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# UNIT 15 CURRICULUM PLANNING

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## 15.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous units of this block you have learnt about the meaning, scope and bases of curriculum. You have studied that curriculum is a diverse field, which involves learning not only about central ideas but also about a range of opinions within each. Having studied the basics we shall now discuss curriculum planning. It is a comprehensive process by which a continuous flow of learning experiences is provided to the learners for their self and societal development. Curriculum planning involves several processes ranging from setting of goals and objectives to actual transaction. This implies that curriculum planning is not about merely preparation of syllabi and courses of study but also an effort for a continuous search for excellence in education. In this unit we shall study how the different curricular components are organised into a meaningful learning package, the different levels of planning and the postulates that guide the process of curriculum planning. The unit also throws light on the decision screens to be considered for organization and effectiveness of curricular plans and on some postulates for improving the curriculum planning process.

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## 15.2 OBJECTIVES

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After going through the unit you should be able to:

- define curriculum planning;
- discuss the various levels of curriculum planning;
- interrelate the key elements in curriculum planning;
- identify the decision screens on which are the bases of organizing effective curricular plans; and
- identify means for improving curriculum planning process.

You will agree that though there is no single definition of curriculum planning, you do get an idea of how the term is used to connote various processes associated with curriculum planning.

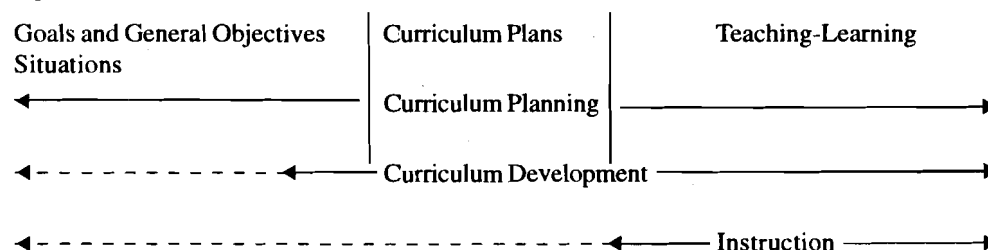
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## 15.3 DEFINING CURRICULUM PLANNING

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The very aim of planning is to bring the context of the future into the present. According to a Chinese proverb, 'Even a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'. Hence the destination of a journey becomes the objective, without which the journey would be a directionless and a meandering or unplanned search. Decisions about the future have to be taken in the present and for this purpose, goals are set to meet the future needs. The planning process helps educators to improve their skills for curriculum planning.

Let us try to define the term 'curriculum planning'. The term curriculum has been explained in different contexts. Some of the frequently used terms are 'curriculum planning', 'curriculum development', 'instruction', 'curriculum organization' etc. Curriculum organization refers to the way in which the intended learning experiences are organized or structured. Curriculum planning is a process in which participants at different levels take decisions about the goals of learning, decide about the teaching-learning situations by which these may be achieved and whether the methods and means adopted are effective. The relationship between the terms curriculum planning and development and often instruction has been expressed by Beane, et. al. (1986) as follows: "We view the relationships among curriculum planning, development and instruction as shown in Fig. 15.1. Each is concerned with the others but each has a major focus. We view curriculum planning as a generic concept that may describe activities ranging from the identification of broad goals to the description of possibilities for specific teaching-learning situations. Curriculum development on the other hand is mainly concerned with the design of plans for actual teaching-learning situations. It is based upon the broad goals and identifies ways to translate those goals into a coordinated and coherent program of learning experiences. Instruction is developed from broad goals and curriculum plans and focuses on methodological questions such as teaching techniques and the implementation of activities, resources, and measuring devices used in specific teaching-learning situations". This is represented in the figure below :



**Fig. 15.1: The Relationships among Curriculum Planning,  
Curriculum Development and Instruction**

(Source: Beane, et. al., 1986)

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Let us look at a few definitions of Curriculum Planning:

“Curriculum Planning is the orderly study and improvement of schooling in light of stated objectives”.

– Krug, Curriculum Planning (rev. ed.) 1957

Curriculum planning is the process whereby ..... arrangements of learning opportunities or curriculum plans are created.

– Saylor and Alexander, Curriculum for Modern Schools, 1966

Curriculum planning is the process of gathering, sorting, selecting, balancing and synthesizing relevant information from many sources in order to design those experiences that will assist learners in attaining the goals of the curriculum.

– Hass, Curriculum Planning: A New Approach (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), 1980

You will see that there is no single definition of curriculum planning. However you do get an idea of how the term is used to connote various processes associated with curriculum planning.

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## 15.4 LEVELS OF CURRICULUM PLANNING

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Before we arrive at a definition of curriculum planning let us examine the levels of curriculum planning. Curriculum planning involves decision making at various levels. We shall discuss here curriculum planning activities at seven levels, the national level, the state level, school-system wide level, building level, teacher team level, the individual teacher level and the classroom level with cooperative planning between students and teachers. These seven levels have been given by Beane, et. al. (1986).

These levels represent comprehensively what it means to work on curriculum and will help you to place the meaning of curriculum planning in its proper perspective by identifying the common thread that runs through all of them.

### 15.4.1 National Level

Curriculum planning at the National Level involves scholars of some particular discipline from various institutions across the country. They discuss and decide how to develop and disseminate a programme, the existing one being either obsolete or inadequate to meet the demands.

The stages involved in the planning process at the national level are:

- Identifying important subject matter, facts, principles concepts, etc.
- Deciding on a sequence in which the subject matter may be taught-from specific to general or from easy to difficult, etc.
- Recommending activities through which students might best learn the subject matter, including experiments, discussions etc.
- Listing supplementary materials for further studies in the particular subject area, and
- Suggesting tests that learners might take to check their progress.

These stages are then put together in sets of teaching/learning materials for purposes of implementation.

The underlying assumption, you would have noticed, is that once developed, such curriculum projects or packages could be put in the hands of teachers and quality education would be assured. The materials, thus produced, are often branded ‘teacher

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proof since it is believed that teachers with less than desired skills or knowledge would be working from the plans of scholars/experts, and that the teachers themselves don't have to contribute to the content.

Though we do not have immediate answers with empirical evidence, it is worth considering the following questions.

- Can national level curriculum projects account for the characteristics of learners in local institutions where the projects are supposed to be used?
- Are the subject-area scholars sufficiently knowledgeable about learner characteristics to prepare curriculum plans for use in all the institutions?
- Are subject-area scholars better equipped than teachers to develop curriculum plans in their area of specialization?
- How do national-level curriculum plans influence the professional role of teachers?
- Is it possible to develop curriculum plans that would be successful even when used by relatively unskilled teachers?

### 15.4.2 State Level

In this scene, a group of educators (teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators, etc) forms a committee under the State Education Department. The task of the committee is to recommend what ought to constitute the overall programme across the State. It, however, depends upon the characteristics of the learners and the broad goals of education. A series of meetings of the group over a course of several months culminates in the production of a model to be sent to all the state institutions for implementation.

The issues pertaining to this level of curriculum planning are:

- Should the local authorities have the prerogative of setting up their own programmes based on local needs and preferences?
- Are statewide programmes and standards necessary to ensure the quality of education for learners across a state?
- Are state level personnel more qualified to develop curriculum plans than local teachers?
- How do state level curriculum guides and mandates affect the role of the teacher at the local level?

### 15.4.3 System Wide Level

This level involves a group of curriculum planner at district level. It discusses the district level curriculum. The team consists of elementary, middle and high school level teachers, district curriculum coordinator and several citizens.

The team studies and modifies goals of a programme; reviews what students might already be learning, identifies areas for improvement and recommends steps for improvement. This is a district level curriculum planning committee, which reflects on curriculum issues affecting the whole district. It also sponsors curriculum development projects and professional growth activities.

In this context, the following questions could be considered:

1. What are some present problems or ideas in the district that could be referred to the curriculum planning committee?
2. What methods can be used to have a fair representation of various groups such as teachers, administrators and citizens?
3. Which issues the curriculum committee could classify as not appropriate for consideration?

### 15.4.4 Building or Institution Level

This scenario deals with a group of parents, teachers, administrators, counsellors and students from a particular institution, may be a school, college or university. They are together to evolve a new discipline policy for that institution.

The group works on the basis that a student's encounter with the personal and social experiences is as important as those gathered from the academic activities. Therefore, these personal and social experiences form part of the curriculum. This situation represents a form of curriculum planning that results from the recognition that students learn a great deal from what is termed the 'hidden curriculum'. The hidden curriculum includes such institutional features as governance structure, grouping patterns, grading procedures teacher expectations, etc. Since features like these do result in learning, whether they are planned or unplanned, and so they need to be considered in conscious efforts to plan the curriculum. That is to say, they must be planned in terms of purposes, activities, evaluation devices and so on.

Hence, the issues are –

- Should students be involved on a building-level curriculum committee? If so, in what capacity, and how would student representatives be selected?
- To what extent should the aspects of hidden curriculum be considered to be sources of learning for students?

### 15.4.5 Teacher-team Level

This scenario deals with a group of teachers representing different subject areas who have come together to develop a unit. This type of activity is known as inter-disciplinary curriculum planning since it involves contributions from various subjects or disciplines of knowledge.

The oft-repeated questions at this level of curriculum planning are:

- What might be the benefits of cooperative interdisciplinary planning?
- What are the factors that are believed to detract from the effectiveness of an interdisciplinary team?
- How might aspects of various subjects be correlated with one another?

### 15.4.6 Individual Teacher Level

In this case, a teacher tries to make a decision about learning objectives – what the teacher would like a group of students to learn. In the area of subject matter or content, the teacher will have to make decisions about important facts, principles, concepts and learner outcomes that should be emphasized. The teacher must also plan different kinds of activities and resources and ways to measure how well learners have accomplished various objectives. At some time, the teacher may search through various journals looking for ideas about activities, gather background information, or consult other teachers. At the end, the teacher decides on long and short-term objectives as well as the timing of various activities. The teacher must then develop a set of plans for use on a daily or weekly basis. In designing this kind of plan, a number of items must be considered, such as the characteristics of the learners, the sequencing of activities, the appropriateness of various learning materials, and the availability of resources.

We must recognize here that the planning orientation of prospective teachers is often limited to daily lesson planning. All too often, little attention is paid to how these relate to long-term unit plans. As a result, many teachers may have difficulty in understanding the relationship between short and long-range plans and, in addition, may not appreciate the need for the latter. The planning done by the individual teacher is probably the most critical in the range of curriculum planning forms.

As a teacher you might be interested in the following questions:

- In developing curriculum plans for your teaching, do you consider both long and short-term learning objectives?
- What is the greatest problem you encounter in your curriculum planning?
- About how much time do you spend on curriculum planning? Is that time sufficient? If not, how much more do you require? How do you arrange for it?
- What format do you use of formulating curriculum plans? How does your format compare with that of other teachers?
- How often do you teach without having prepared curriculum plans?
- Do you feel the preparation of careful curriculum plans enhances your teaching?
- How often do you depart from your plans in teaching situations?

### 15.4.7 Cooperative Curriculum Planning Level

This scene deals with a teacher and a group of learners. After discussion, the group draws up a formal set up of plans, summarizing all of its discussions about what might be done.

Here the teacher is guiding a group in formulating plans as to how they might study a particular topic. The teacher and learners work together to decide any combination of the 'what, how, who, where and when' questions regarding the unit they are working at.

Whether one believes its use or not, student-teacher planning does represent a level and form of curriculum planning. Its proximity to the actual group of learners and the possibilities for including learner interests in plans lead some of its proponents to conclude that it is the ultimate level of curriculum planning.

In this context let us consider the following issues:

- In what ways can we involve learners in curriculum planning?
- What factors might inhibit learner participation in curriculum planning?
- What might be the benefits we gain out of learner participation in curriculum planning?
- Should learners play a role in curriculum planning? If no, why not? If yes, what kind of role?

#### Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Check your answers with the one given at the end of the unit.

1. List three basic issues pertinent to curriculum planning at the state level?

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2. Briefly describe curriculum planning at the teacher-team level.

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## 15.5 PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM PLANNING

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The levels of planning discussed in the previous section illustrate what it means to work on curriculum and thus give some idea of the meaning of curriculum. Let us now examine some characteristics or principles of curriculum planning as given by Beane, et. al. (1986), to arrive at a definition of curriculum planning.

**Principle 1: Curriculum planning is concerned with the experiences of learners.**

The ultimate purpose of curriculum planning is to improve the learning experiences provided to the learners. Hence it can be concluded that curriculum planning is essentially about learning experiences of learners.

**Principle 2: Curriculum planning involves decision about both content and process.**

The different levels of planning highlighted the fact that content and instructions are not independent but interdependent concepts. The curriculum planner should be concerned not only with what students ought to learn but also how they learn. Since learning involves doing, curriculum plans without action are incomplete and likewise plans without a purpose will head for aimlessness. Therefore curriculum planning involves decisions about both content and process.

**Principle 3: Curriculum planning involves decision about a variety of issues and topics.**

The process of curriculum planning focuses on several issues and topics within a particular area of instruction. It involves decisions about goals and objectives of a programme, curricular approaches, programme of evaluation and need for new programmes.

Curriculum planning involves decisions about various issues in relation to each other and not in isolation, for example learning activities are decided in relation to the objectives of the program etc. Therefore, curriculum planning involves decisions about a variety of issues and topics.

**Principle 4: Curriculum planning involves many groups.**

In the early twentieth century the popular belief prevailed that curriculum planning could be done only by scholars and implemented by teachers. As is evident from the different situations discussed earlier, various participants contribute towards curriculum planning thereby enriching the plans. Educators have realised that curriculum planning is not the sole responsibility of any one group but should involve participation of teachers, students, curriculum administrators, citizens, scholars etc. This would result in a variety of ideas and suggestions and would help to improve the curriculum. The teacher of course remains the key participant in the curriculum planning process and is ultimately responsible for implementing the plan. The underlying principle is that curriculum planning involves many groups.

**Principle 5: Curriculum planning takes place at many levels.**

We discussed various situations that described various levels of curriculum planning, from the national level to the classroom. In order to focus planning on the specific needs and characteristics of learners it should be done with specific teaching-learning situations in mind. National level planning is as important as local level planning. Planning at various levels ensures participation of different groups. The planning process should strive to achieve goals framed at all levels. It can be concluded that curriculum planning takes place at many levels.

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### **Principle 6: Curriculum planning is a continuous process.**

The different situations discussed described different phases of the curriculum planning process. These steps are formulating goals and objectives, defining organizing centers, selection of learning activities, programme evaluations and recommendations for its improvement. The process of planning cannot be compartmentalized, since it is a continuous process, as one process leads to the other. In order that the curricular programmes remain dynamic and relevant, the process should ensure continuity i.e. the curricular programme should be subjected to periodic analysis and evaluation and, based on this feedback, the programme should be suitably modified.

Hence curriculum planning is a continuous process.

In the light of the curriculum planning activities discussed above, a comprehensive definition has been suggested by Beane, et. al. (1986).

“Curriculum planning is a process in which participants at many levels make decisions about what the purposes of learning ought to be, how those purposes might be carried out through teaching learning situations, and whether the purposes and means are both appropriate and effective.”

In the following section we shall try to define curriculum and also try to understand some terms related with curriculum.

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## **15.6 CURRICULUM PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

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Curriculum planning is a complex process, which involves both convergent and divergent thinking in which ideas are first, generated, the scope is widened and then drawn into set instructional patterns. First the ideas or actions to be used in curriculum planning are described. From these ideas prescriptions are made of what is to be done in curriculum planning.

### **15.6.1 Theories of Curriculum Planning**

Ralph Tyler has offered some suggestions for developing curriculum and instruction. These are considered as the classic tenets of curriculum planning. The four questions raised by Tyler (1950) that need to be addressed for curriculum planning are:

- 1) What educational purposes must the school attain?  
(Delineate what is to be taught and how this material is relevant to the common current purposes of schooling)
- 2) What learning experiences can be provided to achieve those purposes?  
(The content, processes and methods that will be used to deliver instruction and information)
- 3) What organizational methods will be used in relation to the purposes?  
(In relation to the learning experiences, how effectively the instructions and presentations can be organized)
- 4) How will the attainment of the purposes be evaluated?  
(Assessment of successful attainment of objectives).

Tyler's questions are basic to the curriculum planning process and have been accepted for the past few decades. This rationale has been the most influential in devising curricular plans. Other theorists like Virgil Herrick (1950) and Hilda Taba (1962) have added to Tyler's model by providing some ideas, which they felt, were imperative for curriculum planning for example knowledge of sources of educational purposes, types of curriculum organizations and means for conducting evaluation. Curricularists like Elliot Eisner (1967) and Herbert Kliebard (1968) acknowledge Tyler's contribution

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but find the rationale either too simplistic or too limiting. Learning is a complex journey of how the human brain processes and retains information. Therefore the curriculum planning process also involves a complex set of ideas and processes, which are interrelated and need not follow the linear sequence in that order as proposed by Tyler. Decisions about one set of components influence and have a bearing on the others.

Leslic Owens Wilson in a paper on Curriculum Development, 1997, 2002, has suggested questions in addition to Tyler's that could help in creating a relevant and useful programme.

#### "Wilson's Additions to Tyler's Principles

1. In the context of students' future needs, be able to justify why you are teaching particular content or processes. (Be able to provide a rationale for *what* you are teaching and for *how* you are using students' time.)
2. Be able to make the content or processes more holistic. (Teach the whole child through instructional techniques and processes, which actively engage multiple modalities and children's minds, bodies, psyches and social consciousnesses. Good instruction needs to be multi-modal and holistic in order to be remembered. This approach creates multiple neural pathways and has a better chance of being remembered and of meeting different types of learning styles.)
3. Be able to make instruction relevant to students' experiences past, present and future lives. (The instructional strategies and content into student's experiences – make it real, make it applicable to their past experiences, their present needs and their immediate futures.)
4. Be able to create more authentic types of assessment. "(Give students connections through meaningful assignments that have direct applicability and carry-over into the real world.)" (Leslie Owens Wilson, 'Curriculum Development', 1997, 2002)

Wilson has suggested that in order to create effective curriculum and instructional designs, Tyler's questions could serve as the basics from where to get started. Wilson's questions could then be used to monitor the instructional relevancy and applicability.

#### Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Check your answers with the one given at the end of the unit.

3. Define Curriculum Planning.

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4. What are the four basic questions, which a curriculum planner needs to address for effective planning?

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## 15.6.2 A General Framework for Curriculum Planning

We discussed in the previous section that curriculum planning is a complex activity and describing it through a linear sequence of events would deny much of the curriculum work that actually takes place. Most of the curricular theorists have taken Tyler's four questions to form the basics of the planning process, but have proposed a "Systems" model in which all components are considered in each step of the process. [J. Galen Saylor and William Alexander (1974) in Beane, et. al., Curriculum Planning and Development, 1986].

The components of curriculum planning have been based upon a general framework. Beane, et. al. (1986) have used the term 'framework' instead of 'model' or 'theory' to avoid the implication of linear process, give an idea of the reality of practical curriculum work and an idea of how the components ought to be considered. They have developed the Curriculum Planning Framework given in Fig. 15.2 based on the theories of Tyler (1950), Herrick (1950), Edward Krug (1950, 1957), and Robert Harnack (1968).

The various aspects of the curriculum planning framework are –

### (1) Foundations

Education is based on three foundational areas of philosophy, psychology and sociology, which consider the needs of both individual and society. These three areas have been dealt with in the previous unit of this block.

### (2) Goals

The goals of education are based on the above three foundational areas and represent the larger purposes of education. These goal statements are developed at the national, state and district levels. Goals are broad statements based on the purposes and requirements of the educational systems. However a problem often encountered is specific. Curriculum planning is done without considering these broad goal statements. Often goals are viewed as too ambitious statements to be achieved through specific curriculum plans. However broad goals could be realized through general objectives.

### (3) General Objectives

All teaching-learning situations are geared to achieve the broad educational goals. As the learner matures from childhood to adulthood, he or she moves through several developmental stages and learning situations. These learning stages contribute to the attainment of educational goals. Since educational programmes are devised according to the developmental stages of the learner, each level contributes to the larger goals. "Statements about contributions at each level to the broad goals are known as general objectives" (Beane, et. al., 1986). Stating general objectives serves two functions:

- i) General objectives bridge the gap between broad goals for education and activities for teachers and learners. What has to be achieved is clear.
- ii) They guide the curriculum planning activity at a particular level.

### (4) Decision Screens

Five areas need consideration while deciding about curricular plans for specific teaching-learning situations:

- i) Learner characteristics must be clarified, since plans have to be appropriate for the learners for whom they are intended. The characteristics to be considered are developmental and chronological age, attitudes, interests, previous achievements, learning styles etc.
- ii) Learning principles should be considered while framing curricular plans. Although these principles need not be written down they can be kept in mind to ensure the best learning conditions for the learners.

- iii) The third feature that influences decisions for curriculum planning involves the general resources. These resources are located inside the school and outside also. The school-based resources include money, physical infrastructure, media and outside resources are places of significance which learners visit, knowledge from experts, libraries and other resources.
- iv) The curricular approach that is adopted also has a bearing on the type of teaching-learning situation. That is developed depending on the goals of education the curricular approach could be chosen. The approach could be based on a specific discipline, or on a broad field of various interrelated disciplines, on social problems and fourth on learner needs and problems.
- v) The fifth decision screen pertains to the ways in which the knowledge is organised to create specific teaching-learning situations. Subject matter is always important even though the design focusses on learner needs or social problems. The Curriculum Planning Framework discussed above has been represented in the Fig. 15.2.

*Source:* Beane, et. al. (1986.)

The framework in Fig. 15.2 does suggest a systematic process, but it does not necessitate the fact that curricular plans move through the elements step by step. However the framework does serve two major purposes:

- i) to check whether all important components are being considered in curriculum planning and
- ii) to ensure that various components are interrelated to one another through evaluation techniques.

Let us now talk about a very crucial stage in the curriculum planning process, i.e. planning for specific teaching-learning situations.

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## 15.7 DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIFIC CURRICULUM PLANS

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We have learnt about the various levels of curriculum planning and about the theories of curriculum planning. We shall now explore how groups and individuals actually put plans together. Beane, et. al. (1986) have described a format for curriculum plans in the resource unit. It may include the following components:

1. A unit title (i.e. the organizing centre)
2. A brief rationale statement clarifying the title and describing its importance
3. A brief statement describing the general characteristics of the learners for the whom the plan is intended (age, grade, developmental stage, etc.)
4. A general description of where the particular units fits in the scope and sequence of the total school programme
5. A suggested time frame for the unit
6. A list of objectives
7. Statements of important content on which the teacher and learners will need to focus
8. A listing of activities in which learners may engage to approach the objectives
9. A listing of measuring devices that may indicate learner progress with regard to the objectives
10. Suggestions for evaluation of the unit plan or resource unit

Beane, et. al (1986), have suggested that "curriculum plans may be developed by individuals or by groups. In either case the plans' effectiveness depends upon the

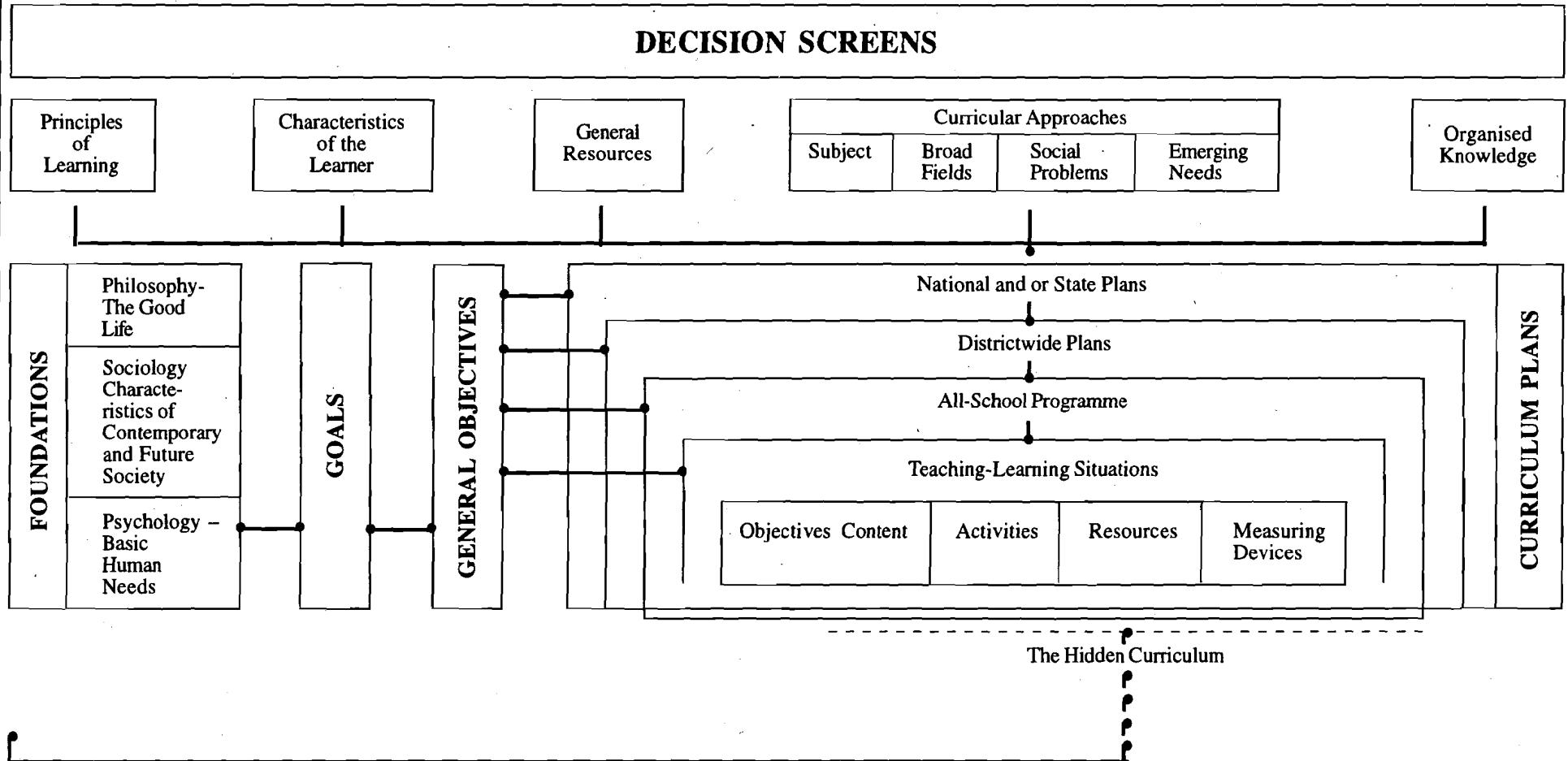


Fig. 15.2: A Framework for Curriculum Planning.

Source : Beane, et. al. (1986)

imagination, experience and thoughtfulness of those who prepare them". They feel group planning is more advantageous than individual efforts. A group provides more ideas and suggestions and hence a balanced view is possible. A group will not function with rigidity, but function in a lively manner and make the process of curriculum planning an exciting exercise and boost the morale of the educators.

## 15.8 LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM PLANNING

In the previous sections we talked about curriculum planning at various levels. In the last three situations, it was a team of teachers, or a teacher planning for a group or a group of learners planning together. The first two cases reflect the realistic role of teachers in curriculum planning and the third category is the less typical curriculum devised by learners. Many curricularists in the twentieth century have spoken a great deal about learner concerns and interests. They have been strong advocates of a technique called pupil-teacher or teacher-student planning. Although this technique was popularised by Krug, 1957; and Waskin and Parrish, 1967, yet it was criticised by some. The critics were of the opinion that learners should have no say in the curriculum planning as they are not as knowledgeable and hence cannot participate intelligently. However the fact teacher-student planning has been used implies that learners must have some role in curriculum planning. The specific teaching learning situations have several components like organizing, objectives, content, activities, resources and measuring devices. According to Beane, et. al, (1986) the components present possibilities for planning by teachers alone, students alone or both cooperatively. This has been presented in Fig. 15.3. They have described unit planning as the identification of a variety of possibilities within each component. The teachers may define a range of objectives and number of content items, activities, resources and measuring devices related to them. Students could then be involved in selecting from any one or more possibilities in each component for-example the selection of objectives and resources could be done by the teachers but the students could choose the possible learning activities and/or measuring devices. Some teachers even leave the entire process to learners. They may ask learners to decide upon the organizing centres i.e. the title or theme of study and then teachers may help to plan the rest i.e. content, activities, resources related to the organizing centre.

The teacher will decide, based upon student ability, the extent to which a learner should be involved in the process of curriculum planning. Some educators feel that teacher-student planning may be used in some areas and not in others. However since the goal of all schools is to develop self-directed, independent learning, teacher-student planning should be evident as learners progress through the school.

	Organizing Centre	Objectives	Content	Activities	Resources	Measuring Devices
Teachers Planning Alone	●	●	●	●	●	●
Teacher-Student Planning	●	●	●	●	●	●
Students Planning Alone	●	●	●	●	●	●

Fig. 15.3: Whether Students and Teachers Plan Together or Alone, Unit Development involves All Components.

Source: Beane, et. al. (1986).

Beane, et. al. (1986) have listed several advantages of teacher student planning as a classroom technique :

1. It provides a model of democratic living based on cooperative and participatory decision-making.
2. It supports mental health by providing opportunities to have a feeling of belonging.
3. It enhances teacher-student relations by the suggestion that learning is a mutual adventure.
4. It offers a chance for teachers to know what is important and interesting to learners.
5. It enhances social competence by offering opportunities to participate.
6. It offers learners a chance to express their own ideas and interests.

However it is noteworthy that teacher-student planning is not merely a technique. Instead it bases the idea of curriculum planning on the concept of democratic participation.

Before we proceed further answer the following question:

**Check Your Progress**

**Notes:** a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

5. Give reasons why group curriculum planning is more advantageous than individual planning.

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## 15.9 IMPROVEMENT OF CURRICULUM PLANNING

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After studying the basics in curriculum planning, we shall now explore how educators can improve the process of curriculum planning. Educators should participate effectively in curriculum planning activities in the given educational environment.

Learning experiences must be systematically organised so that learners can achieve the goals of self and society. Hence educational experiences must be carefully planned. Curriculum planning coordinates the goals with the activities chosen to achieve them. A systematic implementation of curriculum plans still eludes educational institutions. Of course planning does take place from the national to the classroom level, but such activities are often disjointed and do not follow a definite framework of goals and objectives. The process of curriculum planning must be based on some principles. Beane, et. al. 1986 have given the following postulates that must guide the process of curriculum planning :

1. It should be based on the concept of good life, characteristics of contemporary and future society and the basic needs of human beings. This would ensure that curriculum relates to the real world, the society and the humane qualities of people.
2. The essential elements of teaching and learning should be well coordinated so that the effectiveness of teaching and quality of learning is not jeopardised.

3. Curriculum plans should be responsive to the current needs of society and individuals. They should also foresee the future conditions and prepare learners to meet the future needs.
4. Curriculum plans should focus on a broad range of needs of learners and society.
5. The statements of educational goals should be written with clarity so that they may prove useful in guiding the process of curriculum planning. In the absence of such clear-cut goals the plan becomes meaningless and aimlessness sets in.
6. The community at large has the right to identify the goals for its children. Hence educators must inform citizens about foundational areas so that goal decisions are based upon sound knowledge and understanding of the objectives.
7. The right and responsibility to identify programmes for learners rests with educators because of their professional expertise. Suggestions of citizens should be sought on school programmes but the final decision should be made by professionals.
8. Curriculum planning and development are best achieved through a cooperative endeavour. This involves a wide range of experts to understand the complex components of curriculum planning.
9. The curriculum should provide an integrated set of activities rather than provide a set of unrelated educational experiences. It should articulate the school programmes and learners across grades and levels.
10. Curriculum plans should enable learners to integrate their experiences. This is possible only if the school programme has devised a framework which coordinates with all components.
11. The organizational structure should be refined, by individual schools and also at the district level. The structure should facilitate the study of curriculum problems and also suggest improvement activities.
12. Continuous feedback through evaluation and action research help to modify the curriculum plans and makes them dynamic.
13. Curriculum planning should involve democratic participation right from citizens to learners. Citizens could participate for goal identification and learners for deciding about specific teaching-learning situations.
14. The teacher is central to the curriculum planning process and is responsible for decision making. Curriculum plans are ultimately implemented by the teacher. The teacher can observe changes in the learner characteristics and needs in relation to the plans.
15. Curriculum decision-making should be continuously evaluated. All content and process related activities must be analysed.

The above postulates must guide the curriculum planning process.

You will agree that the search to improve school curricula is a continuous process which reflects certain issues and trends that impact on schools and society. In the following section we shall examine some curricular trends that curriculum workers have to grapple with.

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## 15.10 TRENDS AND ISSUES IN CURRICULUM

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Ornstein and Hunkins (1988) have spoken about several curriculum issues. Let us look into two broad curricular issues: (i) Irrelevant Curriculum and (ii) Emerging Curriculum and possible future trends.

### 15.10.1 Irrelevant Curriculum

The school curriculum is often criticised for being irrelevant. When we say that curriculum is irrelevant it means that it does not meet the needs of society or learner,

implying the need for modification of content. The irrelevance of curricula can be considered in two ways –

- i) The curriculum is fixed and not relevant to society.
- ii) The curriculum is trivial which implies that knowledge by way of facts, figures is remote and meaningless and not relevant for students.

#### **a) The Fixed Curriculum**

This suggests that changes in society are directly related to changes in the curricula. Dewey (1916) has interpreted the curriculum as experience, which links curriculum to perpetuating, transferring and reconstructing society. Dewey felt that “The scheme of a curriculum must take into account... the intention of improving the life we live in common so that future shall be better than the past”. The curriculum should reflect the culture of society. It should portray what people in a particular society think and do. The need for curricula to be relevant is underscored by the fact that there is knowledge explosion and change is rapid. Some educators feel that curriculum becomes obsolete every few years. Bentley Glass (1979) believe that the rate of obsolescence of scientific knowledge equals that of an automobile. That means knowledge increases exponentially and that our curricula do not consider these changes and our resources are limited. It, however, does not consider that trends change and rate of change varies over time. Ornstein and Hunkins, (1988) believe that “new knowledge is assimilated as existing knowledge is revised and modified to accommodate it”. Similarly the existing subject matter accommodates the new content and new teaching learning situations are merged with existing ones to create new approaches. The curriculum cannot afford to remain fixed and should be subject to modifications in this world of change. This will maintain the health and vitality of schools.

#### **b) Trivial Curriculum**

A trivial curriculum is one that lays great emphasis on rote learning and irrelevant facts and figures that students are forced to learn. For example, teachers may ask students to memorize the capitals of each State of India, names of all Indian Presidents, the lines of a poem, etc.

This kind of meaningless teaching occurs at the cost of useful academic time which could be utilized instead for teaching some other content. Most of the students go through the vigours of rote learning throughout their school and college lives and forget the knowledge acquired. More than 75 per cent of various kinds of facts learned in a subject is forgotten over a twelve month period of time (Tyler, 1934). Of course, this loss of retention varies with students of differing ability and across various stages of education. For example, college students do better than elementary school students. Learners tend to forget within minutes what is perceived by them as trivial or useless. Instead of memorizing a host of meaningless facts, meaningful learning takes place if the curriculum relates to the learner’s previous knowledge is useful, and if it can relate to the personal experiences of the learner.

Trivial facts and figures are of little value to adults and so they cannot be meaningful for children. Information, like names of Presidents, coefficients of angles etc. can be made meaningful if it relates to existing ideas in their cognitive and affective backgrounds. But if it is forced because of the requirements of a rigid curriculum then the facts learnt are easily forgotten. Instead, the focus of educators should be to help students shift away from random memorization of facts to develop useful concepts and problem solving skills. The time that could be utilized for actual learning is wasted in rote learning. Through a trivial curriculum students can at the most retrieve information to pass exams or impress teachers. Retrieval of information can be best achieved through computers and teachers should encourage learners to think and engage them in problem solving activities. (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1988.)



### 15.10.2 Emerging Curriculum

An emerging curriculum is one, which is constantly evolving and includes the upcoming and new areas of study. It is a dynamic curriculum and changes according to the needs of the individual and society. Such a curriculum reflects the social and political changes and is learner centred.

Let us now study some examples of how emerging societal trends influence curricula.

#### i) Liberal Education

It is in contrast to the old concept of authoritarian education in which learning and instruction was teacher controlled. The teacher was the final authority and students were passive recipients of knowledge without any individual freedom. Liberals contend that the aim of education is to liberate the learners' minds and should be provided to all without discrimination. The focus of modern curricula is natural and modern science and modern languages. It is a democratic approach to teaching-learning and fosters creativity and self-expression in the learners.

#### ii) Global Education

Learners have to understand that they are a part of an ever-changing world. They must be aware of the global changes and phenomenon that have resulted in global interdependence. Global education is a response to this need of the world to understand the evolving global systems. Students must understand that every aspect of human life has global implications, whether it is clothing, transport, clean drinking water, pollution or any other human activity. The students should be able to gauge the degree and pace of changes in the world. The preparedness for such changes will necessitate the development of such skills as problem solving, decision-making, creative thinking etc. The global education curriculum should provide a global perspective to learners since it strives to achieve the aims of global education which ultimately prepares learners for facing the global realities.

#### iii) Interdisciplinary Education

The present curricula are no longer compartmentalised into rigid subject areas. In fact the present curricula are deviated from traditional watertight compartments into broad discipline areas. Several subject areas have converged to produce broad subject fields such as biochemistry, environmental studies, bio-informatics business mathematics etc. The interdisciplinary approach will facilitate a better understanding of the key concepts of the subject matter and inculcate effective skills for solving problems of the society.

#### iv) Education for Secularism

Most of the societies in the present day world are secular i.e. people of various faiths and religion live together. Societies abide by democratic principles and members of society are free to practice religion of their choice. This is reflected in the schools, where students belong to different faiths and religions. The state fosters secular culture among the students through its curriculum. Imparting religious instruction may breed discontent and internal trouble within institutions. Liberals forwarded the concept of secular education, which was accepted by the church and clergy. They replaced the traditional religious aspects of the curriculum with scientific understanding of the universe and a greater awareness of political, economic and cultural aspects of the society.

### Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Check your answers with the one given at the end of the unit.

6. List two advantages of teacher-student planning as a classroom technique.

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7. On what basis can you gauge the irrelevance of curricula?

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### 15.10.3 Future Trends in Curriculum

One of the aims of education is to prepare the individual for the future. Hence the curriculum planner must bear in mind the future needs and assess the possibilities of curriculum development for the future. The curriculum planner has to address questions like the role of education in society, influence of curriculum on the future of society and participation at various levels for effective curriculum planning for the future. Curriculum planning for the future is imperative because of demographic changes, technological innovations, social changes and cultural changes.

These changes have influenced the Indian society. Schools have to respond to the changing socio-political pressures and hence curricula must equip the learners with the basic skills such as understanding others, learning skills, continuing education, participation in the economic world etc.

#### Impact of Information and Communication Technology

The world and our country as well is under the impact of information and communication revolution. This has put severe demands on curricula at all levels to keep learners abreast of the latest developments on the one hand and to equip them with such skills as will enable them to harness that information on the other. This will definitely change the pattern of learning inputs and gear the curriculum to match the changing needs and learner characteristics.

#### Distance Education

Distance education has emerged as an alternative to the formal face-to-face mode of learning. This is in response to the increasing demand for continuing and lifelong education. It is also here to supplement the formal system of imparting education. Distance education curricula are focussed on learner needs, placed according to learner's ability and flexible to accommodate the place and time of study of the learners. The teachers prepare the instructional materials, both print and non-print to influence learner behaviours. There is also provision for human interaction. Such a learning mechanism is useful for the highly motivated learner and curricula encourage self-learning and self-activity.

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## 15.11 LET US SUM UP

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This unit has been concerned with the concepts and skills of curriculum planning. It has focussed on how educators can use these skills at various levels to enhance the experiences of learners. Curricula which foster this capacity are able to address in a better way the needs and characteristics of learners and society. We illustrated different forms of curriculum planning and how these are utilised at different levels.

Our discussion was also focussed on arriving at a definition of curriculum planning and some related terms to ensure effective participation in the curriculum work. The components of curriculum planning based on a general framework were analysed. The framework would help curriculum planners to incorporate the important elements of the curriculum and also serve as an evaluation tool.

The actual process of developing curriculum plans was discussed stepwise and how learners could be involved in the process of curriculum planning. The entire process of teacher-student planning is based on the premise of democratic participation. Curriculum planning should be a dynamic phenomenon and so it should incorporate from time to time changes and modifications according to the changing needs of society and learners. Several postulates were cited that could possibly guide the process of curriculum planning. We noted some curriculum trends and issues that have a direct bearing on the curriculum. Irrelevant curricula are a reminder of some miseducative classroom experiences. Broad educational concerns addressed by emerging curricula are – Liberal education, global education, interdisciplinary education and a study of possible future trends.

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## 15.12 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

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1. Select a subject from the secondary school curriculum. Identify objectives, select contents, suggest possible instructional activities and evaluation mechanisms.
2. Discuss what current social trends you feel are most likely to continue in the immediate future. What new social trends do you believe will emerge in the future? How will those social trends affect the school curriculum?

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## 15.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 15.14 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Three pertinent issues for curriculum planning at the state level are:
  - The prerogative of local authorities to set up programmes based on local needs.
  - State level personnel more qualified than local teachers to develop curricular plans.
  - Quality of education for learners across a state to be ensured through state level standards.
2. Curriculum planning at the teacher team level involves interdisciplinary curriculum planning since teachers from various disciplines contribute their knowledge. Different aspects of the subjects are correlated to evolve a curricular plan.
3. Curriculum planning is a process in which decisions are taken at several levels about the purpose of learning, teaching-learning situations, organizing these activities and to ascertain the effectiveness of these activities in achieving the purposes.
4. The four basic questions for curriculum planning are:
  - a) What educational goals are to be attained?
  - b) What learning experiences are to be provided for attaining the goals?
  - c) How the methods and strategies are to be organized?
  - d) How will attainment of goals be evaluated?
5. Some educators feel that group planning has more advantages than individual planning because a balanced set of ideas and opinions can be obtained from the group. The group can make the atmosphere more lively and exciting and thereby motivate the participants for developing effective curriculum plans.
6.
  - i) It fosters the concept of democratic living.
  - ii) It improves teacher-student relations since they work together.
7. Irrelevance of curriculum can be considered on the basis of -
  - i) when the curriculum becomes fixed and rigid.
  - ii) when the knowledge imparted emphasizes mainly rote learning of facts, figures etc.