course activities (perhaps gleaned from past years, perhaps from old textbooks) and then move back to formulate the objectives supposedly giving life to them. This model asks faculty to do something much more challenging, to take a hard look at their institution—at their students, themselves, their subject matter, their milieu—and undertake the struggle to identify and formulate problems that they might have only vaguely perceived before.<sup>11</sup> It also asks them to struggle with the difficult task of uncovering, recognizing, and dealing with often deeply hidden and sometimes conflicting assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the type of environment they want to create for their students.

Faculty who use this approach will teach significantly different courses from those who use the three original models. The struggle to identify a problem, to develop a clear and coherent rationale, and to design consistent activities and assignments can only strengthen teachers' power to engage students in issues that characterize vital and critical intellectual communities. At the least, the model promotes the development of courses that are true to their epistemological underpinnings and to their explicitly stated guiding visions.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>Students, teachers, subject matter, and milieu are Schwab's four commonplaces of education. See Joseph J. Schwab, "The Practical. Translation into Curriculum," *School Review* 81 (August 1973): 501-522, and Joseph J. Schwab, *College Curriculum and Student Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

<sup>12</sup>The author acknowledges the assistance of Larry MacKenzie, Director of the General Studies Project, Community College of Philadelphia, in the preparation of this article

### *Appendix*

#### **COURSE DEVELOPMENT MODEL 4**

*Community College of Philadelphia*

*Submitted by Elaine Atkins, Fay Beauchamp, Barry Grossbach,  
Michael Hardy, Larry MacKenzie, Henry Sweezey, Susan Tobia*

The following model focuses on the intellectual environment that the course wishes to create and the intellectual processes that will characterize it. The emphasis is on maintaining coherence between the course rationale and its daily classroom activities.

#### *A. Overall Description of the Course*

The course description should provide the *rationale* for the course, defining what educational *concerns or problems*, in terms of student needs and the demands of the academic community, the course will respond to and what it is designed to achieve. In other words, it should explain *why the new course is needed*, what it will provide for our students. It should establish and explain the choice of the *major critical issues or questions* which function as the organizing principles of the course.

#### *B. Major Units, Components, Themes, and the Structure of the Course*

Identification of major units, components, and/or themes of the course should be accompanied by an explanation of how they relate to each other in an overall framework and to the large questions or issues named in the course description.

#### *C. Detailed Description of Each Typical Type of Activity Designed to Involve Students in Learning, with Significant Examples*

Discussions, seminars, lectures, writing groups, laboratory sessions, and other *typical* types of activity should be described and the role of this type of activity in the course explained. Whenever possible, course developers should explain briefly how such activities are designed to provoke increasingly sophisticated thinking and aid students in participating effectively in the intellectual/professional community represented by the course.

The following questions should serve as a *guide* here, and course developers should give each one serious consideration, although all do *not* need to appear in the proposal, since their relevance will vary across curriculums and disciplines.

1. How does the activity challenge and enable students to analyze, interpret, reflect on, evaluate, and/or integrate ideas?
2. How does it make students aware of theoretical positions or assumptions that characterize the field?
3. How does it open up consideration of the implications of alternative perspectives?
4. In processes of discussion and investigation, how is opportunity given for students to consider follow-up lines of inquiry?
5. How do activities engage students in careful attention to language?
6. How do the activities illustrate problems related to the use of experimental procedures?
7. How do the activities lead themselves to consideration of the relationship between theory, hypothesis, and data?

**D. List of Required and Optional Texts, with Comment**

If there is an agreed upon list, it should appear accompanied by a rationale for its selection. In cases where text selection will vary according to individual instructors, criteria for choosing texts, based upon consideration of the three previous steps (A-C) should be provided.

**E. Sample Writing Assignments and Examinations**

At least five writing assignments and examinations should be included. Each should be accompanied with an explanation of what it is meant to accomplish in terms of the course's aims and in relation to its foundational questions and key intellectual processes (steps A-D).

**F. Evaluation**

The proposal should include a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the course. This evaluation plan should answer the following questions:

1. How will assignments and exams be evaluated in order to ascertain what students have learned from the course in terms of the critical questions and issues mentioned earlier?

2. In addition to looking at student papers and exams, what other methods will the instructor use to determine the effectiveness of the course design? For example, what use might be made of ethnography, peer observation, standardized instruments, interteam critiquing?

---

ELAINE ATKINS is Professor of English, Community College of Philadelphia, 1700 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130.

Van Manen, Max. *Researching Lived Experience. Human Science for an Action-Sensitive Pedagogy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990. 202 pp. \$49.50/\$16.95.

This book offers detailed methodological explications and practical examples of hermeneutic-phenomenological inquiry. Van Manen shows how researchers can tap the unique nature of human situations, how to construct questions that evoke narrative texts suitable for reflection, and how to write phenomenological texts.

Copyright © 1991 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.