

Comprehensive Curriculum Planning: The Evangelisto Model

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Abstract of Paper:

Schools are faced with increasing demands and requirements as they prepare children for life. Schools must not only facilitate academic development in students but also prepare them for careers and for successful participation in a global society. Whereas the curriculum is the means by which schools define their goals and provide programs to achieve them, it is vital that curriculum planning be comprehensive, systematic, and relevant to the needs of children and the world that they will inherit. The Evangelisto curriculum model provides teachers and curriculum developers with a clear and efficient approach to planning. This research-based model has been used with great success for more than three decades in planning curriculum, within the United States and internationally. The focus of this session will be to present and explain the Evangelisto Curriculum Model and its uses in planning school programs.

Comprehensive Curriculum Planning: The Evangelisto Model

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Schools have the mission of preparing children for life. This has never been a simple mission, but it is one that becomes increasingly more complex and overwhelming as years roll by. In order for schools to be in a position to accomplish this mission with any degree of success, they must be highly focused and clearly organized. The curriculum provides the focus and the requisite organization.

Curriculum is simply the plan by which schools fulfill their responsibilities on behalf of children and society as well. However, plans may exist on a continuum from hastily prepared and superficially developed to carefully promulgated and thoroughly and thoughtfully constructed.

Many curriculum models are available as a basis for identifying curriculum components and for developing curriculum. However, the existing models share some common limitations:

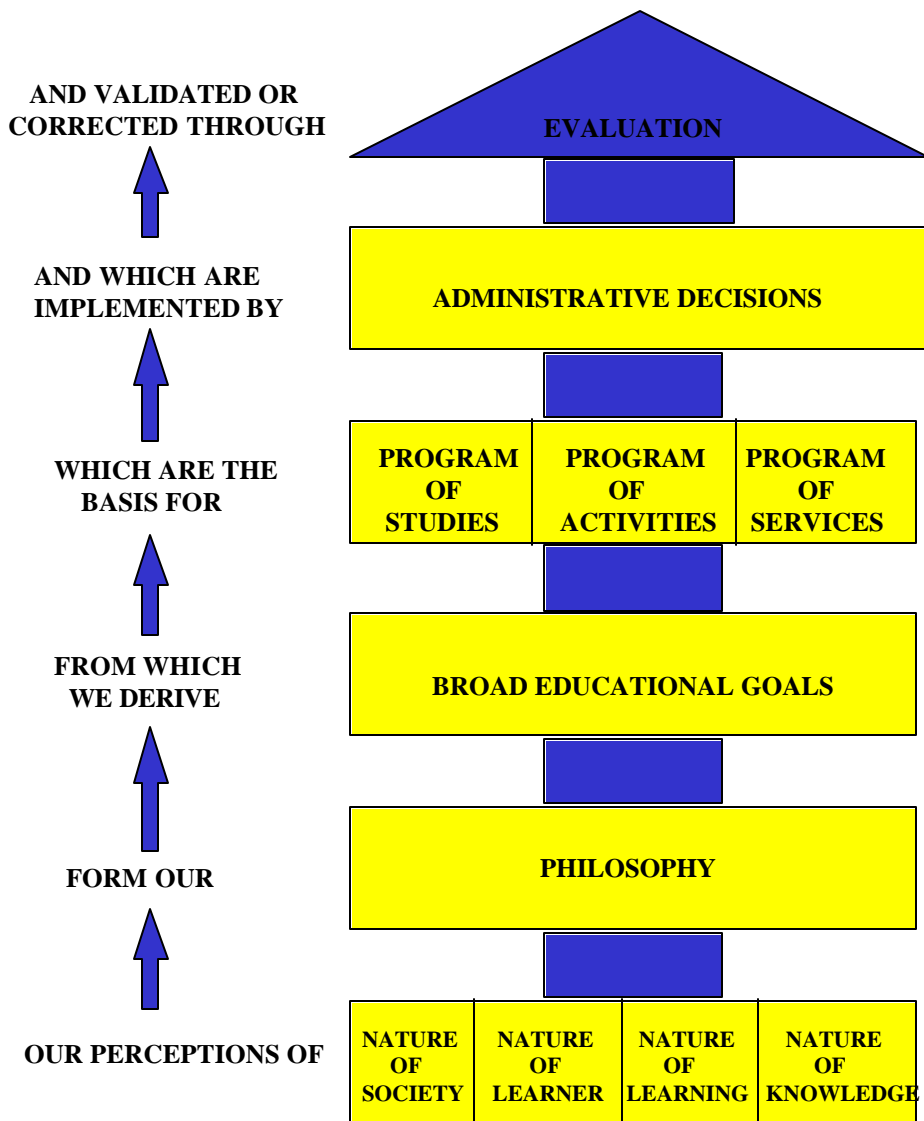
1. Some models include several important components involved in designing comprehensive school programs but omit others that are of considerable importance.
2. Some models are too simplistic in their basic design, ignoring or avoiding many of the more specialized, but necessary intricacies of curricular decision making.
3. Some models are somewhat cumbersome and convoluted, proving to be rather difficult to employ in the curriculum development process.

The Evangelisto Model for curriculum development provides a comprehensive, yet manageable, model for designing curricula that help schools fulfill their missions in preparing children for life. The tiers of the Evangelisto Model, progressing from bottom to top, require curriculum developers to:

1. Inventory and record their knowledge, beliefs, understandings, attitudes, and values about the nature of the society for which children are being prepared, about the nature of the learner, about the nature of learning, and about the nature of knowledge itself.
2. Express and assert their philosophy regarding the role of the school and incorporating the beliefs formulated earlier about the nature of society, learner, learning, and knowledge.
3. Delineate the K-12 curriculum goals for the school or school district.

4. Develop programs of studies, activities, and student support services.
5. Formulate the various administrative decisions that are intended to implement, sustain, and enhance the programs through which the school accomplishes its mission.
6. Evaluate the efficacy of the entire curriculum, considering not only measurable outcomes related to student learning but many other sources of data that are indicators of the effects of the school programs which are operating.

The Evangelisto Model:



THE EVANGELISTO CURRICULUM MODEL

The Mission of the School

The Task: Write a clear and concise mission statement that expresses the purpose and focus of the school.

Before curriculum development begins, it is essential that schools define their role on behalf of students, families, and communities that they serve. While there are many specific focal points that school curricula must address, the fundamental consideration is that schools are here to prepare children for life.

The school's mission statement provides a focal point for all school endeavors and all curriculum planning. If a syllabus or a school policy is not congruent with the school's mission, then there is a basis for determining if either one belongs there at all. The mission statement should be displayed prominently in all school buildings and should be incorporated into all course syllabi and other appropriate documents as a reference point.

Clearly, a mission statement needs to be at once succinct and comprehensive; at the same time it should be asserted in language that is specific and clear. Vague generalities do not provide a clear enough sense of the school's mission.

I. The Foundation of the curriculum: Society, Learner, Learning, Knowledge

A. The Nature of Society

The Task: Identify the major realities of society today and indicate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that children will need to succeed in it.

If the school proclaims its mission to be focused on preparing children to be effective, productive, responsible members of a global society, then it is evident that curriculum planning must include an overview of the major realities/characteristics of the very global society that students are being prepared to encounter. While the list of realities is potentially quite vast, some of the more obvious items of interest may include:

1. Communication
2. Technology
3. Political/World climate
4. Economics
5. Vocations
6. Interpersonal relationships
7. Family and community living
8. Ecology
9. Values and value systems
10. Health [both physical and psychological]
11. Uses of leisure time

B. Human Development

The Task: Describe what children are like in terms of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development at key grade levels. Identify the implications for decisions related to school and classroom environment as well as for teaching approaches in working with children.

Curriculum and instruction are two aspects of schooling that must be regarded together at all times. A curriculum plan which identifies the scope and sequence of content (facts, concepts, skills, attitudes) must also address the pedagogy that is appropriate for inculcating or developing learning in students. Yet, the nature of the content (in terms of its complexity and degrees of abstraction) and the teaching approaches (teacher-directed or student-centered) must not be planned in a vacuum. The nature of the learner will inevitably have a profound influence on learning, by way of facilitating or by way of impeding learning. Hence, when designing a curriculum, one must carefully consider the nature of the learner in order to plan appropriate instructional approaches to be used.

Human development is a vast and rather complex terrain to traverse. It entails physical, intellectual, social, and psychological dimensions. A great deal of information has been provided through the years by researchers, yet so much more needs to be learned. Curriculum planning must not ignore what is known about human development. Our success with children will inevitably be intertwined with the degree to which we are able to use what we know about them as we attempt to prepare learning programs and environments that are suitable for students. Some of the major contributors to our understanding of human development include Abraham Maslow, Robert Havighurst, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget. In addition, much new information is emerging from brain research and from the work of Howard Gardner [Multiple Intelligences] and Daniel Goleman [Social Intelligence].

The significance of these developments and others is that educators would be wise to re-visit their notions about teaching and learning and incorporate the relevant concepts and understandings as a basis for accommodating the many human needs that children bring into the classroom. The simple logic that applies here is that we are much more likely to succeed in our efforts to effect learning if we are able to provide the learning experiences that are congruent with the developmental realities that we find in youngsters. Some implications that relate to human development include:

1. Selection of teaching strategies
2. Development of a classroom environment that will be conducive to learning
3. Using means of communication that are appropriate to the learners
4. Providing the emotional and psychological supports that students need
5. Selection of learning materials that account for learning modalities, reading levels, levels of understanding, and prior knowledge
6. Assessing student learning

C. The Nature of Learning

The Task: Decide what learning is, then explain how learning occurs in individuals. Note the variable that affect learning, then explain what teaching approaches teachers should use to facilitate learning.

We know a great deal about how learning happens. There are myriad theories about how learning occurs in human beings, and many teaching approaches have been developed in response to those theories. However, one significant reality confronts us, and that is: Despite the heroic, creative, and persistent efforts of dedicated and talented teachers to facilitate learning in students, the results fall short of the goal. Many students do not learn a great deal of what they are taught. Standardized test results across the country are indicative of this [*author's note: Clearly, standardized tests have a rather limited focus in what they measure and do not even begin to encompass the many goals that teachers are responsible to attain across the major domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. However, they are widely used barometers of teaching efficacy; thus, they provide an objective substantiation of the claim being made here that children are not entirely successful learning what they are being taught.*]

Some of the learning theories, particularly those that find their origins in the work of Ivan Pavlov, believe that learning results from a stimulus-response continuum in which the individual learns through constant exposure to a particular stimulus. The theories that originate from this perspective suggest that effective teaching approaches would be teacher-centered and possibly lecture-oriented, using rote memorization and drill-and-practice. This approach is used widely around the world and has been largely successful. Unfortunately, there are some limitations in using such an approach:

- a. despite the fact that presentation of information can be done quickly, it takes a great deal of time to allow for the multiple repetitions required for learning
- b. it tends to focus on memory and recall, rather than on the higher order thinking skills
- c. it becomes tedious quite quickly for many students, and there is a tendency for some students to become increasingly less attentive as the process continues

Other learning theories explain that learning occurs when the individual perceives a pattern or develops an insight into the material that is being observed. Kurt Lewin's field-ground theory and the work of gestalt psychologists assert the view that the individual actively seeks out meaning and formulates understandings by seeing relationships and patterns, then interpreting them as to their significance. The teaching approaches that are suggested by this line of thinking are: problem-solving, laboratory experimentation, and inquiry learning; the classroom is essential student-centered, and the teacher is in the role of guide and facilitator. The advantages of such approaches are that the learning which results is powerful and rather indelible and the higher order thinking skills [synthesis, analysis, and evaluation] are more readily accommodated. The most obvious disadvantage is that such approaches are quite time-consuming; students need time to observe, formulate hypotheses, gather and analyze data, synthesize, evaluate, draw conclusions and determine applications of their insights.

D. The Nature of Knowledge

The Task: Determine how knowledge will be organized for classroom instruction and how decisions are to be made regarding what to include in scope and sequence planning. Decide what the focus of instruction should be in classrooms: facts, concepts, skills.....

Before curriculum planners design a program of studies, they need to arrive at a series of very fundamental and critical decisions. These decisions are actually derived from our views on the nature of knowledge. This becomes increasingly difficult as educators continue to experience the effects of the “Knowledge Explosion” in which vast amounts of new knowledge are appearing daily, and decisions regarding what to teach and what to ignore are more difficult than ever before. To avoid overwhelming the curriculum with too much information, we must be very selective. [author’s note: Years ago at a national conference, a speaker shared the following insight, one that is so very true --Knowledge is like a graveyard – everything goes in and nothing comes out.]

The most fundamental questions relate to our views on the nature of knowledge. It might seem frivolous to ask such a question, but it is a necessary one with which to start. What is knowledge? What knowledge should students acquire?

What is knowledge?

- Facts?
- Concepts?
- Skills?
- Attitudes?
- Problem-solving?
- Scientific Method?
- Thinking?
- All of these?
- Some of these?
- None of these?

Our very answer to this question suggests the emphasis that will be given in classrooms and even the overall design of the program of studies. To a large extent, the methods of instruction that are used in the classroom will be influenced by the focus of the studies program as determined by our views on the nature of knowledge

II. Expressing the Philosophy of the School

The task: Prepare a statement of the school's philosophy that summarizes the views clarified earlier as to the mission of the school and the views on society, the learning, learning, and the nature of knowledge.

While the school's mission statement provides a succinct expression of its purpose, the philosophy is a more extensive statement that may incorporate several key ingredients:

- A. The Mission Statement
- B. An overview of the nature of society and the knowledge, skills, and values that children will need as future members and leaders of that society
- C. A summary of the beliefs regarding child development and its relationship to the learning environment and learning experiences to be provided
- D. A statement regarding the nature of learning and the appropriate teaching approaches to be used in the classroom
- E. An explication of the nature of knowledge, identifying the organization of the content of the curriculum and the relative emphases on learning of facts, concepts, skills, problem-solving, thinking, et al.

The philosophy should be prominently displayed in curriculum materials as a reminder for all users that all teaching and learning are ultimately related to it.

III. Developing District Goals

The Task: Prepare goal statements that provide a more specifically focused series of statements that tell what students will know or be able to do when they have completed the school program.

The district's goals express the focal points of the total curriculum. The goals explicate more specifically what the outcomes are expected to be for all students who complete the educational program. By necessity, the goals need to be

1. Comprehensive – They must be expressed in broad terms so as to subsume all of the learnings that are intended for all of the students.
2. Clear and specific – The language of the goal statements must be as specific and unambiguous as possible; vague or overbroad language will not provide the clarity that will enable multiple users of the curriculum to be in agreement as to what the goals are.
3. Outcome-focused – It is important to express the goals in terms of what the students will know or be able to do when they have completed the curriculum. This helps foster a clear sense of direction as curriculum development moves into the more detailed decision-making that comes later.

It is imperative that the district's mission statement and goal statements be clearly congruent. After all, the goal statements tell more specifically what it takes to accomplish the mission. It is also critical that the mission and goal statements

incorporate the perceptions and understanding that derive from considering the nature of society. I.e., in preparing children to be successful and effective citizens of a global society, we must be sure that our goals address the knowledge, values, and skills that are required.

IV. Designing Programs: Studies, Activities, and Services

The Task: Decide what subjects will be offered to students in the instructional program, identify out-of-class learning experiences that complement and supplement classroom instruction, and determine the services that will be provided to support students in their attempts to succeed in their work.

Very often, parents and educators think of “curriculum” purely in terms of what occurs in the classroom. This is the most pervasive view of curriculum and the one that gets the greatest amount of attention when discussions of the curriculum occur. Yet, schools around the world provide activities outside of the classroom that are considered to be quite valuable and necessary in the total development of children. At the same time, these same schools [depending upon available resources and the degree of emphasis given locally to such things] provide a number of support services to assist students not only in their daily functioning within the school setting but also outside of the school [most frequently focused on college or career pursuits]. It is the beliefs of the educational community [administrators, teachers, parents, host community] that will determine the degree of attention given to the activities program and the support services.

The Evangelisto Curriculum model maintains that all three programs are integral to the total curriculum and that all must receive full support if the mission of the school is to be achieved to the greatest extent possible. De facto realities [i.e., the widespread and almost universal presence of activities and services in curricula around the world] give testimony to their place in the curricula. Logic also supports the need for activities and services in the school’s curriculum. While the classroom is the school’s primary focal point in the learning process, we must remember that classroom learning becomes more powerful and real when students have the opportunities to use their knowledge and practice their skills in the activities program. In addition, there are many students whose ability to succeed are impeded by any number of personal and academic impediments. Activities and services are vital programs that enhance our success in achieving the school’s goals. Sadly, activities and services are often underfunded or undervalued because education is historically seen as that which transpires in the classroom and with reference with textbooks, et al. This the so-called “two by four” approach to the curriculum: what happens between the two pages of a book and within the four walls of the classroom.

The Evangelisto Model asserts that each of the three programs which comprise the centerpiece of the overall curriculum has a distinctive, but complementary function in the accomplishment of a school’s mission. In effect, if the mission of the school is to “Facilitate students in their development as capable, responsible, and effective members of a global society,” one might ask how such a mission is accomplished. If we rely solely

upon classroom instruction to accomplish that goal, we run a risk that some students might not reach the levels of competency to which we aspire; others might achieve only partial success; still others might simply “put in their time” and go through the motions, or they might drop out altogether. Thus, the activities programs provides a vehicle for extending and solidifying classroom learnings or for keeping students in school so that we have additional opportunities to help them learn. The services program, on the other hand, entails providing help and support that is intended to empower students to succeed in school by helping them in resolving personal difficulties (both physical and psychological) that might impede their learning, making appropriate choices as to educational programs and future studies, and formulating career plans that are appropriate.

V. Formulate Administrative Decisions

The Task: Prepare a budget; design school facilities; develop policies and procedures related to programs, teachers, students, and school requirements.

The primary purpose of any school’s administration is to provide the leadership and resources that are required in the achievement of the school’s mission. There are many facets to administrative decisions, and only the major ones are highlighted here.

A. Preparing a budget

Resources must be made available for accomplishing the goals of the school. The fundamental issue here is that there must be a clear correlation between the school’s goals and the resources that are allocated to them. Priorities must be established, and the funding levels must be commensurate with the degree of emphasis related to them. In an era when resources seem to be quite limited, budgetary decisions must be made with due care that money is being spent wisely and in accordance with the established priorities. Since the work of the school is accomplished through its programs of studies, activities, and services, the funds must be allocated to support them.

Budgetary planning is certainly under the control of the central administration, but it is important to remember that fiscal decisions that are intended to support instruction are best made with the input from the individuals who provide that instruction. Collaborative budget decisions tend to keep program and student needs in focus.

B. Designing school facilities

Where facilities exist already, the issue here becomes one of making sure that the buildings and grounds are sufficient and well-maintained to support the instructional and activities programs. From a usage standpoint, the question centers upon how appropriately and effectively the buildings and grounds are being used. Always, safety is an important consideration.

When planning new facilities, there are any number of considerations that must be included in the deliberations:

1. What kinds of structures are needed to house students at the various age levels? Long-range planning of facilities requires demographic information about the population and housing patterns within the school community.
2. What special facilities are needed for athletics, performing groups, cafeteria, auditorium, computer labs, library, health suite, faculty offices, and others?
3. How does a campus arrangement compare with having separate buildings on tracts of land spread over a large area [neighborhood schools vs. centralized facilities]?
4. What classroom and special purpose areas are needed in each building for students and staff?
5. How accessible should the facilities be to the general public?

C. Delineating policies and procedures

Policies and procedures provide guidelines as to the daily activities of individuals within the school. There are many specific aspects of the policies and procedures needed in schools. Some of the more prominent areas of focus are:

1. Discipline: rules of conduct and the consequences provided for them; what mechanisms are to be used when rule infractions occur? Suspension [in-school and out-of-school] and expulsion procedures must be clearly defined, and due process considerations must be followed.
2. Attendance/lateness.
3. Class schedules
4. Grouping of students for instruction
5. Dress codes [for students and staff members]
6. Homework
7. Grading
8. Lesson planning
9. Student voice
10. Placement of students
11. Allocating resources and budgeting
12. Field trips
13. Curriculum renewal

Student, faculty, and parent handbooks should be provided and should be clearly organized and “user-friendly.” Ideally, the school will maintain a Website, providing detailed and extensive information regarding the policies and procedures as well as assorted other information on personnel and school activities.

VI. Evaluating the Curriculum

The Task: Determine how the curriculum and its effects will be evaluated: decide on the kinds of data needed to evaluate the curriculum and the achieving of each of the school's goals and how to analyze that data.

Curriculum evaluation involves assessing and judging the accomplishment of the school's goals. Assessment entails the gathering of data about the school programs, et al., while evaluation is about making judgments based on the data. An evaluation is essentially a value judgment: how well are we doing with reference to this goal? Is this satisfactory?

It is important to use a wide variety of data in evaluation of the curriculum. While the overwhelming trend today is to use standardized test data on student performance as the basis for evaluating schools, it is important to remember that such data provides a very narrow perspective. For instance, if we want to determine how successful our programs are, we may want to consider using:

1. Grades that students earn
2. Graduation rates
3. Course completion rates
4. Longitudinal data on student performance
5. Participation levels in extra-class activities
6. Surveys of parents, students, teachers, employers, colleges and universities
7. Discipline records
8. Parent conference feedback
9. Accreditation visit reports
10. Teacher-made tests
11. Student portfolios
12. Honor roll membership

While it is important to gather data systematically and to analyze them carefully, it is essential that the results of the evaluation be used as the basis for modifying, enhancing, and adjusting the curriculum. If we discover that the curriculum is working well, the focus should be: How can we sustain and even enhance our successes? If it is discovered that the curriculum falls short of expectations, then the relevant questions are: What caused the level of performance to be thus? And What adjustments can be made to improve on the curriculum's performance in this area?

The Evangelisto Model as a Basis for Planning and Evaluating Curricula

The Evangelisto Model is a research-based model that provides curriculum planners a useful tool in making curriculum decisions. Curriculum development needs to be comprehensive if it is to produce curricula that will fill the need in schools. It is the

view of this model that each component identified within the model is a vital aspect to be considered in planning programs.

[Author's note: The Evangelisto Model is derived from research conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation, completed in 1982 at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. The study was entitled *The Development and Use of a Generic Model for Planning and Evaluating Basic Skills Programs in Language Arts for Secondary School Students*. It has been the basis for curriculum work that I have done in the United States and internationally. I would like to acknowledge my eternal debt of gratitude to Dr. H. Bernard Miller of Temple University whose guidance and mentoring inspire me even today.]