

Curriculum Development, Social Needs And Problems

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EDUCATION is a process of changing the behaviour patterns of people. Viewing from this direction, it is clear that educational objectives represent the kinds of changes in behaviour that a particular educational institution seeks to bring about in its students. Several factors are again responsible to bring about this educational objective. The important ones being staff, student, curriculum or guideline for drawing curriculum, teaching learning resources and physical facilities. This following will, however, briefly highlight some aspect of curriculum development including the procedure of maintaining the linkages with social needs and problems.

A simple operational definition of curriculum may be considered as an educational programme designed and implemented to achieve some educational objective. In fact, if an educational programme is to be made, it is very necessary to have some conception of the goals that are being aimed at. These educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed and tests and examinations are prepared.

This concept of curriculum design has gained a wide acceptance, but opinion regarding details differ considerably. Many sociologists and others concerned with the pressing problems of contemporary society view the institution as the agency for helping young people to deal effectively with the critical problems of contemporary life. If they can determine what these contemporary problems are, then the elements of the curriculum may be in line with those problems so that the institution can provide necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and the like that will help people to deal intelligently with these contemporary problems. On the other hand, the educational philosophers recognize that there are basic values in life, largely transmitted from one generation to another by means of education. They see an institution as aiming essentially at the transmission of the basic values derived by comprehensive philosophic study and hence see in educational philosophy the basic source from which objectives can be derived. The point of view taken in this course is that no single source of information is adequate to provide a basis for wise and comprehensive decisions about elements of curriculum to be incorporated to meet all the unforeseen conditions in a society. In proposing an orderly procedure for curriculum development, Taba (1962), however, suggested a rationale for considering the following steps: Diagnosis of needs of society; Formulation of objectives as per needs; Selection of content; Organization of content; Selection of learning experiences; Organization of learning experiences; Determination of what to evaluate and the ways and means of doing it.

Contemporary life and the values of society: Today, there are two commonly used arguments for analyzing contemporary life in order to get suggestions for educational objectives. The first of these arguments is that because contemporary

life is so complex and because life is continually changing, it is very necessary to focus educational efforts upon the critical aspects of this complex life and upon those aspects that are of importance today, so that we do not waste the time of students in learning things that were important fifty years ago but no longer have any significance today; and at the same time that we are neglecting areas of life that are now important but for which the institutions provide no preparation.

A second argument for the study of contemporary life grows out of the findings relating to transfer of training. According to this view, the important objectives were to develop the several faculties of the mind and as life developed, the student would be able to use this trained mind to meet the conditions that he will encounter in future. Studies relating to transfer of training, however, indicated that the student was much more likely to apply his learning when he recognized the similarity between the situations encountered in life and the situations in which the learning took place.

In addition to the problems of contemporary life, the prevailing values of the society needs to be taken into account while considering the aims and policies of curriculum development. Investigations made in this connections have mainly indicated the following three aspects of prevailing values of the society: Needs and abilities of the individual learners (Individual's need approach): In this approach, the education is considered to be for development and growth of an individual need. 2) Structure of the organized body of the knowledge (subject specialization approach): In this approach, the aim is to introduce students to the universe of discourse represented by the field of specialization. 3) Needs of the society (social demand approach): The philosophy underlying the social demand approach is that if education is to satisfy the needs of the society, then it should be relevant to the needs of the society. Education is viewed from this philosophy as a preparation for life. Life consists of performance of specific activities and through education these activities could be taught to the students. These need oriented activities thus could be the objectives of the curriculum.

ROLE OF BAU

Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) Mymensingh is the only institute of its kind in the country to provide high-level professional education in agriculture and related fields. Since its inception in 1961, it has been striving to adhere to its objectives of helping the national programme of rural development with the help of its faculty and graduates, through (a) education and training, (b) research and action research, (c) extension, and (d) nation-building activities. The University, in order to achieve its purpose, is working in the classroom, laboratories and fields within the campus as well as in a number of project villages outside to meet its commitment in respect of education, research and extension. The University has got six faculties and is in a good position

to produce required manpower with quite a large number of highly qualified and experienced teachers in different areas of agriculture. Although, activities of BAU in the fields of higher agricultural education, research and extension are going on for more than two decades, questions have been raised from various quarters regarding the quality of its products. In order to make a worthwhile contribution in the area of its respective responsibilities, it is necessary to reconsider relevant aspects and develop suitable strategies for the over all development of the country. However, this article deals mainly with curriculum development, a short review is being made keeping the present curriculum of B.Sc. Ag. (Hons.) course and the system of teaching in the University in view.

At the moment, the students of B.Sc. Ag. (Hons) course have to appear and pass examinations for a total marks of 4300 within the 4-year period covering 31 subjects. The distribution of marks for theory and practical examinations is 2:1 approximately. Although, the allocation of time to practical classes is more than theory, but the students do not seem to be that much practical oriented. The following factors might be responsible for this: (1) The practical classes are mostly held in the laboratory situation instead of bringing the students out in the field. The existing routine and requirements for most of the subjects is such that the students need to go upto BAU farm at best and rarely to the farmers field.

(2) The students give more emphasis on theory papers instead of practical, as the theory papers carry more marks.

(3) Due to various unavoidable circumstances a substantial proportion of normal classes and session cannot be duly held. As such, the teachers are required to complete the syllabus in a hurry just before the examination. The students also have to digest the course willingly or unwillingly to pass the examination.

(4) Although most of the agricultural graduates join in extension service (60% extension, 25% research, 5% education and 10% administrative jobs), but the present syllabus is apparently research and education oriented. It is opined by many that some subjects as we are teaching now may be excluded for those who will join extension services.

(5) The intake of students in the first year class is often so high that it is difficult to conduct both theory and practical classes effectively with the existing class and laboratory facilities.

Some Anticipated Modifications: It can be realized from the above discussion that some modification needs to be made in the present education system of B.A.U. to produce better graduates and for developing the desirable qualities in them. Primarily, three possible ways of modification may be considered to improve the present system of BAU academic programmes. These are: (1) Introducing course system in place of existing annual education.

(2) Introducing the preservice system of internship programme

without disturbing the present system, and (3) Modification of curriculum and syllabuses by emphasizing more on practical aspects.

The rationale for curriculum development demands that it is a continuous process, involving constant replanning, redevelopment, and re-appraisal. In this context, the present curriculum and syllabuses of the University should also be modified on the basis of needs of the situation. Primarily two broad types of curriculum may be developed in order to produce two types of graduates. They are graduates to be absorbed by the Extension Department and graduates to be absorbed by the Research and Teaching organizations. Some from both the wings may however, join the administrative jobs after completion of BCS examinations. There should be a continuous feedback of information from different job-giving organizations about their job market in order to take initial step during admission and to develop relevant facilities. Next, the break-up of the syllabuses according to theory and practical papers may be chalked out on the basis of job analysis and identifying the knowledge and skill that are required to each of the task elements for accomplishing different situational demands. Care must be taken to develop a balanced syllabus so that the students are not overburdened with too many unnecessary subjects. Special considerations shall have to be made to expose the extension graduates about the field situation and rural experience. Similarly, the research and teaching graduates should be trained through research projects and practice teaching to develop their proficiency.

Linkage with social needs: It is obvious that to be useful and relevant in accomplishing educational objective, it should have a continuous flow of information between farmers and educationists. It is a gigantic task as in the recent past, and probably still, there has been very little information flowing from farmers to scientists and for which introduction of a farm level feedback mechanism is necessary. Besides, through a continuous process of observation, farm level survey, questionnaires and interviews, collection of samples, keeping of records, check tests, analysis of documents etc. information regarding farmers problems can be collected. The technological advancements, individual need, social need and a large number of other factors

need to be considered for this purpose. Moreover, in department discussion with students, teachers, supporting staff, employed graduates, unemployed graduates etc. may also provide us some pertinent information. However, for maintaining a continuous linkage with social needs and problems, the well-agreed principles in different aspects of agricultural extension like motivation, communication, proper use of extension methods, development of local leadership, building rural institutions and evaluation development programmes be followed.

SOME SUGGESTION

In view of the discussion made so far, I like to (Continued on page