

The Role of Curriculum Scholars in Current Curriculum Debates

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Abstract

Curriculum is a set of planned tasks, learning experiences and behaviors proposed by an authority to achieve predetermined goals in form of behavioral change, academic achievements and learning outcomes within a particular time. The scholars are the people who have command and expertise in any of the curriculum components. The article focuses on the role of curriculum scholars in Pakistan and how and what type of changes they can initiate to bring harmony and tolerance, character and quality in development of curricula. The international issues, trends evolving globalization can be enhanced and incorporated to foster individual and social development. It is a qualitative study based on historical evidences and current researches highlighting the importance and role of curriculum scholars and meeting the world class education system. The issues and trends mentioned by developed countries curriculum experts paved way to synthesis them with local rising issues and trends .

The study concluded that the curriculum developers have dynamic roles in curriculum debates because they have to work for bridging gaps of developing and developed nation, addressing local curriculum issues, Using pragmatic approach rather than ideological, reorganizing of recent curricula, solving language issue, facing controversies on curriculum change, making it unified and centralized, diverting curricula to research orientation, obtaining continuous feedback and developing harmony in society at the same time. It is imperative for scholars to have effective communication skills and dynamic personality to incorporate the future trends without creating conflicts and confusion in the society. They need to know the skill to motivate and mould high ups for future changes and bring changes without development of controversies.

Keywords: Role, Curriculum, Scholars, Current, debates

Introduction

Duell¹ (1898) claimed that everything that can be invented has been invented. Watson² (1943) predicted that there is a market of five computers in the world. Oleson³ (1977) said that there is

¹ Duell, H.C 1898, Commissioner of The US Patent Office USA

² Watson J.T, 1943, Chairman IBM USA

³ Olson ,K 1977. President Digital Equipment Corporation USA

no reason for any individual to have computers. These are the comments from leading figures of politics and manufacturers and what they predicted seems to be ridiculous today because world has changed so fast and in so many directions. To meet these changing requirements one has to make preparation through the youth we have and the curriculum is the only way to equip them. This curriculum is not the old traditional one but a progressive and up to date that caters the needs of the society and states.

Curriculum is a set of planned tasks, learning experiences and behaviors proposed by an authority to achieve predetermined goals in form of behavioral change, academic achievements and learning outcomes within a particular time. The scholars are the people who have command and expertise in any of the curriculum components. They supposed to perform the tasks of setting and arranging curriculum elements in the light of aims and goals. The destiny of nation, rise and fall, status and place in world communities and future roles solely depend and rely on the curricula suggested by these experts including the teachers. The change and challenges that the next century is going to pass through, is unique and different from what has been experienced in the past. It is assumed, and perhaps true, schools programs and plans have not been able to keep pace with changing social and international requirements. The curriculum has always been blamed for not producing as demanded by market and society. Keeping in view the bureaucratic set up in place of democracy, the scholars need to change and switch form old, rigid and monotonous curriculum to a vibrant and progressive twenty first century curricula. They must prepare to face argument and resistance because change brings controversy and controversy brings alternate solutions which cause development and progress. It is utmost need of the time to make drastic changes based on current developments on international scenarios in all the components of curriculum at different levels.

The curriculum development process involves many areas and more aspects which need to be made according to the current environment. The first one is arrangement of learning experiences which includes class size, grade spans, length of school day and year, time allotment of the subjects and provision of instructional personnel. The second is contents of the subject offered in school, resources and courses of study. The third area is methodology which seeks the answer of how, presentation of contents, instructional media, readiness of the students, drills, discipline, simulation and some other techniques be used. The fourth one is evaluation which has to be continuous of teachers as well as learners and learning process. These are some of the key areas which curriculum expert will encounter during the coming years. As my concern here is not of the past but of the future so first it is advisable to find future trends and issues in curriculum in the world's current curriculum debates.

Importance of Curricula in 21st Century

The curriculum is a guide line or suggested activities that the learners have to follow during their study time. It provides a blue prints for teachers, students, parents and examining body of the different levels. It is imperative to change and revise the curricula with the passage of time and make necessary amendments as the world is pacing so fast and so diversified. The advent of technology and internet has totally reshaped the world education history.

i. Fast Changing Contents

The contents and plans of the curricula are rapidly changing. The general span of change is 3 to 5 years but as the world moves by leaps and bounds but the curricula needs to be changed with thorough care intense cautiousness. There is no space for experimentation or test and trial because when there is time limitation then everything is required to be exact and correct in all stages and phases. Many years ago, the change took place in decades and centuries but now it has changed and it takes place overnight. It is necessary to create space for rapid changes in curriculum. Margaret Mead once stated that the world is now at the point where it must educate people in what nobody knew yesterday and prepare schools for what no one knows yet, but what some people must know tomorrow.

ii. Curricula for Developing Nation

The world is divided into three categories, developing nation, developed nations and underdeveloped nations but on the other hand they are getting closer and becoming global community. The migration of the people from underdeveloped to developing or developed countries is increasing day by day. The attractions and temptation of these countries draw the masses towards them, their children and families after migrations have to switch from lower background knowledge to high class knowledge society.

iii. Learning for Life and Leisure

The post modern curricula envisages and emphasises on two aspects of learning, the one is preparation for life and second is utilisation of leisure because there must be purposeful life and it can only be when free time, if available, can be used in productive manner. The curriculum scholars are aware of these two important facts and they try to enhance these two concepts in curricula to make it effective and useful. The learners suppose to be enjoying the efficient learning and with joy and happiness.

iv. Shift from Transcription to Machine Operation

In the past there were writing skills which was mostly emphasised but now the focus has been shifted because in present world the electric devices decreased the chances of writing by hand. It is an urgent need to include in curricula the machine operation skills rather than transcription skills. There is no doubt that the age of computer demands skills to operate different operating systems so the learners need to acquire as fast as possible to handle these machines. The teachers are being replaced by machines that are why self learning and learning by media will overcome the other sources of learning. Future scholars need to be vigilant of the development

v. Qualitative Enlargement of Curricula

In globalised community, every individual needs to meet international standards to become part of that community, for this purpose the curricula must be revised and revamped to make it internationalised. In place of increasing the contents of curricula there has to be qualitative change in it in global perspective. Globally the quality is more emphasised than quantity of curricula, therefore, it is necessary to match curricula with at least neighbouring countries to make youth competitive of world market and research centres. Diversification doesn't mean quantitative change in curricula but qualitative improvement as per advancement in research and development. The learner can be provided different learning environment to face different situations and problem and to develop an ability to handle the problems arising in current situation.

vi. Chemical and Electronic Aids

Although chemical aids have always been in use by human being to improve his mental efficiency but with research and development, it has taken a very important place and position in boosting genius and intellect. The biological shortcomings have been overcome psychological issues are to be resolved. The medicine and supplements have worked effectively. Electronic aids has made the globe in one's hand, with an iPods one has access to the world leading research archives, digital libraries, data banks and encyclopaedias.

vii. Alternate Solutions

In the past the major focus was on finding the solution of the problems but this century focus is on finding alternate solutions to the problems. In the past one solution was quite enough for the time being there was no choice but today it deems necessary to have more than one choice. The body of knowledge has been changed particularly in social sciences. The crust of learning is based on the attainment of skills to find and present new and alternate solution to emerging and new arising problems.

viii. Individualized Education

This idea is not new as it has been exercised since long but in futures its importance is evident because of the knowledge developed on the basis of individual differences and individual requirements. It is imperative to find the ways and means to design such curriculum which caters individual needs and demands to explore the potentials that may not be boosted in groups. Individualized education exists in form of home tuition, academies and one on one teaching but its needs a lot of work force and resources.

ix. Learning Mobile

If anyone observe around him he/ she observes all type of people busy in operating mobile finding things, searching words, sending messages and making calls. One receives hundreds of messages containing information and deep thoughts. They are sometime guidelines, information, counseling and much more.

x. Cyber Family, Cyber peers

In the past family based on kinship and blood relationship but today it has changed and overturned by cyber families and internet groups. Many people do not join family gatherings and prefer cyber family and friends. The influence of the physically present peers is overshadowed by cyber peers because it is easy to express inner feelings on internet rather face to face. The curriculum developers need to be watchful of the advancement of these new emerging concepts and circles. They are suppose to include them inform of contents and assign a role to cyber space and family in the process of socialization.

xii Industrial to Knowledge Society

A few decades ago the major focus of the learning process was on skill development but it has been shifted to knowledge development because the period for industrialization is going to be over in near future as many general tasks and sophisticated jobs are being done by robots and computers. Software engineering has got importance to design and develop such program that could cater the needs and requirement of the masses and intellectuals. That is why the developed countries are directing their emphasis on knowledge rather than skills. It does not mean the skills should be rejected altogether but they can be placed behind knowledge.

Thornburg (1999) describes that learning can reach greater heights if the rate of change inside an institution is less than the rate of change outside, the end is in sight. He rightly claims that students must be prepared for jobs that have not been invented yet. The curriculum will create an educational system that prepares students to work in fields that do not even exist.

Castro (2001) presented the following ideas of the future curriculum

- a. home schooling and web-enabled courses
- b. Increase in online courses in future to overcome the problems like population and physical constraints.
- c. Shift from what used to be extra-curricular activities and become the main curriculum
- d. Concentration on social, art, sports and character education.
- e. School subjects will be learned in teams by means of project based tasks utilizing visual displays and multimedia presentations.
- f. Curriculum will cater to the needs of the community and business world

McDonald (2002) says that online education is based on anywhere and anyplace depending on shared interests that can create new peerage, family and groups of common interests. They may not be able to long last but they do exist and have an influence on personality of the learners.

Newhouse et al, (2002) made clarification that problem solving skills need to be part of the curriculum. The curriculum will consist of skills necessary for educational problems that need to be addressed.

Mills & Roblyer (2002) argued that today's classrooms need to prepare students to become citizens of the information age. Students must think critically, analyze and synthesize information to solve technical, social, economic, political, and scientific problems, and work productively in groups.

Mulcahy (2003) says that technology requires changes in the way humans work. The school curriculum will reflect how learners learn and feel as well as society's life style. He emphasizes that educators must work in partnership to break down the barriers of time, space, content and form so can collaborate, communicate, and share ideas.

Snyder (2004) confirmed that the teacher-mediated classrooms do not foster computer-mediated learning. He believes that technology can improve student learning and make teachers' work much easier. Educational technology will become powerful low-cost, off the shelf tools that can make learning more engaging and knowledge more accessible.

Merchant (2006) proposes an interesting list of some of these features, drawn from his study of textual innovation and 'digital writing' based on specific instances of screen-based communication (email, chat rooms, SMS, discussion boards and web-blogs) he further suggests that texts are changing in a number of ways, and that trends include:

- A move from the fixed to the fluid: the text is no longer contained between the covers or by the limits of a page.
- Texts are revised, updated, added to and appended (and often archived).
- Texts become collaborative and multivocal, with replies, links, posted comments and borrowings.
- Multimedia allows for a rich interplay of modes as texts become multimodal.

Homer (2007) points that the kinds of study that constitute English have always been, inescapably about culture, and thus "cultural heritage", since the term, and the evolution of its practices have evolved side by side.

Morgan (2007) commented that the promise of a known and stable body of canonical works in print, of solid and enduring value (and values) such a formulation, while comforting in its familiarity, is also problematic.

Role of Curriculum Scholars

So far, the new and key concepts of the 21st century were presented but in next the role of curriculum developers will be discussed. There are certain ideas that overlap but their status is different in coming paragraphs. There is no chronological order but surely there is some sequence of the incorporation of the new ideas.

i. Incorporate new Trends in Curricula

The first and foremost task of curriculum developer is to induct and incorporate these new trends, sensing their importance and feeling social requirements and constraint. It may not be possible to find a way to enhance all the trends but certainly there is a way out in implementing the maximum of them as per requirements and demands of the society. Meeting social, parents and learners demands, the curriculum developers can play very effective role in bringing desired change and development chances for the social strata.

ii. Technology Based Curricula

The technology has a very significant role in developing future of a nation. In place of industrialisation the future is with those who excel in knowledge. Technology has covered almost 60% of the whole learning so it is duty of the curriculum developers to bring technology into curricula of different levels. From a cell phone to a nuclear reactor, all actions and activities are based on technology. From food to medicine, from papers to pro-book everything is based on technology and it will overtake all the other areas very soon. Access and availability of technology is increasing day by day and during last five years the figure of technology market have blown up which indicates future trends.

iii. Market Oriented Curricula

While suggesting future goals the curriculum developer need to set future markets goals that could lead the learner to the world economy and make him compatibles with the international markets by skills and knowledge. Economic orientation in education is imperative in the current era because people strive for those jobs that pay well. The problem of brain drain arises because of mismatching of jobs to skills and knowledge.

iv. Grade Wise Linkage With International Curricula

The world has become a global village therefore development in one part of the world affects the other. Any type of happenings may spark the whole world so it is need of the time to keep in touch with International Research and Development. This linkage need to be at all level so that the world population could become an international community. Every individual could play his or her role world development and peaceful.

v. Developing Curricula of Personal and Interpersonal Skills

Apart from technology, the titanic area that must be highlighted is personal and interpersonal skills because communication is an integral part and parcel of life so an individual must be capable of expressing himself and comprehending others with good interpersonal skills. Here the education of values and ethics which is now termed as character education may be placed by giving due weight in curricula development.

vi. Curricula for Exploration of Unknown

New inventions tell us that they were exploration of unknowns so knowing the unknown is key to latest knowledge circle. Knowing things from history is one type of knowledge but exploring untraded land, unwaded seas, unknown future and unknown knowledge could be only guided when a curricula for this purpose is built on by experts curriculum developers if they know how to settle it and well aware of setting this type of curricula.

vii. Quality in Place of Quantity in Curricula

Presently it is complained that children carry a loaded bags which is heavier than their own wait because they keep so many books and note books with them. They are unable to carry particularly in developing countries but the output is not as much as the developed countries where the weight of the bags is quite low. It proves that the current curricula are not as much productive as it needs to be that requires curricula to be revised properly. Only addition of some more books does not bring the quality but there are certain prerequisite for enhancing quality.

viii. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation

Another very important role for curriculum developer is to carry out continuous evaluation and analysis of the curriculum by taking feedback from teachers, parents, major stake holders and from job markets. The curriculum itself, its implementation, its process and development stages all must be monitored and assessed through different techniques and approaches.

Major Consideration for Curriculum Scholars

Curriculum scholars are just like lighthouses that guide and set the direction of the ships. Guiding society and young generation for better futures depends on the selection of the contents and curricula, particularly for higher education which provides footprints and pave the way of development and progress. The first and foremost is to absorb theoretical and philosophical changes as soon as they take place because if they are not sensed then the nation may go astray and directionless. Secondly they have to be vigilant of globalised happenings and developments and the changing that are taking place in different countries. Thirdly they enhance diversity in all its forms and manifestations in curricula so that the class, race, gender and color differences could not affect or hinder any one. The fourth one is emphasis on

character education that may produce good human being which resultantly makes them good professionals and workers. The education for international values and local values can be made integral part of curricula. Last but not the least is technology education which is dire need of future nations and generation if it is to be better, then technology education should be imparted at all levels and grades to use it and to carry out further works on it.

Conclusion

The curriculum developers have dynamic roles in curriculum debates because they have to work for bridging gaps of developing and developed nation, addressing local curriculum issues, Using pragmatic approach rather than ideological, reorganizing of recent curricula, solving language issue, facing controversies on curriculum change, making it unified and centralized, diverting curricula to research orientation, obtaining continuous feedback and developing harmony in society at the same time. It is imperative for scholars to have effective communication skills and dynamic personality to incorporate the future trends without creating conflicts and confusion in the society. They need to know the skill to motivate and mould high ups for future changes and bring changes without development of controversies. The curriculum developers have dynamic roles in curriculum debates because they have to work for bridging gaps of developing and developed nation, addressing local curriculum issues, Using pragmatic approach rather than ideological, reorganizing of recent curricula, solving language issue, facing controversies on curriculum change, making it unified and centralized, diverting curricula to research orientation, obtaining continuous feedback and developing harmony in society at the same time. It is imperative for scholars to have effective communication skills and dynamic personality to incorporate the future trends without creating conflicts and confusion in the society. They need to know the skill to motivate and mould high ups for future changes and bring changes without development of controversies.

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