

## **FOUR MAJOR CONCEPTS OF CURRICULUM ORGANIZATION**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

It is obvious that the programme of a school must be planned and organised on some basis. It would amount to a waste of the efforts, energy and time of the children by their teachers and school officials if they are allowed to carry on their educational experiences as they like, or on a hit and miss basis. That, these experiences be selected, planned and carried forward on the basis of some pattern of organization that will give continuity, meaning and significance to the educational programme is important. The organization of the curriculum brings the to open the entire questions of achieving programme. It is one of the major concerns in the whole area of curriculum planning- Since design is the plan that teachers follow in providing learning activities, the relationship of the curriculum design to the achievement of the desired goals of the school is quite bluntly stated by Casewell: "It is true that improved teaching always results in better education, but the conventional curriculum in actual living the various developmental tasks which our society demands (Casewell, 1946).

Thus, curriculum design or organisation or approach as it is variously called, is seen as the process of selecting, organizing and guiding the learning experiences to be provided by the school, that gives reality to all the theories, concepts and points of view about the curriculum.

Consideration will now be given in the remainder of this paper to important methods that may be used to design the curriculum. These types of curriculum organization are: the subject approach, the broad-field approach and the needs or experience approach. Attention will be given to the bases for the organization of each. The merits and the demerits of these methods will be stated while an estimate of their uses in the modern curriculum planning will be presented. A conclusion will indicate which of these approaches is favoured by a majority of the authors on curriculum planning with reasons.

### **THE SUBJECT CENTRED APPROACH**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The subject organised curriculum is the oldest and what is sometimes considered the traditional concept of the curriculum and approach to curriculum construction. This approach is by far the most widely used method of organizing educational experiences today. In this type of design, the subjects become the primary method of organizing and carrying on learning experiences, and mastery of the subject matter becomes a basis through which the educational objectives of a school are in a large measure to be attained. It is difficult for curriculum people in this camp to think of the curriculum in images other than those of subjects like science; history; language; art; music and mathematics.

#### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APPROACH**

The school subject is a logical and convenient organization of the cultural heritage of the race. The inherent logic of racial experience becomes the primary method of organizing the subject and, this is usually done by a specialist-a scholar in the particular field and who has a keen understanding of the interrelationships of the concepts, facts, principles and the like, which constitute a logical system of new knowledge. New discovery and new knowledge can thus be easily fitted into existing bodies of knowledge, so that the subject is reorganised in terms of these new findings and discoveries, or the subject field is extended and expanded accordingly.

These systematic bodies of subject matter as a basis for organizing learning experiences have been taken over by the school. The selected body of subject matter becomes the material to be learned by the children, and one of the chief functions of the teacher is to guide the children in learning it. Minimum essentials or standards may be set in terms of the amount of subject matter that must be mastered by the child before he can be considered successful in his learning experiences. For the purpose of aiding those who have difficulty in acquiring this mastery, remedial classes or remedial techniques are often given and many devices are

used in order that the children will more readily want to the subject matter selected and will be able to learn it more readily, The textbook becomes the chief type of teaching material and the main source for learning experiences.

In this type of curriculum design, the chief responsibility of curriculum planning is to determine the particular subjects to be offered by the school and the body of knowledge to be encompassed within each subject. Thus, most of the efforts of the curriculum workers, teachers; curriculum directors; and curriculum committees consist of evaluating the merits and worthwhile-ness of various subjects already included or that might be included in the curriculum and, in selecting the facts, information, principles, general lotion and the like, that should be acquired by the children. Suitable attention may also be given to methods that may be used by the teacher to promote the acquisition of such bodies of subject matter by the children. A further concern of curriculum workers in this type of organizations is to devise ways of evaluating pupil mastery of subject matter, through tests, problem-solving situations and the like.

#### MERITS OF THE APPROACH:

Many educators and lay citizens are of the opinion that the school subjects represent a desirable basis of organising experiences in the school. It is maintained that, the systematic story of human knowledge through the organized bodies of subject matter enables the learner to build more efficiently and adequately his stock of understanding, concepts, information, principles and generalizations. Within the design, the subjects serve as a desirable method of building new learning's into experience by relating them to the knowledge already acquired A lot of citizens and educators feel that the full intellectual powers of the individual can best be developed through the study of logically organized subject matter. The study of subject matter provides the most feasible method for developing abilities to do logical thinking, to deal with abstract concepts and principles and in general to develop the qualities that characterize high-level intellectual activities of educated people. Such subjects include History; Science; Mathematics; and Geog-raphy. Those that subscribe to the educational concepts of perennialism and essentialism naturally accept school subjects as the most feasible and practical method of organizing the curriculum in conformity with these premises in education. Children are allowed to acquire rapidly and efficiently the basic concepts; understandings; principles and knowledge developed by the race over years of century. Apart from the fact that, the subject type curriculum has centuries of tradition behind is» such extensive use of this method has of course, resulted in its general acceptance by citizens, teachers, children and school officials generally Because of the obvious fact that, the great majority of teachers have been schooled in the subject type of curriculum and because their professional training has been on the subject organization, it becomes much easier for such teachers to work in a curriculum that is organised on the subject basis than it is to work with other types of curriculum design. Schools too, find it much easier to go ahead within the traditional type of subject than tore-educate teachers to work with a new type of design. Similarly, it is easier to carry on curriculum planning efforts within the subject organization than it is in other types of design. The subject curriculum lends itself easy to evaluation, as evaluation consists chiefly of testing the acquisition of subject matter and the development of skills and abilities based on standardized and teacher-made tests.

#### DEMERITS OF THE APPROACH:

Bearing in mind the growth and development of children and the psychology of learning, this curriculum design leaves much to be desired in terms of psychological soundness. Particularly is this true for children in both elementary and secondary schools. A serious demerit is that, it is very difficult to encompass a worthwhile set of desired outcome for children within the subject type of design. This is actually true if the entire curriculum is organized on a subject basis. The subject curriculum concentrates almost altogether on intellectual development "While it cannot be denied that intellectual development is a primary function of the school, a madam conception of education recognises the responsibility of the school to provide experiences that will foster the **desirable growth** of children in other aspects of personality." (Harvard University Committee on the objectives of a general Education in a free society, 1945). The subject organisation fractionizes learning. In the subject curriculum. The learner often sees little relationship between the subjects studied as separate entities and often fails to organize *his learning* into a systematic whole in relation to life problems. Even an adult who is a highly trained specialist faces the situation as a totality that necessitates the use of knowledge cutting; across a number of subject fields. Alfred North Whitehead( 1957) pointed out the deficiencies of the typical subject curriculum thus: The result of teaching small parts of a large number of subject. There is only one subject-matter for education and that is life in all its manifestation.

Apart from the fact that the subject curriculum is not based on a functional use of knowledge, it is seriously limited in the range of the matter covered. In this organization, whole areas of knowledge are not treated at all and many other areas are considered in only an introductory and sketchy fashion.

### **ESTIMATE OF SUBJECT IN CURRICULUM DESIGNING:**

There is an indication that as the children become mature and broaden their stock of learning about a matter of importance to them, they will need to organize them into systematic understanding of those particular areas of human activity. It cannot be overstated that the very youngest child begins to utilize his knowledge and learning from the very earliest of his learning experiences and as the child matures into an adolescent, the need for opportunities to organize his knowledge in terms of broad areas of human experiences increases. Contrary to the position assigned him by his critics John Dewey also saw the need for systematically organizing knowledge; "The next step in learning is the progressive development of what is-to the skilled mature person" Dewey (1938). Also, it is not possible to get rid of subject matter in curriculum organization.

### **THE BROADFIELD APPROACH CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APPROACH**

The broad field type of curriculum organization represents a modification of the traditional subject. This approach eliminates the sharp demarcations that exist in the traditional subject matter, the knowledge and understandings pertinent to a whole area of study. It represents an effort to fuse and integrate disciplines. Strictly speaking, it is a subject approach but one in which the basis of selecting and organizing subject matter is different from that used in the traditional subjects.

An example of broad field approach may best be illustrated with the course in Biology now commonly taught in secondary schools. This course represents an effort to bring together into one instructional unit the knowledge, concepts, and principles from the highly specialized disciplines of Botany; Zoology, Physiology; Anatomy; Bacteriology and similar closely related subject matter areas. In the field of Social Studies, efforts have been made to bring together disciplines of History; Political Sciences; cultural anthropology; Sociology and the like into broad courses designated as social science problems of democracy on a similar title. In general science, such subjects as Physics; Chemistry; Geology Astronomy and Anthropology are brought together. Apart from the fact that this approach is widely used both in the elementary and secondary schools, efforts to build broad field courses of this type have been particularly extensive at the college level. Many colleges have developed a so-called survey type of course or a general education course that represents efforts to bring together the essential understandings and knowledges of a whole area of subject matter.

### **MERITS OF THE DESIGN**

Since the broad field approach is a variant of the subject type of design, much of the discussion in that section relative to the merits and faults of the subject design are pertinent to the analysis of the broad field type of organization. In addition, the integration of a number of disciplines into an area of study has an advantage of bringing together for the pupils bodies of closely related knowledge so that interrelationships are *more* easily understood, and that a border approach to the understanding of the society and the problems of living, and, to the application of knowledge to present day affairs are more conscious of the other subjects and areas that are related to and touch closely upon their own special subject fields. It helps to break down departmental lines and to give teachers a broader view of the curriculum. Apart from the fact that this type of design provides for a *more* functional organization of knowledge, its courses place emphasis on basic principles and generalization rather than on information and facts.

### **DEMERITS OF THE DESIGN**

This design is seen as being fundamentally an approach through the attempt to improve subject matter and subject matter offerings, rather than an attempt to relate these subject matters seriously to the needs and the individual interests of the children who take them. It merely gives a child, a general introduction to areas of knowledge and because of the necessity of introducing many topics and aspects of the field into this type of course,

the child does not really penetrate deeply into the subject matter of any area. The result is that he may become acquainted with quite a mass of information and knowledge about a broad field but, will not have much of a body of working knowledge or information about any one subject. It does not only disenable the learner to grasp the inherent logic of subject matter but, the approach may result in an abstract academic type of course that is beyond the grasp of many students.

### **ITS PLACE IN CURRICULUM DESIGN**

A causal observer of curriculum development in the schools recognizes that the broad field approach for organizing at least a part of the curriculum of a school is well established and accepted. The fields of social studies and science have already been used as illustrations. The main problem facing curriculum workers in utilizing this type of organization is to find the most satisfactory bases or methods for organizing the subject matter and terms of the integrated approach. Although some of the broad field types of courses that have been developed in recent years have not always used satisfactory procedures for organizing the subject matters of the field, it is important to note that they are initiatory efforts. A number of promising approaches in the organization of the subject in using the broad field approach should be tried to overcome some of the shortcomings listed above.

### **THE PROBLEMS OF LIVING APPROACH CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APPROACH**

Both the subtle and broad field approaches are chiefly oriented to the culture. The following two approaches take greater account of the individual and his needs and concerns as factors in the educative process.

This curriculum approach is based on an analysis of life activities that will have maximum value and significance to the pupil in his day by day activities as well as later enable him to participate most effectively in adult life. As a result of this, those who use the problems of living approach to curriculum designing draw heavily on cultural anthropology and sociology to obtain a penetrating analysis of the major life activities of mankind. The centres for organizing this type of desire become what the curriculum worker generalizes as the major concerns or activities of groups living together as a society. This approach assumes that learning activities in school should have a direct and functional relationship to major social functions of living such as the work; leisure, and family activities of people as individuals and as members of group., seen to cluster.

### **MERITS OF THE APPROACH**

Through this approach the child will see the direct relationship of the learning experiences to his day by day activities and the day by day **experiences** selected and organized by the school are based in major areas of living. If this method of selecting and organizing learning experiences is fully utilized, the activities in which the child engages in school will be more meaningful to him and he will see a real purpose in them. This approach can very well provide for a better integration of the school experiences of the child than does the subject curriculum.

### **DEMERITS OF THE APPROACH**

in spite of the favourable aspects of this method of organizing the curriculum, it still has some shortcomings. On the very basis of dividing up life's activities into various functions, the curriculum design itself suggests artificial divisions. If the units of work are organised as more or less discrete bits of experience devoted to the various areas of living in rotation, the lines of demarcation might become as sharp as they are under the traditional procedure. Those that have criticized this design maintain that, the schemes presented to date represent adult rationalization about life activities rather than statements of life activities of people themselves. The same critics assert that, the social functions of living approach puts too much emphasis on the here and now and on what might often prove to be quite temporary and ephemeral aspects of living, neglecting to help pupils attain basic information and understanding that would be useful as long as they live. This approach presents a practical difficulty in utilizing it in

present day schools because of lack of teachers trained that are prepared to use it and because of the lack of suitable books and resource materials.

### **ITS PLACE IN CURRICULUM PLANNING**

It is very clear that the major areas of living approach had great impact on much of the experimentation and many of the new developments that have taken place in curriculum planning in the last two decades. In this connection, it is important to note that this design blends very well into the next approach. For this reason, it is very difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the two in some aspects of curriculum development. One can say that the present emphasis on pupil problems, needs and concerns as organizing centres for curriculum experience grew out of these earlier efforts to organize the curriculum in terms of the problems of living.

This design is closely related to the activity movement in the elementary schools, while in the secondary school, the approach has often been used as a method of organizing the core curriculum and as a method of selecting learning experiences in certain problem type of course-social living; family etc. In addition to this, the problem of living approach has often affected the selection and organizing of learning experiences in the traditional subjects themselves. For example, professional groups and specialists in the various subject fields are constantly trying to make their respective subject in the secondary :-schools more functional and meaningful to learners. At-times they utilize problems of living as a basis for electing the subject matter units to be included in the courses. One can say that, much of the curriculum development of the next few years will certainly involve the use of problem s-of-living and the needs and concerns of the learners as they may blend into one approach as a basic method for developing new types of core programmes and problem courses in junior and senior secondary school (J.S.S, and S.S.S).

### **THE NEEDS APPROACH**

#### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APPROACH**

This is the design that provides for the selection and organization of learning experiences in the school on the basis of the interest, needs or problems of learning. In the needs approach, more emphasis is placed on pupil teacher planning and on how a teaching staff and his educational community can accomplish the educational planning essential to giving adequate meaning, scope and direction to the learning experiences of the children entrusted to their care. Curriculum planning by this process is continuous and everchanging. Unlike the subject curriculum it cannot be planned too far ahead because of the involvement of the pupil's interests and experiences. However, subject matter is always involved but in different ways and it is selected on a different basis. Continuous exploration of children's interests and needs and cooperation of pupil in planning experiences does not proceed long term planning by teachers. In fact when day-to-day, instant pupil-teacher planning determines the curriculum, some learning experiences which have been labeled educational trivia by critics may be introduced. They include how to ask a girl for a date, etc.

#### **MERITS OF THE DESIGN**

The advocates of this design say it possesses these advantages: They claim that the approach constitutes the most psychologically sound method of selecting and organizing curriculum experiences for at least the cote part of the programme. They also maintain that the method of design is the most complete and satisfactory implementation of the progressivists' concept. A curriculum based on the needs approach is highly functional, provided the needs are genuine ones and the learning experiences have been properly selected. By the nature of this design, the emphasis of the school is placed on the growth and development of pupils rather than on the imparting of subject matter. While the design provides for batter integration of learning activities in schools, it best emphasizes the mental hygiene concept' of guiding development. It also has possibilities of contributing to a large number of the outcomes desires from a good educational programme.

#### **SHORTCOMINGS OF THE APPROACH**

The approach may minimize the social responsibility of the school for, by placing great emphasis on the child himself and on his needs and problems, the school probably did neglect the development of an understanding of the society in which they youngster lived or the social institutions with which he dealt or the development of an over-all consuming desire to be concerned about the welfare of his fellow men. The

approach may result in serious gaps in the child's education experiences. It has not only been criticized for presenting serious difficulties in developing an organized education programme, but that, it does not provide for an adequate mastery of subject matter.

### **ITS PLACE IN CURRICULUM PLANNING**

If moderate interpretation of the needs approach is followed so that curriculum design is based on what specialists in the field of child growth and development consider to be the genuine needs of youth growing up in a modern culture, there is a belief in a much sounder basis for selecting and organizing curriculum experiences at least, in the core part of the curriculum. This concept of needs approach closely approximates the major social functions of living organization, which is favourably considered in the previous section. If curriculum workers utilize the research of specialists in child growth and development, cultural anthropology, sociology, mental hygiene and closely related disciplines to ascertain what seems to be the most important needs, problems and developmental tasks facing the youth, they have valid guides for the selection and organization of curriculum experiences.

In terms of this position then, there is belief that curriculum workers should utilize the needs, and interests of youngster as determined by competent people including the teacher as one basis for selecting experiences which the school should provide. When used along with other basic factors that must be considered in the educational process, particularly the demands of the culture in which the individual lives, these are appropriate bases for designing the curriculum. Featherstone (1950) states this point well in these terms: "The needs of youth are not only valid but also necessary guide to and into the cultural context in which men live to discern youth's needs."

### **CONCLUSION**

Although Bent and Unruh (1969) claim that none of the approaches considered can provide an adequate curriculum, nor can any one of them provide all the answers for designing a curriculum, yet curriculum patterns based on social orientations are directly to the area of social studies and the social aspects of the school. Concepts of the emergent curriculums are also available in expanding the responsible and constructive role of the learner in the learning and evaluating processes in determining the climate of the learning enterprise, in accepting and respecting the student, and in the critical place that important intellectual and social processes have in the behaviour of the classroom.

These curriculum designs too, when evaluated from the point of view of use out of the formal school and from the kind of curriculum design life itself will offer in the years after school, will indicate the increasing value of concepts based on the social frame-work and emergent curriculum thinking Albery and Albery in their book *Reorganizing the High School Curriculum*, .. 1 9o2 1 states that *most* if Dot all the authors on curriculum development favour the use of this design in schools because of the NUMEROUS ADVANTAGES' it has for the purpose of making contemporary education functional, Macdonald states: "The serious consideration of an emergent curriculum structure for planning the inservice programme of schools and for developing educational programmes communities and less privileged nation is urged" (Macdonald 1965) one certainly agrees with the views of Macdonald, but this type of pattern would be very expensive for a developing nation to embark upon beating, in mind that all available resources and facilities have to be prepared so as to make the programme a success, particularly when the pattern is based on pupil-teaching planning. Also, to put it into practice, the teachers of any developing nation have to be well prepared so as to meet with such highly sophisticated pattern of curriculum organization. On the whole, one tends to agree with the views

of R. C. Doll (1968) when he says: "Obviously, the ideals answers to problems of curriculum organization have not been found. Several — no adequate theory on which to base decisions about curriculum design." All in all, one can conclude that the emerging needs approach is more favoured than the other three approaches as attested to by all the authors on curriculum planning as a result of a lot of advantages it has for the purpose of making contemporary education functional.

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