



## Exploring curriculum: Concepts and variants

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### Abstract

The development and application of curricula play a key role in determining student outcomes. This essay examines the core ideas of curriculum, examining how it has been interpreted and the effects different definitions have had on teaching. Examining how various curricular models—such as competency-based, learner-centered, and traditional approaches—address a range of learning demands, the study digs into these variations. The impact of curriculum design on educational accessibility and inclusivity—especially for students with special needs—is given particular attention. This study attempts to give educators and policymakers insights into the benefits and drawbacks of various curriculum models through an extensive examination of the research and case studies. It also provides ideas for fostering more inclusive and productive learning environments.

**Keywords:** Curriculum design, educational outcomes, curriculum models, learner-centered education, competency-based curriculum, inclusive education, special needs education, educational accessibility, curriculum variants, educational policy

### Introduction

Introducing a curriculum involves understanding its fundamental purpose, components, and importance in the educational process. Here's a structured overview

### Definition

**Curriculum:** The term "curriculum" refers to the comprehensive educational experiences provided to students. It includes what is taught (content), how it is taught (pedagogy), and the intended outcomes of education.

### Components

- 1. Content:** The knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to learn. This can include subjects like mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies.
- 2. Pedagogy:** The teaching methods and strategies used to deliver the content. This can vary from lectures and discussions to hands-on activities and collaborative projects.
- 3. Assessment:** The tools and methods used to evaluate students' learning and performance. This includes tests, quizzes, assignments, and other forms of evaluation.

### Purpose

- 1. Guidance:** Provides a structured framework for educators to plan and deliver instruction.
- 2. Consistency:** Ensures that all students receive a similar educational experience and achieve certain learning outcomes.
- 3. Goals:** Aims to meet educational standards and objectives set by educational authorities and institutions.

### Types of Curriculums

- 1. Explicit Curriculum:** What is formally written and planned, such as textbooks, lesson plans, and state standards.
- 2. Implicit Curriculum:** The unofficial or informal curriculum, including the values and norms communicated through the school environment and culture.
- 3. Hidden Curriculum:** The lessons and values students learn that are not part of the formal curriculum, are often related to social behaviors and attitudes.
- 4. Null Curriculum:** The content or topics that are excluded from the curriculum, often reflecting institutional priorities and biases.

### Curriculum Development

- 1. Needs Assessment:** Identifying the educational needs of students and aligning them with the curriculum.
- 2. Objectives Setting:** Defining clear, measurable learning objectives.
- 3. Design and Implementation:** Developing and applying curriculum materials and instructional strategies.
- 4. Evaluation and Revision:** Assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and making necessary adjustments based on feedback and outcomes.

### Importance

- 1. Student Learning:** Directly impacts the quality of education and students' learning experiences.
- 2. Educational Equity:** Ensures all students have access

to a standard set of educational experiences and opportunities.

- 3. Adaptability:** Allows for adjustments and updates in response to new research, technology, and societal changes.

Understanding the introduction to curriculum sets the stage for deeper exploration into curriculum development, evaluation, and the broader implications for educational practice. Let me know if you're focusing on specific aspects or have particular questions!

## Historical Perspectives

### The roots of modern education in post-independence India

Post-independence India faced the monumental task of unifying a diverse nation. Education became the cornerstone for building a sense of national identity and progress. In the early years, the focus was on eradicating illiteracy and establishing a common curriculum that could cater to the country's varied demographic. The government set up various committees and commissions to deliberate on the best way forward for India's system.

#### Key educational reforms and committees

- **The University Education Commission (1948-49):** Led by Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, this commission laid the groundwork for higher in India.
- **The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53):** Focused on the organization and improvement of secondary.
- **The Kothari Commission (1964-66):** A comprehensive review which led to the formulation of the National Policy on Education in 1968.

#### The genesis of National Curriculum Frameworks

As India's socio-economic landscape evolved, so did the understanding that the curriculum must be dynamic, reflecting and catering to the changing needs of society. This realization gave birth to the National Curriculum Frameworks (NCF), which provided a structured approach to syllabus development.

#### The progression of NCF

- **NCF 1975:** It emphasized the importance of education in promoting national progress and integration.
- **NCF 1988:** Focused on child-centered approaches and inculcating a temper among students.
- **NCF 2000:** Addressed the need for a global perspective.
- **NCF 2005:** This framework was revolutionary, advocating constructivist pedagogy and inclusive.

#### Curriculum as a reflection of societal change

India's curriculum development has always been a mirror of the societal changes happening within the country. Whether it is the incorporation of environmental studies post the Bhopal Gas Tragedy or the introduction of Information

Technology as a subject in the wake of the digital revolution, the curriculum has been responsive to the times.

#### Addressing social disparities through education

Education in India has also been a powerful tool for addressing social disparities. The curriculum has evolved to include lessons on social justice, gender equality, and the history of the marginalized, thereby the new generation on the values of democracy and equality.

#### Fostering national development through curriculum

The Indian curriculum is not just about academic knowledge; it's about creating responsible citizens who will contribute to national development. Subjects like Economics, Political Science, and Social Work are designed to instill a sense of civic duty and an understanding of the country's development needs.

#### Emphasis on skill development

With the world moving towards a knowledge-based economy, the Indian curriculum has shifted focus to skill development. The introduction of vocational subjects and the emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education are steps towards preparing students for the jobs of the future.

#### Continuous dialogue between educational policy and societal change

The interplay between policy and societal change in India is ongoing. The curriculum is continuously updated to include contemporary issues like digital literacy, environmental conservation, and health.

#### Recent developments in the Indian curriculum

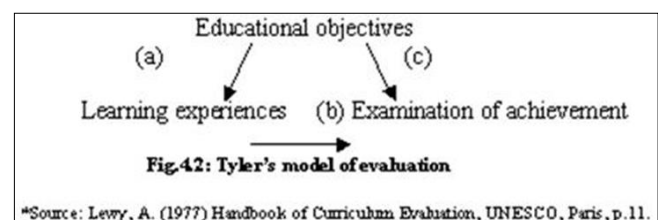
The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the latest milestone in India's educational journey. It aims to overhaul the existing education system by making it more holistic, flexible, and aligned with the 21st-century needs of the nation and the individual learner.

#### Curriculum Models and Frameworks

Various models of curriculum evaluation have been developed by different experts. We shall discuss four important models of curriculum evaluation in this section.

##### 1. Tyler's Model

Probably the best-known model of curriculum evaluation is proposed by Tyler (1950) who described education as a process in which three different foci should be distinguished. They are educational objectives, learning experiences, and examination of achievements. Tyler's model is shown schematically in the following figure



\*Source: Levy, A. (1977) Handbook of Curriculum Evaluation, UNESCO, Paris, p.11.

In the above, evaluation of this type is represented by the arrow marked with the letter (c). This model is primarily used to evaluate the achievement level of either individual

learners or a group of learners. The evaluators working with this model are interested in the extent to which learners are developed in the desired way. Both cognitive and affective domains are given importance in this model. In Tyler's model, the relationship between educational objectives and learner achievement constitutes only a portion of the model. The systematic study of the other relationship is also described in the model. The arrow (b) refers to the correspondence between the objectives and the learning experiences suggested in the curriculum and realized in the actual school situation. Arrow (L) refers to the examination of the relationship between the actual learning experiences and educational outcomes.

**2. Shake's Countenance Model**

Stake (1969) explained curriculum evaluation in terms of 'antecedents', 'transactions', and 'outcomes'. Let us first understand these terms. The term 'antecedents' refers to those aspects in which curriculum is taught, such as time available and the other sources provided. The term 'transactions' refers to what happens in lessons, including what is done by both the teachers and learners. The term 'outcomes' connotes the learner's achievements, the effects of the curriculum on the attitudes of the students, as well as the teacher's feelings about teaching the curriculum. This model is known as the countenance model because different people look at the curriculum and appraise it accordingly. Stake's evaluation model is explained below

Terms	Kind Of Information	Methods
Antecedents	*Organizational background *Resources *Attitudes of administrators and parents *Examinations available *Content in Curriculum *Knowledge and skills of pupils	*Time table *Syllabus and textbooks *Interview
Transactions (in lessons)	Teachers: *Roles adopted *Use of time and resources *Content with Pupils Pupils *Cognitive Processes *Interest and involvement *Use of time	*Activity Records *Observations of class *Self-report by teachers *Self-report by pupils
Outcomes	*Pupil's achievements *Pupil's attitudes, interpretations *Teachers' attitudes, interpretation *Effects on other parts of institutions	*Test and written work *Questionnaires *Interviews

**3. The CIPP Model**

Stufflebeam (1971) proposed the CIPP model stressing the need for attention to context (c), Input (i), Process (p), and Product (pr). The first three terms refer to formative evaluation, while the product refers to summative evaluation. Let us discuss each of the terms, used by Stufflebeam, below.

**Content evaluation:** Here the curriculum evaluator is engaged in studying the environment (context) in which the curriculum is transacted. It provides the rationale for the selection of objectives. Content evaluation is not a one-time activity. It is a continuous process for furnishing baseline information for the operations of the total system.

**Input evaluation:** The purpose of input evaluation is to get information on how to utilize resources optimally to meet the objectives of the curriculum. It includes the evaluation of some sort of physical and non-physical inputs such as the availability of physical and human resources, time, and budget. It also includes previous achievements, education, and aspirations of pupils.

**Process evaluation:** This is the most critical component of the overall model. The quality of the product largely depends on this component. It addresses the curriculum implementation decisions. Stufflebeam presents the following three strategies for process evaluation

1. To detect or predict defects in the procedural design or its implementation during the diffusion stages: In dealing with plan or curriculum defects, we should identify and monitor continually the potential sources for the failure of the curriculum. The source may be logistical, financial, etc.
2. To provide information for curriculum decisions: Here, we should make decisions regarding test development before the actual implementation of the curriculum. Some decisions may require that certain in-service activities be planned and carried out before the actual implementation of the curriculum.
3. To maintain a record of procedures as they occur: It addresses the main features of the project design; for example: the particular content selected, the instructional strategies planned, or the time allotted to the planning for such activities

**4. Hida Taba Model**

Hilda Taba's Social Studies Model emphasizes the cause-and-effect relationship in the curriculum process. The evaluation process is based on experimental control over the study materials and their effect on the achievement of the students. The researcher prepares different sets of study materials, each set having certain variations from the other. The materials are exposed to different groups of students. After the exposition, the curriculum is evaluated. The outcomes of curriculum evaluation will determine the principles of developing the new programs

Curriculum evaluation monitors and reports on the quality of education. Cronbach (1963) distinguishes three types of decisions for which evaluation is used.

1. **Course Improvement:** deciding what instructional material and methods are satisfactory and where changes are needed.
2. **Decisions about individuals:** Identifying the needs of the pupil for the sake of planning of instruction and grouping, acquainting the pupil with his deficiencies.
3. **Administrative regulations:** Judging how good the school system is, and how good individual teachers are. The goal of evaluation must be to answer questions of selection, adoption, support, and worth of educational materials and activities. It helps in identifying the necessary improvements to be made in content, teaching methods, learning experiences, educational facilities, staff selection, and development of educational objectives. It also serves the needs of the policymakers, administrators, and other members of society for information about the educational system.

### Types of Curriculums

1. Learner-centered design
2. Subject-centred design
3. Problem-centred design

#### 1. Learner-centered design

The learner-centered design focuses on the understanding that each learner has different characteristics. The teachers or instructors are to give opportunities to the learners to take ownership of a project or assignment. They are required to create chances for independent learning with well-regulated liberty. This indicates that students take a more active role in the classroom, but it is to be done under the instructor's guidance.

#### 2. Subject-centered design

Subject-centered design is a traditional approach to curriculum that focuses on a particular Subject matter or discipline rather than on the individual. Additionally, during the curriculum development process, this approach includes four subtypes of curriculum designs: subject-area design, discipline design, broad-field design, and correlation design.

#### 3. Activity-centered design

Some experts view curriculum "as various forms of activity that are a grand expression of the human spirit and that are of the greatest and most permanent significance to the wide world". According to the activity-centered curriculum students, should learn by engaging themselves in various activities which is desirable and purposeful. It stresses the practical aspects of life. Emphasis is given to "learning by doing" and "learning by relating to life". Laboratory work and fieldwork are given more importance. Activity-centered curriculum may consist of activities such as making a dress, constructing a box, building a miniature house, etc. The activities become the focus (rather than the fixed content), which are intended to achieve the pre-stipulated objectives.

#### 4. Integrated Curriculum

An integrated curriculum involves a judicious mix of subject-centered, learner-centred, and activity-centred

curricula. It enables the students to get a comprehensive view of the concepts to be learned. For example, a course like "History of Civilization" may be an integrated curriculum representing history, literature, art, music, and sociology. The traditional curriculum is too formal, fragmented, and isolated. As a result, it fails to give a comprehensive view of life. It does not lead to unity of knowledge. The introduction of an integrated curriculum overcomes such barriers.

#### 5. Core Pattern Curriculum

The core-pattern curriculum is problem-centred. It gives importance to preparation for living in a democratic society. So, emphasis is laid on the all-round development- physical, mental, moral, emotional, and spiritual- development of the learner. According to the core pattern of the curriculum, a long block of two or three periods at a time is desirable. A long block of two to three periods allows time for field trips and short excursions without disturbing other classes. It gives importance to guidance and counseling. The National Policy on Education (1986) has given an important place to the core curriculum. It observed, "The National System of Education will be based on a national curriculum framework which contains a common core along with other components that are flexible". While the core curriculum may become common to all classes, teachers, and students in a state or a nation, the schools are free to design and implement the non-core aspects based on the needs of students or the community or regional needs.

### Curriculum Evaluation and Revision

Curriculum evaluation and revision are crucial to ensure that educational programs stay relevant and effective. As times change and discoveries emerge, it becomes essential to assess whether the curriculum adequately prepares students for the challenges of the present and future. This process allows for educational institutions to meet the ever-evolving needs of students and society as a whole.

#### Step 1: Identifying the need for evaluation

The first step in this process is recognizing the need for evaluation. This can be prompted by factors such as changes in educational policies, advancements in technology, feedback from students and educators, or external factors influencing the curriculum, like changes in the job market. By recognizing the need for evaluation, institutions can proactively address potential gaps and areas for improvement.

#### Step 2: Setting the objectives

Once the need for evaluation is identified, the next step is to establish clear objectives. These objectives serve as guidelines for the evaluation process. They outline what areas of the curriculum will be assessed and provide a framework for data collection and analysis. Setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives ensures that the evaluation process is focused and effective.

#### Step 3: Collecting data

The heart of curriculum evaluation lies in gathering meaningful data. This can be done through various methods, including surveys, interviews, classroom observations, assessment analyses, or focus groups. By collecting data

from a diverse range of sources, institutions can gain a comprehensive understanding of how the curriculum is functioning and how it can be improved.

#### Step 4: Analyzing and interpreting the data

Once the data has been collected, it's time to analyze and interpret it. This step involves examining the data closely and identifying patterns, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. It's crucial to involve diverse stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and experts in the relevant field, to ensure a well-rounded analysis.

#### Step 5: Making informed decisions

With the data analyzed, it's time to make informed decisions. This stage involves synthesizing the findings, identifying priorities, and developing strategies for curriculum revision. Decisions are often made by a committee of educators and administrators who weigh the evidence and determine the changes required to enhance the curriculum's quality and effectiveness.

#### Step 6: Implementing the revisions

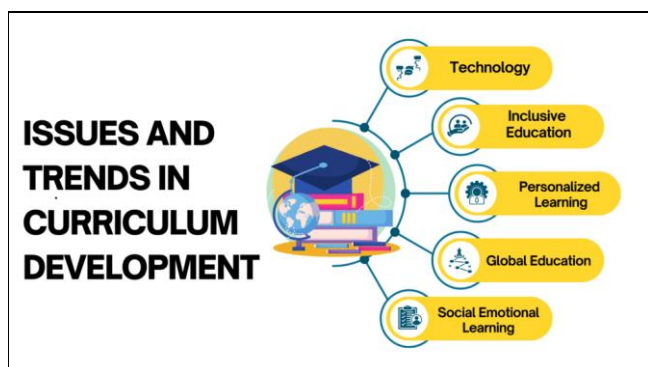
Once decisions have been made, it's time to put them into action! This step involves designing and implementing the revisions to the curriculum. It may include developing new courses, modifying existing ones, updating teaching materials, or incorporating new teaching methods. Implementation should be done collaboratively to ensure a smooth transition and provide support to teachers and students.

#### Step 7: Continuous review and improvement

Curriculum evaluation and revision are not one-time events but rather an ongoing process. After implementing the revisions, it's crucial to continuously review and improve the curriculum. This can be done through regular check-ins, feedback loops, and monitoring the impact of the changes. By embracing this continuous improvement mindset, educational institutions can adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

#### Current Issues and Trends

Issues and trends in curriculum development refer to the challenges and changes that impact the creation, design, and implementation of educational curricula. Some of the current issues and trends in curriculum development include



1. **Technology integration:** As technology continues to advance, it is important to incorporate it into the

curriculum to prepare students for the future job market.

2. **Inclusive education:** The need to design curricula that are inclusive of all students, including those with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds, has become a growing trend in curriculum development.
3. **Personalized learning:** The shift towards personalized learning, which allows students to tailor their learning experience to their individual needs and interests, is gaining momentum.
4. **Global education:** Preparing students for a global society is another trend in curriculum development, which includes the incorporation of global issues, cultural awareness, and language learning.
5. **Social-emotional learning:** The importance of addressing students' social and emotional needs is increasingly being recognized, and curriculum developers are incorporating social-emotional learning into their curricula.
6. **Environmental education:** The need to educate students about environmental issues and sustainable practices is also a growing trend in curriculum development.
7. **Career readiness:** Preparing students for their future careers is a critical issue, and curricula are being developed with a focus on job skills, internships, and vocational training.
8. **Assessment and evaluation:** Effective assessment and evaluation of student learning outcomes are crucial for ensuring that the curriculum is meeting its intended goals and objectives.

#### Conclusion

The complexity and diversity inherent in educational design are shown by this examination of curriculum topics and variations. The analysis emphasizes how crucial it is to choose and modify curriculum models to accommodate students' diverse requirements, particularly in situations when accessibility and inclusivity are required. In a continually evolving educational landscape, more contemporary approaches such as competency-based and learner-centered models offer flexibility and relevance, while classic curricula give structure and consistency. There isn't a single curriculum model that works for everyone, though; the greatest results come from carefully crafting curricula that meet both the individual requirements of students and certain educational objectives. In the future, curriculum creators, educators, and legislators must work together to create and implement inclusive and adaptive curricula that guarantee all children.

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