

# THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

*Besmart-Digbori, E.D. Ph.D.*

## **Abstract**

The focus of this article is on the purpose and process of curriculum development in vocational and technical education. The article is focused on a rationale for curriculum development and the development of curriculum. The article also lays emphasis on making decisions in planning the curriculum. In the second section of the article, emphasis is placed on models of curriculum planning. In the process, models such as Tyler's, Wheeler's, Giles and Lawton's models were highlighted.

## **Introduction**

Ever since the term "curriculum" was added to educators' vocabularies, it has seemed to convey many things to many people. To some, curriculum has denoted a specific course, while to others it has meant the entire educational environment. While perceptions of the term may vary, it must be recognized that curriculum encompasses more than a definition. Curriculum is a key element in the educational process.

## **A Rationale for Curriculum Development in Vocational and Technical Education**

The uniqueness of the vocational and technical education curriculum raises a critical question. What is the basic direction that curriculum development in vocational and technical education should take? History tells us that, traditionally, curricula have been developed in a somewhat haphazard manner with little consideration given to the impact of the development process. Another point is that a vocational and technical education curriculum soon becomes outdated when steps are not taken to keep it from remaining static. Finally, it must be recognized that the vocational and technical education curriculum thrives on relevance. The extent to which a curriculum assists students to enter and succeed in the world of work spells out success.

As a curriculum is being developed, the vocational educator is obliged to deal with these concerns in such a way that quality is built into the "finished product" or graduate. Any curriculum that is not developed systematically, or that becomes static or irrelevant, will soon have an adverse effect on all who come in contact with it. In order to avoid that difficulty, curriculum developers must give consideration to the basic character of the curriculum and build in those factors that contribute to its quality.

## **Development of Curriculum**

The type of curriculum to be developed for the schools depends on the structure of the society and the special norms, economic structure, and activities and the political system of the local government area, the state or country. It should not be forgotten that education is planned to serve the society, educated personnel experts are needed in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, transportation, oil exploration among others. Curriculum development must have to take account of these (Agnenta, 1982).

## **Making Decision in Planning the Curriculum**

The entire curriculum development process is interlaced with decision-making situation. Question such as, should we take this approach or that "approach"? And which objectives reflect the goals of our programme? are typical of practical problems faced by the curriculum developer. At first glance, these problems appear to be relatively simple ones to solve. However, an examination of the decision-making process actually needed to find their solutions will readily show that few curriculum development problems can be properly attacked unless those involved are willing to make major sacrifice and resource commitments to this end.

Curriculum development is an extremely complex and intricate process involving many decision situations. Decisions must be made about policy statements, priority determination,

educational programme and course selections, standards, and other aspects of the total curriculum. Although decisions are made at different levels in an educational system, decision-making influences the total curriculum regardless of the level at which a decision is made.

### **Who Makes Decisions?**

The question of who makes decisions is a critical one, and the answer is very involved. Some educators in school system have a great deal of latitude in handling decisions. In other school systems, the control rests primarily with non-educators. The true decision-maker in a problem situation depends upon the level at which the problem has occurred. Furthermore, decision-makers can be divided into policy decision-makers and operational decision-makers.

### **Policy Decision-Makers**

Policy decisions must rest with boards of education, boards of trustees, or other officially designated groups who represent the people. Members of these groups are spokespeople for the public and work toward the goals of providing the best possible education programme for their community.

### **Operational Decision Makers**

Decisions made at the operational level are the responsibility of administrators and or teachers located throughout the educational organization. Once policy formation has occurred, then policy must be applied in a professional manner to the educational organization. Policy making groups depend upon professional educators to take the lead in this task and in fact this is why professional educators are hired. Any operational decisions that need to be made must be handled by educators within the school organization.

As with policy decision makers, operational decision makers may in some instances need input from parents, students, voters, civil leaders, business and industrial leaders and policy-making groups when arriving at solutions to problems.

### **Decision-Making Strategies**

There are many decision-making strategies about to be considered but this article will focus on management by objectives (MBO) and programme evaluation and review technique (PERT).

### **Management by Objectives**

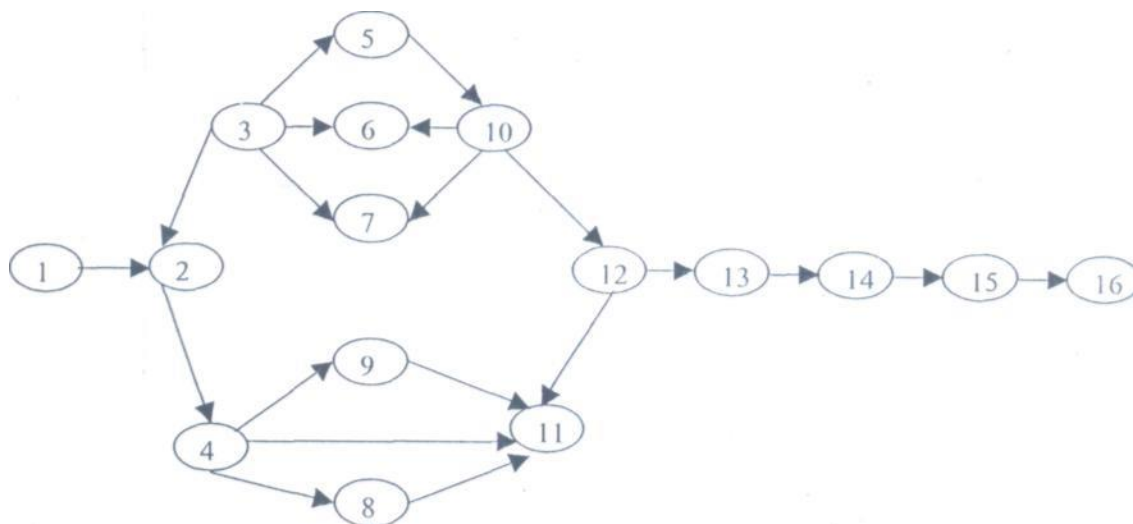
The management by objective (MBO) approach to decision-making has been used in organizations, in recent years. Briefly, the MBO process in education may be described as the process where administrators and teachers jointly identify common goals of the organization and define each person's role in helping to fulfil those goals.

Furthermore, these goals serve to measure the progress of each individual in accomplishing his or her responsibilities and the progress of the organization in fulfilling the goals. Five sequential steps are followed in developing an objective: finding the objective, setting the objective, validating the objective, implementing the objective, controlling and reporting the status of the objective.

### **Programme Evaluation Review Technique (PERT)**

The programme evaluation and review technique (PERT) focuses on identifying key events and activities leading to the accomplishing of a long-range goal or objective. The strength of this approach is that time lines, activities, and events can be illustrated graphically as shown in Fig 1. Events are either the start or end of a mental or physical task. Time is not consumed and the event cannot be accomplished until all activities leading to the event are completed. The activity describes the work required to accomplish an event. Time estimates for the events can be hours, days, weeks, or whether the planner chooses and time estimates can be made for optimistic (earliest date possible), most likely, and pessimistic forecasts (date likely of completion when unplanned problems arise).

In addition, events are numbered sequentially so that they may be easily identified.



**Fig. 1: PERT Network for Feasibility Study of Vocational Programme XYZ**

1. Decision made to study feasibility of establishing programme XYZ (1/5).
2. Standards for programme XYZ established (2/15).
3. School-related data identified (3/1).
4. Community-related data identified (3/1).
5. Prospective enrollment figures determined (5/1).
6. Quality Instructors available (5/1).
7. Current facilities assessed (5/1).
8. Current and future budget support determined (5/1).
9. Current and projected employment opportunities determined (6/1).
10. School-related data analyzed (6/1).
11. Community-related data analyzed (6/1).
12. Composite data analyzed and final proposal prepared (8/1).
13. Report viewed by vocational education advisory council (9/1).
14. Proposal approved by vocational director and school administration (10/1).
15. Proposal presented to school board (11/1).
16. School board makes final decision (12/1).

The Figure 1 illustrates an overall plan of action and the dates when each is to be accomplished.

### **Models of Curriculum Planning**

The focus of every curriculum theorist is on providing direction to the analysis and understanding of the type of educational experiences which schools should provide as well as how they carry on the process of helping children to learn. This is exemplified by various models including those of Ralph, D.K. Wheeler, Giles and Lawlon.

### **Tyler's Model**

The Tyler's rationale focuses on four fundamental questions related to the process of analysing and developing the curriculum and the relevant questions represents four-step sequence of:

- i. Identifying objectives,
- ii. Selecting the means for the attainment of these objectives,
- iii. Organizing these means, and iv. Evaluating the outcomes. These translate to the model below.

#### **Step 1. Objectives. 1.**

The learners.

2. Contemporary life.
3. Subject specialists.

**Step 2.** Psychological and Psychological Screen Selected of learning experiences.

**Step 3.** Organization of learning experiences.

**Step 4.** Evaluation.

**Wheeler's Model**

This model consists of five stages, one leading to the next to form a circle as shown below:-

Fig. 2.

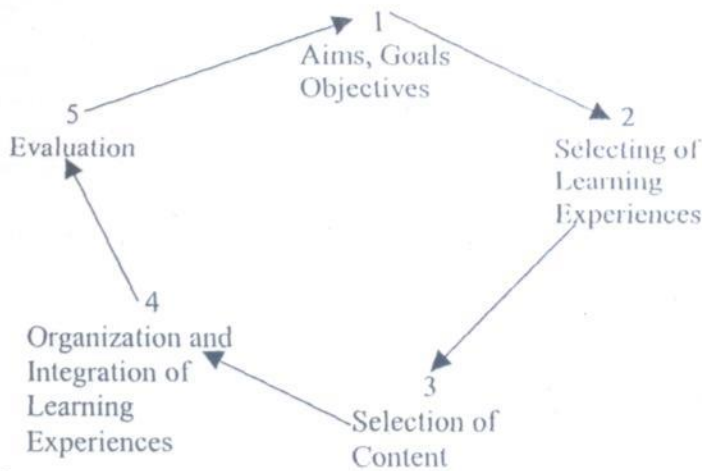


Fig. 2

**Giles' Model**

Giles' model interrelationship of problem areas in curriculum development Fig 3.

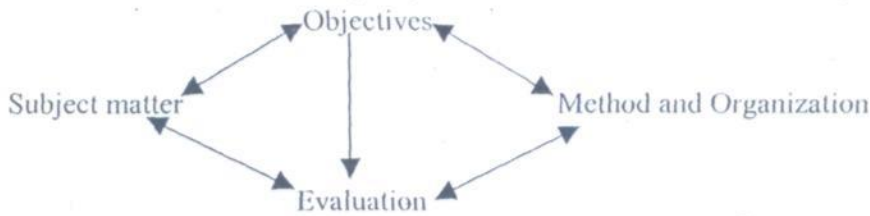
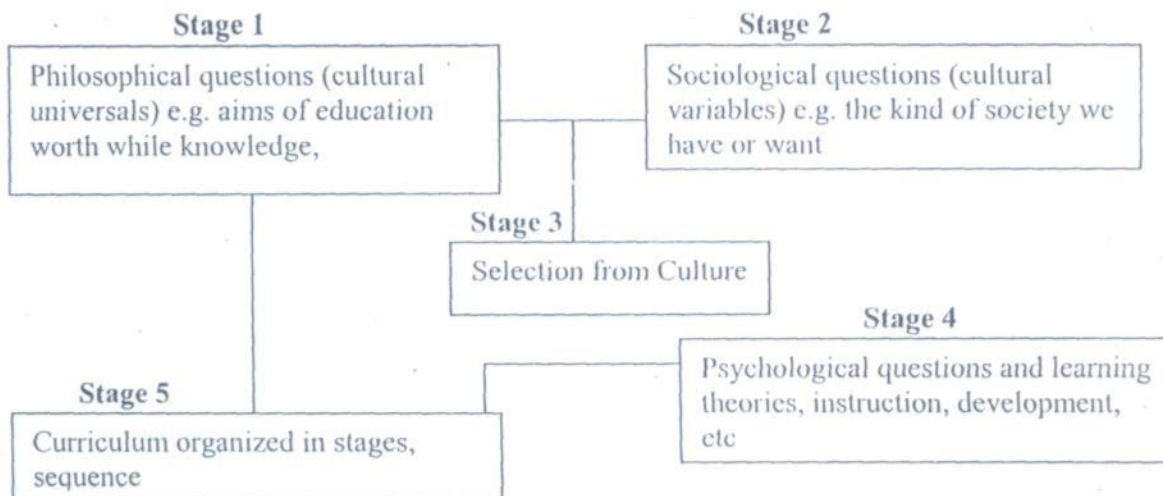


Fig. 3

**Lawton's Model**

Lawton's model recognizes the culture of any society as the basis of the educational process. It is the value system of the society the underlines the formulation of educational purposes Fig 4.



Lawton's Models

**Fig 4**

**Conclusion**

The models highlighted revealed one scenario, that is, schools are allowed to evaluate themselves. It is doubtful if the outcome of this practice is in any way helpful to curriculum planning and development. In fact, it is the employer that should be in a better position to evaluate the curriculum as effective or not.

**Recommendations**

In developing curriculum for vocational and technical education programmes, the following should be considered.

1. The structure of the society and the social norms.
2. The economic structure and activities of the society.
3. The political system of the local government area, the state and country.
4. The provision of new materials is a step to successful curriculum development. The hard work lies in their successful dissemination and implementation.

**References**

- Aigbomian, D. and Iyamu, E. (2001) *Foundations in Curriculum Studies*. Mushin: Metro Publishing Limited.
- Aghenta, J.A. (1982). The Purpose and Process of Educational Planning. *Benin Journal of Educational Studies* 1, 2, 5-15.
- Bloom, S.O. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. The Classification of Educational Goals. Handout 1. The Cognitive Domain*. New York: Uavid Mckay Co. Inc.
- Cooper, K. (1979). Curriculum Evaluation-Definitions and Boundaries. *In Curriculum Evaluation Today: Trend and Implications*. New York: McMillan Publishing CO. Inc.
- Finch, C.R. (1984) *Curriculum Development in Vocational and Technical Education*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Mkpa, M.A. (1987). *Curriculum Development and Implementation*. Owerri: Totan Publishers Limited.
- Okeke, E.Z. (1981). Evaluating High School Ecology. *Journal of the Science Teachers' Association of Nigeria*, 19, 2, 70.
- Ozigi, A. and Canham, P. (1979). *An Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Provus, M. (1971). *Discrepancy Evaluation for Educational Programme Improvement and Association*. Berkeley, California: Mc Cutchan.
- Pratt, D. (1980). *Curriculum Design and Development*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jov. Inc.
- Stufflebean, D.K. (1978). *Curriculum Process*. London: Watson.
- Tyler, R. (1975) *Basis Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.