Analysis of Curriculum Assignment

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Author's note, 2014: This assignment was initially developed before curriculum documents were commonly in electronic formats. Now, many school systems offer curricula online, or offer them in some other electronic format.

This original assignment was developed because many of my graduate students, who were also practicing educators at varied levels, had never seen their school's curriculum. It is my belief that obviously you do not use what you have not seen. Additionally, in my graduate classes on instructional design and curriculum students were asked to write an original piece of curriculum. In this context examining exemplary prototypes was desirable as I believe humans learn a great deal by comparisons. Unfortunately, in gathering prototypes to compare and contrast, many of the documents students found were either very old and outdated, or keyed to table of contents of texts, or utterly devoid of practical features which might make them useable. Many schools simply have endless lists of standards or benchmarks and little else. These are not true curricula!

Assignment Instructions: (See the companion checklist.) In all probability you will not find one curriculum guide that has all of the components listed. Please construct the assignment in **a narrative form**, concentrating only on the components in your samples. At the beginning of the analysis **cite the documents** you used using the following components (if available) -- **title, subject, grade level, date and place of publication, publishing agency, and authors**.

Many states, districts, and organizations have posted online complete curricular documents. This access makes comparing and contrasting multiple documents easy. You may also wish to compare your curriculum with those of classmates and formulate a comparative document, and so this assignment may be done in pairs or triads.

You are to examine, in a compare and contrast manner, two or more curricula in the same general academic area. This approach provides a basis for deeper comparisons. In this mode, students often examine their district's curriculum and then find one that is exemplary, more up to date, or one that offers components that are unique or different. This approach often aids students in making more comprehensive suggestions for improvement to their district's documents, and or adjustments to the piece of curriculum they create for this class.

I.   **General Appearance and Usability - These are components that may increase the accessibility and usefulness of the document.**

    A.   Is there a title page?
    B.   Are the authors named, date and place of publication?
    C.   Is the document presented in an electronic format? Or, is the document bound? Clarify form.

C.	Hardbound or electronic – Check or comment only on those aspects that apply. Is the document published in a way that facilitates easy access and use?
- Spiral binding
- Loose-leaf
- Tabs, color coding, or sectional divisions for easy access
- Table of contents
- Index
- References (Those documents used in writing the document)
- Additional resources or audio-visual materials
- Sample lessons, units or extended plans or
- District or national contacts (Names and phone numbers or addresses of agencies or persons who might be helpful in aiding teachers in the implementation of the program.)
- Diagrams
- Additional features – Please clarify

D.	Is the document written so that it easily understood?
E.	Is the layout pleasant, attractive and/or user-friendly?
F.	Is the font and size of the print readable?
G.	Are there charts or schema that help conceptualize material?

II.	**Philosophical Statements - These statements may be implicit assumptions or explicit statements about:**

A.	The client (parents, the community, citizens, etc.)
B.	The educative process or processes
C.	The school
D.	The teacher
E.	The learning process
F.	The content
G.	Students

Philosophical statements may be in the form of mission statements, directives, a direct philosophical statement or general goals. They set the "TONE" of the curriculum. There should be some sort of internal congruence between the philosophy of the curriculum and its components.

III.	**Aims, Goals, and Objectives - These terms are often used interchangeably, but they are not. Aims refer to the general, broad intentions of the curriculum plan. Goals are subsets of the aims. They may be stated as either short term and/or long term goals. Objectives are the individual skills involved in each portion of the curriculum plan. Frequently, these terms are replaced with**

other terms that mean the same thing. These portions of the plan should also reflect the basic philosophy espoused or implied at the initial stages of the plan.

    A.   Are the aims stated in a clear manner?

    B.   Do the aims reinforce, infer or state the philosophical tone of the curriculum plan?

    C.   Are goals stated as long term and/or short term goals?

    D.   If the plan includes both types of goals, is there a defined relationship between the two?

    E.   What are the degrees of specificity of the aims, goals, and objectives?

    F.   Are the aims, goals, and objectives stated in behavioral terms, or are they problem-solving objectives, or are they expressive outcomes?

    G.   Does the sequencing follow some sort of logical or developmental pattern? Or are the intentions more loosely arranged?

IV.   Content - The content portion of curriculum evaluation refers to the actual subject content or processes recommended by the curriculum plan.

    A.   What is the range of the content? Grade recommendations, ages, or are competencies built upon?

    B.   How is the content sequenced?

    C.   How specific are the subject areas or recommendations?

    D.   Are student activities described in detail? Is there merely an overview of activities or suggested guidelines of activities rather than detailed activities?

    E.   Do activities also contain related cognitive and/or affective and/or psychomotor processes?

V.   Methods and Processes - This refers to actual suggestions and/or practices for implementing teaching strategies. This is the instructional design portion of the curriculum plan.

    A.   What processes and methods of teaching are used in the curriculum plan?

    B.   What processes are suggested for students?

    C.   Are there student-to-student transactions?

    D.   Are there teacher-to-student transactions?

    E.   Are there other-staff-to-student transactions?

    F.   Are there student-to-materials transactions?

    G.   Do the processes and methods used agree with the general philosophy and tone of the curriculum plan established at the onset?

VI.   Organization - Refers to the organization of the instructional plan and suggestions for the organization of students and materials, etc..

    A.   Are there suggestions for scheduling?

    B.   Are there suggestions for the spatial arrangement of materials or equipment

or furniture?

C. Are there suggestions for the arrangements of instructional groups?
D. How is the plan arranged, and what are the various components of the plan? (This refers to the layout of the plan.)
E. Does the arrangement of the plan make sense? Is it sequential? Is it easy to understand?

VII. **Your Evaluation of Curricula - May refer to the specific methods that are used to determine if, how, when, or to what extent the instructional objectives in the curriculum were successfully completed.   This portion also refers to your individual assessments of the curriculum document or plan. If possible, answer this portion from both perspectives.**

A. Effectiveness
   1. Achievement of stated goals
   2. Comparison to other programs
   3. Methods of evaluating students
   4. How are the evaluation results to be used?

B. Practicality
   1. Cost of the program
   2. Staff requirements
   3. Materials requirements
   4. Space requirements
   5. Availability of supportive resources

C. Consistency requirements
   1. Inner consistency: e.g. language, format, philosophy, procedures, evaluations
   2. Clarity of meaning and design

D. Overall impressions
   1. Overall usefulness
   2. General impressions of format and design

E. **Recommendations** - Perhaps this is the most important part of this process. What would you do to improve the usefulness of this document?