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**"CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND THE APPROACH TO COURSE CONTENTS" - A PAPER DELIVERED AT A WORKSHOP/SEMINAR HELD AT ISRAEL PATRICK IYAMBO COLLEGE - NAMIBIAN POLICE ON 22 JULY 1999**

**BY S. J. KOROMA**

Chairperson, my resource person colleagues, distinguished guests, course participants, ladies and gentlemen. I feel highly honoured to be asked to share my unqualified experience in curriculum development and the approach to course contents" at a crucial time like this when Polytechnic of Namibia and other stake holders are grappling with designing new diploma course in (Road) Traffic Science, specifically aimed at meeting the needs and requirements of the traffic officers operating within the borders of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr/Madam Chairperson, it is most gratifying to be able to participate in such an important workshop/seminar at a time when drivers are least obeying traffic codes thus leading to numerous deaths on Namibian roads despite the relentless efforts of the traffic personnel.

Madam/Mr Chairman, the topic at hand is a broad one and can take a week or more to fully deal with it. Notwithstanding this, I will crave your indulgence to be patient and allow me to take some of your precious time to give you what I can of it.

In the light of my plea ladies and gentlemen, I would like to start with the definition of a curriculum.

**2. AN EVOLVING DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM**

Curriculum, as a special area of study within education, emerged from the need to arrange, organise and translate such visions into educational programmes of study. Although the first formal book in the area of curriculum was not produced until 1918, serious study of the opinions in education were underway in the nineteenth century.

In the United States for instance, three prestigious committees were formed in 1888 - the committee of fifteen on Elementary Education, the committee of ten on Secondary Education and the committee on College Entrance Requirements. These committees were charged with the responsibility to discuss major issues and make recommendations on the purpose and organisation of public education in America. Strangely though, these committees never really discussed anything but the re-organisation of existing educational structures, they did initiate a scrutiny of the programs in education.

Questions raised during these formal inquiries formed the foundation for the emergence of the area of curriculum - an area of inquiry concerned with the conceptualization, design, implementation, and assessment of educational programmes. Nearly one hundred years later, curriculum development stands as an essential area of study in education and as a crucial function in a nation experiencing rapid change.

Although the first use of the term curriculum can be found in Scotland as early as 1820, the first modern use of the term in the United States came nearly a century later. The term curriculum comes from the Latin word "currere" which means "to run". The course of the race, with time, came to mean "the course of study". Not surprising, then, the traditional definition of curriculum is a course of study or training leading to a product or education. For most lay persons, curriculum today is equated with course guides, syllabi or textbooks that establish the "course". Such a classic definition of the term also reflects the meaning of curriculum for the most conservative or structured educators in the field.

The various kinds of definition of curriculum have changed over the years in response to social forces and expectations for the School, the process of curriculum development has remained constant. Through analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation, curriculum developers set goals, plan experiences, select course content, and assess outcomes of School programmes. These constant processes have contributed to the emergence of structure in curriculum planning and development.

3. A curriculum is a plan for learning. All educational plans consist of a vision that interprets social values and a structure that translates those values whereby values are interpreted and arranged into learning experiences.

In the last twenty years, curriculum development has seen sweeping changes in the methods by which schools and tertiary institutions improve instructional programmes. Competency based educational targets, multi-media commercial learning systems, and the advent of the personal computer, to name a few of the changes, have impacted upon the process of curriculum development.

As you will later see in this paper, curriculum development is truly a value laden task with important decisions at every turn, and the process of curriculum is consistent despite major changes in roles and responsibilities in education. I believe that knowing the process and understanding the issues of curriculum are important to successful practice.

Moving towards the new millenium, educational leaders will surely have rough times in planning or developing curricula. With this at the back of our minds, curriculum development should entail political dimensions and alternative futures to assist curriculum planners in an orientation to these areas.

Curriculum development is a complex process that requires time, and there can be no lasting change and improvement of school curriculum without careful planning and execution.

4. In Namibia, for instance, the process of structuring the curriculum in our schools has been greatly refined, and represents a significant advance in our ability to design and implement improved school programmes. Suffice it to say that curriculum development as a process is today a basic cycle.

This cycle consists of:

- (1) Analyse
- (2) Design
- (3) Implement
- (4) Evaluate

These steps must be followed in curriculum development in order to improve educational programmes.

I will now deal with the four steps for curriculum development at classroom level.

## AN OUTLINE FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT - CLASSROOM LEVEL

Operation	Focus	Activity	Resource Base
Analyse	Clarify values Set goals	Identify purposes Set parameters Outline program Select content Order content	Environmental forces Information sources
Design	Establishing programs	Develop lessons Select materials Choose instruction strategy Establish management pattern	Knowing about the learning process
Implement	Training for interaction	Integrate learning Individualising instruction	Knowledge of human development
	Application and management of resources	Delivery systems, grouping, space, time, focus of learning, climate, personnel roles	Change theory Knowledge of the act of learning
Evaluate	Assessment	Evaluate criteria Student and teacher assessment	All of the above

After listening to the analysis of the four basic steps in curriculum development, one can see that there has been a concern for the performance of educational programmes. This focus, often referred to as "accountability" in school, has pushed the definition of the curriculum towards an emphasis on ends or outcomes:

"Curriculum is concerned not with what students will do in the learning situation, but with what they will learn as a consequence of what they do. Curriculum is concerned with results".

Curriculum development in recent years has shifted from primarily developing and implementing new courses of study to a complicated process of determining total programmes for learners.

Establishing a working philosophy, formulating goals at a number of conceptual levels and relating objectives to programme development are all tasks of modern curriculum development.

Basic to all educational planning is an assessment of what exist. From such assessment should come an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the educational programme, as well as goals for development.

As I said earlier in this paper that curriculum development topic could take weeks or even years before compiling a "reasonable" curriculum, I would now turn to the approach to course contents.

In designing any course content, one has to ask oneself a series of questions revolving around these primary questions:

1. Education for what?
2. Education for whom? - needs analysis
3. Education by what means?
4. What is the role of the course in terms of formal education programmes and to what ends are they to be directed?
5. Who is to be served by these programmes (course contents) and should their focus be broad or narrow?
6. How are these courses to be designed and what is the best way to promote effective learning of te course contents?

Ladies and gentlemen, my course content needs analysis stated above do neatly fit into what Briggs over fifty years ago called as the unknowns. He posed such questions in dealing with course contents as:

1. What are the desired ends of the intended course contents in education?
2. To what extent shall learning the course contents modify the character and actions of future citizens?
3. What subject areas are most vital in attaining these ends?
4. What should be the content of these subject arrangements?
5. How should the material be organised?
6. What is the relative importance by each course of study?
7. How much time should be allotted for each subject and finally what are the most probably future needs of the learner?

Ladies and gentlemen, questions like these will provoke debate, inquiry, and experimentation in any school course contents or even in school environments.

As you have seen, the basic elements of the prescribed approach to course contents should be concerned first with the derivation of course aims from perceived needs and the second with identification of relationships among them.

Let us look at these in detail:

1. Derivation of course aims from perceived needs.

The approach recommended here is based very much on Tyler's (1949) thinking concerning the way in which course content and course aims might be derived. Tyler, in fact, suggested that those concerned with determining the aims of teaching institutions (Schools in particular) need to take note of the needs of students and society, the opinions of the subject-matter specialists, and the educational and social philosophies of the teaching institution, as well as taking note of what is known about the learning process itself. It is suggested here that a course team needs to act in a similar manner, undertaking a broad analysis of perceived student needs and determining to what extent these might be met through the development of related instructional materials.

Indeed course contents should deal with learners needs, society and national needs. We must make assumptions about the type of knowledge, abilities, interests and motivations of the target group. One has to make sure that the course contents meet the needs so far identified. One crucial item that should reflect in the course contents should be national and international materials on which to base subsequent development work.

In short, course content should have clear aims and objectives aiming at making a holistic individual and society in general.

Mr/Madam, Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, that curriculum development must be linked with teacher education. Quite often, curriculum developers find themselves caught in a web trying to decide whether a curriculum should be developed before teachers are trained or whether you need to implement new curricula. Also, ladies and gentlemen, there is the usual gap between what planners/developers conceive of as adequate and the realities of the classroom as experienced by teachers. To solve this dilemma, assessment, if properly designed, can provide effective feedback to curriculum development efforts. Let me say that curriculum is hinged on the needs of society. Since societal needs change as new demands are introduced, curriculum is expected to change accordingly.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In modern curriculum development, what I want to see done is to design a curriculum that is geared towards enhancing knowledge, skills and values which will help students live more productive lives in their own societies. I am sure, you all will agree with me that about 75 - 80% of learners in most developing countries end up in rural areas and our schools have failed to provide them with skills they would need to survive and improve their living standards in such environment. I believe the only solution that can be helpful is to redirect the current modern sector oriented curriculum towards connecting schools with livelihoods that are practised in their respective neighbourhood. This sort of curriculum is more meaningful and closely related to vocations and production (this is where I personally commend the Polytechnic of Namibia), where the total reality or curriculum of the Schools/Higher Institutions is related to productive labour.

We must put work into the educational process leading to a change of content, methods and structures in our educational programmes. This notion of education and

work in our curriculum encourages learners to specifically undertake practical activities that are directly useful to the society in which they live.

My ideas, ladies and gentlemen, tie very well with what we are doing in this workshop. The graduands of this Diploma in (Road) Traffic Science course will stop being paper qualification chasers only, but also graduands who will be useful to themselves and the society at large.

Finally, it is hoped that we would spend most of our time on constructive discussions on the task at hand, so that at the end of our two-day deliberations we would come up with some solutions to the all important issue of traffic national diploma curriculum.

I personally take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the co-ordination of this seminar; our resource persons from South Africa and the Polytechnic of Namibia. It is hoped that the time and expertise that they have put into the planning of this seminar would be amply rewarded through our full participation and concerted efforts. I thank you all.

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REPORT

WORKSHOP/SEMINAR

DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM  
AND COURSE CONTENTS  
DIPLOMA IN (ROAD) TRAFFIC  
SCIENCE

21 - 23 JULY 1999

