This sixth edition of *Contemporary Issues in Curriculum* is a text for students or school leaders studying the disciplines of curriculum, instruction, supervision, administration, and teacher education. It is written for those who are exploring the issues that have the potential to influence the planning, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum at all levels of teaching and learning. The articles reflect emergent trends in the field of curriculum and instruction.

**NEW TO THIS EDITION**

In an effort to improve the quality and relevance of the new edition, the editors have added 10 new chapters. As in earlier editions, the overall intent of the editors was to focus on well-known contributors in the field of curriculum and to select articles that were easy to read and that simultaneously offered an in-depth perspective on a subject or issue important to curriculum. In deciding to delete or add chapters, the editors considered two factors: (1) Whether the original article had become dated or less relevant to the changing trends in schools and/or society and (2) whether the original piece was either too lengthy or difficult to fully understand. Then, the purpose was to incorporate new chapters that students and instructors would find relevant to the field of curriculum and their own personal situations. The criteria for selection of the new chapters were as follows:

- The new articles are meant to interest those who are preparing for a teaching career as well as experienced educators concerned with issues and policies that influence education.
- The chapters are valuable for use in introductory courses in curriculum and in a variety of upper-level and graduate education courses and address relevant topics such as the Common Core Standards and aiming higher with expectations for student performance.
- The new authors (as in the case of previous editions) are well known in the field of curriculum and/or related domains—philosophy, teaching, learning, instruction, supervision, and policy. To be sure, the best authors in all fields of social science and education have a distinctive message.
- The new authors chosen include a wide range of philosophical viewpoints, but always represent contemporary and emerging issues such as changing societal demographics, pre-K education, and teacher induction and retention.
- The story and issues in the new chapters are well defined and coherent and offer a comprehensive body of information on various educational trends and curriculum issues. They are written in a way that engages readers or takes sides in some political or philosophical struggle.
- The articles selected are intended to be controversial and encourage critical thinking as well as to give the reader ready access to important ideas and issues that affect education in general and curriculum, including new topics related to international comparisons and competitiveness, as well as how one can truly judge the success of a school and the value of an education.
- Although the notions of currency and relevancy filtered through the selection process, it is essential to understand that our pasts blend with our present, and there are no single timelines, no specific historical periods, separate from another time period. Another factor was
PREFACE

duration, that the articles selected would have a time value of at least 5 years into the future.

• The editors are particularly concerned about traditional issues related to teaching and learning, as well as contemporary issues such as global, multicultural, and egalitarian perspectives. Given this bias, the greatest amount of change took place in the sections on curriculum and philosophy, curriculum and learning, curriculum and instruction, and curriculum and policy.

• Finally, it is naïve to believe that more education stories on the front page of any newspaper or news media will change the course of schools or radically alter the curriculum. Nevertheless, the authors chosen tend to have the wind behind their backs and a broad frame of reference for understanding the important problems and trends affecting the present and future in education, as well as the field of curriculum.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

This text is divided into six parts: philosophy, teaching, learning, instruction, supervision, and policy. Each part consists of five or six chapters and is preceded by an introduction that provides a brief overview of the articles and focuses the reader’s attention on the issues to be discussed. Each chapter begins with a set of focusing questions and ends with several discussion questions. A pro–con chart that explores views on both sides of a current controversial curriculum concern and a case study problem appear at the end of each part. These instructional features help the reader integrate the content and the issues of the text. Instructors may wish to use these features as the bases for class discussion or essay assignments.

To ensure that the breadth and depth of viewpoints in the field are represented, we have included articles that portray current trends and illustrate the dynamism within the field. The readings present views that reflect traditionally held beliefs as well as other perspectives that might be considered more controversial in nature. Students and practitioners should have an opportunity to investigate the breadth of issues that are affecting curriculum and be able to access such information in a single source. Readers are encouraged to examine and debate these issues, formulate their own ideas regarding the issues affecting the field of curriculum, and decide what direction that field should take.

In Part I, the Eisner and Rothman chapters are new. No additions were made for Part II. The Finn and Eng pieces were added for Part III. In the next part, the Zhao, Tomlinson and Javius, and Wiggins chapters are new. There is one new piece in Part V, by Ingersoll. As for the sixth part, two new chapters were added by Odden and Ornstein.
PART ONE

Curriculum and Philosophy

How does philosophy influence the curriculum? To what extent does the curriculum reflect personal beliefs and societal ways? How do different conceptions of curriculum affect schooling and student achievement? In what way has curriculum been a catalyst in empowering certain segments of society while disenfranchising others?

In Chapter 1, Allan Ornstein considers how philosophy guides the organization of the curriculum. He explores how beliefs about the purposes of education are reflected in the subject matter and the process of teaching and learning. In Chapter 2, Ronald Brandt and Ralph Tyler present a rationale for establishing educational goals. They identify the sources that they believe should be considered before articulating goals, as well as how goals should be used in planning learning activities.

In Chapter 3, Elliot Eisner warns that leadership in education requires more than just accepting the limited measures now used for determining how well schools are doing and describes some features of a more human vision of schooling. The true measure of educational attainment, he tells us, is what students do with what they learn and when they can do what they want to do. Next, Maxine Greene reminds us in Chapter 4 of the essential role that arts experiences play in helping students develop esthetic awareness. She explains why encounters with the arts are likely to enrich students’ learning experiences. She also discusses why experience with the arts is critical to combating the delivery of prescriptive curricula and developing students’ metacognitive strategies. In Chapter 5, Robert Rothman argues for the importance of adopting the Common Core Curriculum Standards, such as the need for highly skilled workers in the midst of rapidly changing technology and the inadequacy of state standards for global competitiveness and for comparing student performance across state lines. He describes the content of the Common Core for reading, writing, and mathematics as well as next steps to be taken toward implementation.
PHILOSOPHY AS A BASIS FOR CURRICULUM DECISIONS

ALLAN C. ORNSTEIN

FOCUSING QUESTIONS

1. How does philosophy guide the organization and implementation of curriculum?
2. What are the sources of knowledge that shape a person’s philosophy of curriculum?
3. What are the sources of knowledge that shape your philosophical view of curriculum?
4. How do the aims, means, and ends of education differ?
5. What is the major philosophical issue that must be determined before we can define a philosophy of curriculum?
6. What are the four major educational philosophies that have influenced curriculum in the United States?
7. What is your philosophy of curriculum?

Philosophic issues always have had and still do have an impact on schools and society. Contemporary society and its schools are changing fundamentally and rapidly, much more so than in the past. There is a special urgency that dictates continuous appraisal and reappraisal of the role of schools, and calls for a philosophy of education. Without philosophy, educators are directionless in the whats and hows of organizing and implementing what we are trying to achieve. In short, our philosophy of education influences, and to a large extent determines, our educational decisions, choices, and alternatives.

PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Philosophy provides educators, especially curriculum specialists, with a framework for organizing schools and classrooms. It helps them answer questions about what the school’s purpose is, what subjects are of value, how students learn, and what methods and materials to use. Philosophy provides them with a framework for broad issues and
tasks, such as determining the goals of education, subject content and its organization, the process of teaching and learning, and, in general, what experiences and activities to stress in schools and classrooms. It also provides educators with a basis for making such decisions as what workbooks, textbooks, or other cognitive and noncognitive activities to utilize and how to utilize them, what and how much homework to assign, how to test students and how to use the test results, and what courses or subject matter to emphasize.

The importance of philosophy in determining curriculum decisions is expressed well by the classic statement of Thomas Hopkins (1941): “Philosophy has entered into every important decision that has ever been made about curriculum and teaching in the past and will continue to be the basis of every important decision in the future. . . . There is rarely a moment in a school day when a teacher is not confronted with occasions where philosophy is a vital part of action.” Hopkins’ statement reminds us of how important philosophy is to all aspects of curriculum decisions, whether it operates overtly or covertly. Indeed, almost all elements of curriculum are based on philosophy. As John Goodlad (1979b) points out, philosophy is the beginning point in curriculum decision making and is the basis for all subsequent decisions regarding curriculum. Philosophy becomes the criterion for determining the aims, means, and ends of curriculum. The aims are statements of value, based on philosophical beliefs; the means represent processes and methods, which reflect philosophical choices; and the ends connote the facts, concepts, and principles of the knowledge or behavior learned—what is felt to be important to learning.

Smith, Stanley, and Shores (1957) also put great emphasis on the role of philosophy in developing curriculum, asserting that it is essential when formulating and justifying educational purposes, selecting and organizing knowledge, formulating basic procedures and activities, and dealing with verbal traps (what we see versus what is read). Curriculum theorists, they point out, often fail to recognize both how important philosophy is to developing curriculum and how it influences aspects of curriculum.

**Philosophy and the Curriculum Specialist**

The philosophy of curriculum specialists reflects their life experiences, common sense, social and economic background, education, and general beliefs about people. An individual’s philosophy evolves and continues to evolve as long as there is personal growth, development, and learning from experience. Philosophy is a description, explanation, and evaluation of the world as seen from personal perspective, or through what some social scientists call “social lenses.”

Curriculum specialists can turn to many sources of knowledge, but no matter how many sources they draw on or how many authorities they listen to, their decisions are shaped by all the experiences that have affected them and the social groups with which they identify. These decisions are based on values, attitudes, and beliefs that they have developed, involving their knowledge and interpretation of causes, events, and their consequences. Philosophy determines principles for guiding action.

No one can be totally objective in a cultural or social setting, but curriculum specialists can broaden their base of knowledge and experiences by trying to understand other people’s sense of values and by analyzing problems from various perspectives. They can also try to modify their own critical analyses and points of view by learning from their experiences and those of others. Curriculum specialists who are unwilling to modify their points of view, or to compromise philosophical positions when school officials or their colleagues espouse another philosophy, are at risk of causing conflict and disrupting the school. Ronald Doll (1986)
puts it this way: “Conflict among curriculum planners occurs when persons . . . hold positions along a continuum of [different] beliefs and . . . persuasions.” The conflict may become so intense that “curriculum study grinds to a halt.” Most of the time, the differences can be reconciled “temporarily in deference to the demands of a temporary, immediate task.” However, Doll further explains that “teachers and administrators who are clearly divided in philosophy can seldom work together in close proximity for long periods of time.”

The more mature and understanding and the less personally threatened and ego-involved individuals are, the more capable they are of reexamining or modifying their philosophy, or at least of being willing to appreciate other points of view. It is important for curriculum specialists to regard their attitudes and beliefs as tentative—as subject to reexamination whenever facts or trends challenge them. Equally dangerous for curriculum specialists is the opposite—indecision or lack of any philosophy, which can be reflected in attempts to avoid commitment to a set of values. A measure of positive conviction is essential to prudent action. Having a personal philosophy that is tentative or subject to modification, however, does not lead to lack of conviction or disorganized behavior. Curriculum specialists can arrive at their conclusions on the best evidence available, and they then can change when better evidence surfaces.

**Philosophy as a Curriculum Source**

The function of philosophy can be conceived as either the base for the starting point in curriculum development or an interdependent function of other functions in curriculum development. John Dewey (1916) represents the first school of thought by contending that “philosophy may . . . be defined as the general theory of education,” and that “the business of philosophy is to provide [the framework] for the aims and methods” of schools. For Dewey, philosophy provides a generalized meaning to our lives and a way of thinking, “an explicit formulation of the . . . mental and moral attitudes in respect to the difficulties of contemporary social life.” Philosophy is not only a starting point for schools; it is also crucial for all curriculum activities. For as Dewey adds, “Education is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested.”

Highly influenced by Dewey, Ralph Tyler’s (1949) framework of curriculum includes philosophy as only one of five criteria commonly used for selecting educational purposes. The relationship between philosophy and the other criteria—studies of learners, studies of contemporary life, suggestions from subject specialists, and the psychology of learning—is the basis for determining the school’s purposes. Although philosophy is not the starting point in Tyler’s curriculum, but rather interacts on an equal basis with the other criteria, he does seem to place more importance on philosophy for developing educational purposes. Tyler (1949) writes, “The educational and social philosophy to which the school is committed can serve as the first screen for developing the social program.” He concludes that “philosophy attempts to define the nature of the good life and a good society,” and that the “educational philosophies in a democratic society are likely to emphasize strongly democratic values in schools.”

There can be no serious discussion about philosophy until we embrace the question of what is education. When we agree on what education is, we can ask what the school’s purpose is. We can then pursue philosophy, aims, and goals of curriculum. According to Goodlad (1979b), the school’s first responsibility is to the social order, what he calls the “nation-state,” but in our society the sense of individual growth and potential is paramount. This duality—society versus the individual—has been a major philosophical issue
in Western society for centuries and was a very important issue in Dewey’s works. As Dewey (1916) claimed, we not only wish “to make [good] citizens and workers” but also ultimately want “to make human beings who will live life to the fullest.”

The compromise of the duality between national allegiance and individual fulfillment is a noble aim that should guide all curriculum specialists—from the means to the ends. When many individuals grow and prosper, then society flourishes. The original question set forth by Goodlad can be answered: Education is growth and the focal point for the individual as well as society; it is a never-ending process of life, and the more refined the guiding philosophy, the better the quality of the educational process.

In considering the influence of philosophic thought on curriculum, several classification schemes are possible; therefore, no superiority is claimed for the categories used in the tables here. The clusters of ideas are those that often evolve openly or unwittingly during curriculum planning.

Four major educational philosophies have influenced curriculum in the United States: Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, and Reconstructionism. Table 1.1 provides an overview of these education philosophies and how they affect curriculum, instruction, and teaching. Teachers and administrators should compare the content of the categories with their own philosophical “lens” in terms of how they view curriculum and how other views of curriculum and related instructional and teaching issues may disagree.

Another way of interpreting philosophy and its effect on curriculum is to analyze philosophy in terms of polarity. The danger of this method is that it may simplify philosophies in terms of a dichotomy, and not recognize that there are overlaps and shifts. Table 1.2 illustrates philosophy in terms of traditional and contemporary categories. The traditional philosophy, as shown, tends to overlap with Perennialism and Essentialism. Contemporary philosophy tends to coincide with Progressivism and Reconstructionism.

Table 1.2 shows that traditional philosophy focuses on the past, emphasizes fixed and absolute values, and glorifies our cultural heritage. Contemporary philosophy emphasizes the present and future and views events as changeable and relative; for the latter, nothing can be preserved forever, for despite any attempt, change is inevitable. The traditionalists wish to train the mind, emphasize subject matter, and fill the learner with knowledge and information. Those who subscribe to contemporary philosophies are more concerned with problem solving and emphasize student interests and needs. Whereas subject matter is considered important for its own sake, according to traditionalists, certain subjects are more important than others. For contemporary educators, subject matter is considered a medium for teaching skills and attitudes, and most subjects have similar value. According to the traditionalists, the teacher is an authority in subject matter, who dominates the lesson with explanations and lectures. For the contemporary proponent, the teacher is a guide for learning, as well as an agent for change; students and teachers often are engaged in dialogue.

In terms of social issues and society, traditionalists view education as a means of providing direction, control, and restraint, while their counterparts focus on individual expression and freedom from authority. Citizenship is linked to cognitive development for the traditional educator, and it is linked to moral and social development for the contemporary educator. Knowledge and the disciplines prepare students for freedom, according to the traditional view, but it is direct experience in democratic living and political/social action that prepares students for freedom, according to the contemporary ideal. Traditionalists believe in excellence, and contemporary educators favor equality.
### TABLE 1.1 Overview of Educational Philosophies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical Base</th>
<th>Instructional Objective</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Role of Teacher</th>
<th>Curriculum Focus</th>
<th>Related Curriculum Trends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perennialism</strong></td>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>To educate the rational person; to cultivate the intellect</td>
<td>Focus on past and permanent studies; mastery of facts and timeless knowledge</td>
<td>Teacher helps students think rationally; based on Socratic method and oral exposition; explicit teaching of traditional values</td>
<td>Classical subjects; literary analysis; constant curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essentialism</strong></td>
<td>Idealism, Realism</td>
<td>To promote the intellectual growth of the individual; to educate the competent person</td>
<td>Essential skills and academic subjects; mastery of concepts and principles of subject matter</td>
<td>Teacher is authority in his or her field; explicit teaching of traditional values</td>
<td>Essential skills (three Rs) and essential subjects (English, arithmetic, science, history, and foreign language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progressivism</strong></td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>To promote democratic, social living</td>
<td>Knowledge leads to growth and development; a living-learning process; focus on active and interesting learning</td>
<td>Teacher is a guide for problem solving and scientific inquiry</td>
<td>Based on students' interests; involves the application of human problems and affairs; inter-disciplinary subject matter; activities, and projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reconstructionism</strong></td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>To improve and reconstruct society; education for change and social reform</td>
<td>Skills and subjects needed to identify and ameliorate problems of society; learning is active and concerned with contemporary and future society</td>
<td>Teacher serves as an agent of change and reform; acts as a project director and research leader; helps students become aware of problems confronting humankind</td>
<td>Emphasis on social sciences and social research methods; examination of social, economic, and political problems; focus on present and future trends as well as national and international issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 1.2: Overview of Traditional and Contemporary Philosophies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical Consideration</th>
<th>Traditional Philosophy</th>
<th>Contemporary Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational philosophy</td>
<td>Perennialism, Essentialism</td>
<td>Progressivism, Reconstructionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction in time</td>
<td>Superiority of past; education for preserving past</td>
<td>Education is growth; reconstruction of present experiences; changing society; concern for future and shaping it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Fixed, absolute, objective, and/or universal</td>
<td>Changeable, subjective, and/or relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational process</td>
<td>Education is viewed as instruction; mind is disciplined and filled with knowledge</td>
<td>Education is viewed as creative self-learning; active process in which learner reconstructs knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual emphasis</td>
<td>To train or discipline the mind; emphasis on subject matter</td>
<td>To engage in problem-solving activities and social activities; emphasis on student interests and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worth of subject matter</td>
<td>Subject matter for its own importance; certain subjects are better than others for training the mind</td>
<td>Subject matter is a medium for teaching skills, attitudes, and intellectual processes; all subjects have similar value for problem-solving activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum content</td>
<td>Curriculum is composed of three Rs, as well as liberal studies or essential academic subjects</td>
<td>Curriculum is composed of three Rs, as well as skills and concepts in arts, sciences, and vocational studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Emphasis on cognitive learning; learning is acquiring knowledge and/or competency in disciplines</td>
<td>Emphasis on whole child; learning is giving meaning to experiences and/or active involvement in reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>Homogeneous grouping and teaching of students by ability</td>
<td>Heterogeneous grouping and integration of students by ability (as well as race, sex, and class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher is an authority on subject matter; teacher plans activities; teacher supplies knowledge to student; teacher talks, dominates lesson; Socratic method</td>
<td>Teacher is a guide for inquiry and change agent; teacher and students plan activities; students learn on their own independent of the teacher; teacher-student dialogue; student initiates much of the discussion and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social roles</td>
<td>Education involves direction, control, and restraint; group (family, community, church, nation, etc.) always comes first</td>
<td>Education involves individual expression; individual comes first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Cognitive and moral development leads to good citizenship</td>
<td>Personal and social development leads to good citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom and democracy</td>
<td>Acceptance of one’s fate, conformity, and compliance with authority; knowledge and discipline prepare students for freedom</td>
<td>Emphasis on creativeness, nonconformity, and self-actualization; direct experiences in democratic living and political/social action prepare students for freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence vs. equality</td>
<td>Excellence in education; education as far as human potential permits; academic rewards and jobs based on merit</td>
<td>Equality of education; education that permits more than one chance and more than an equal chance to disadvantaged groups; education and employment sectors consider unequal abilities of individuals and put some restraints on achieving individuals so that different outcomes and group scores, if any, are reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Emphasis on group values; acceptance of norms of and roles in society; cooperative and conforming behavior; importance of society; individual restricted by customs and traditions of society</td>
<td>Emphasis on individual growth and development; belief in individual with ability to modify, even reconstruct, the social environment; independent and self-realizing, fully functioning behavior; importance of person; full opportunity to develop one’s own potential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The traditional view of education maintains that group values come first, where cooperative and conforming behaviors are important for the good of society. Contemporary educators assert that what is good for the individual should come first, and they believe in the individual modifying and perhaps reconstructing society.

**The Curriculum Specialist at Work**

Philosophy gives meaning to our decisions and actions. In the absence of a philosophy, educators are vulnerable to externally imposed prescriptions, to fads and frills, to authoritarian schemes, and to other “isms.” Dewey (1916) was so convinced of the importance of philosophy that he viewed it as the all-encompassing aspect of the educational process—as necessary for “forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow man.” If this conclusion is accepted, it becomes evident that many aspects of a curriculum, if not most of the educational processes in school, are developed from a philosophy. Even if it is believed that Dewey’s point is an overstatement, the pervasiveness of philosophy in determining views of reality, the values and knowledge that are worthwhile, and the decisions to be made about education and curriculum should still be recognized.

Very few schools adopt a single philosophy; in practice, most schools combine various philosophies. Moreover, the author’s position is that no single philosophy, old or new, should serve as the exclusive guide for making decisions about schools or about the curriculum. All philosophical groups want the same things of education—that is, they wish to improve the educational process, to enhance the achievement of the learner, to produce better and more productive citizens, and to improve society. Because of their different views of reality, values, and knowledge, however, they find it difficult to agree on how to achieve these ends.

What we need to do, as curricularists, is to search for the middle ground, a highly elusive and abstract concept, in which there is no extreme emphasis on subject matter or student, cognitive development or sociopsychological development, excellence or equality. What we need is a prudent school philosophy, one that is politically and economically feasible, that serves the needs of students and society.

Implicit in this view of education is that too much emphasis on any one philosophy may do harm and cause conflict. How much one philosophy is emphasized, under the guise of reform (or for whatever reason), is critical because no one society can give itself over to extreme “isms” or political views and still remain a democracy. The kind of society that evolves is in part reflected in the education system, which is influenced by the philosophy that is eventually defined and developed.

**CONCLUSION**

In the final analysis, curriculum specialists must understand that they are continuously faced with curriculum decisions, and that philosophy is important in determining these decisions. Unfortunately, few school people test their notions of curriculum against their school’s statement of philosophy. According to Brandt and Tyler (1983), it is not uncommon to find teachers and administrators developing elaborate lists of behavioral objectives with little or no consideration to the overall philosophy of the school. Curriculum workers need to provide assistance in developing and designing school practices that coincide with the philosophy of the school and community. Teaching, learning, and curriculum are all interwoven in school practices and should reflect a school’s and a community’s philosophy.
REFERENCES


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which philosophical approach reflects your beliefs about (a) the school’s purpose, (b) what subjects are of value, (c) how students learn, and (d) the process of teaching and learning?
2. What curriculum focus would the perennialists and essentialists recommend for our increasingly diverse school-age population?
3. What curriculum would the progressivists and reconstructionists select for a multicultural student population?
4. Should curriculum workers adopt a single philosophy to guide their practices? Why? Why not?
5. Which philosophy is most relevant to contemporary education? Why?
CHAPTER 2

Goals and Objectives

RONALD S. BRANDT
RALPH W. TYLER

FOCUSING QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to establish goals for student learning?
2. How do goals and objectives differ?
3. What are three types of goals?
4. What are the factors that should be considered in developing educational goals?
5. What is the relationship between goals and learning activities?
6. In what ways are curriculum goals integral to the process of evaluation?
7. What types of goals should be addressed by schools?

Whether planning for one classroom or many, curriculum developers must have a clear idea of what they expect students to learn. Establishing goals is an important and necessary step because there are many desirable things students could learn—more than schools have time to teach them—so schools should spend valuable instructional time only on high-priority learnings.

Another reason for clarifying goals is that schools must be able to resist pressures from various sources. Some of the things schools are asked to teach are untrue, would hinder students’ development, or would help make them narrow, bigoted persons. Some would focus students’ learning so narrowly it would reduce, rather than increase, their life options.

FORMS OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Statements of intent appear in different forms, and words such as goals, objectives, aims, ends, outcomes, and purposes are often used interchangeably. Some people find it useful to think of goals as long-term aims to be achieved eventually and objectives as specific learning that students are to acquire as a result of current instruction.

Planners in the Portland, Oregon, area schools say these distinctions are not clear enough to meet organizational planning requirements. They use “goal” to mean any desired outcome of a program, regardless of its specificity, and “objective” only in
connection with program change objectives, which are defined as statements of intent to change program elements in specified ways. Doherty and Peters (1981) say this distinction avoids confusion and is consistent with the philosophy of “management by objectives.”

They refer to three types of goals: instructional, support, and management. Educational goals are defined as learnings to be acquired; support goals as services to be rendered; and management goals as functions of management, such as planning, operating, and evaluating. Such a goal structure permits evaluation to focus on measures of learning acquired (educational outcomes), measures of quantity and quality of service delivery (support outcomes), and measures of quality and effectiveness of management functions (management outcomes).

The Tri-County Goal Development Project, which has published 14 volumes containing over 25,000 goal statements,1 is concerned only with educational goals. For these collections, the following distinctions are made within the general category of “goals”:

- **System level goals** (set for the school district by the board of education)
- **Program level goals** (set by curriculum personnel in each subject field)
- **Course level goals** (set by groups of teachers for each subject or unit of instruction)
- **Instructional level goals** (set by individual teachers for daily planning)

Examples of this outcome hierarchy are shown in Figure 2.1.

What distinguishes this system of terminology from others is its recognition that a learning outcome has the same essential character at all levels of planning (hence the appropriateness of a single term, goal, to describe it) and that the level of generality used to represent learning varies with the planning requirements at each level of school organization. The degree of generality chosen for planning at each level is, of course, a matter of judgment; there is no “correct” level but only a sense of appropriateness to purpose.

Teachers, curriculum specialists, and university consultants who write and review course goals use the following guidelines (Doherty & Peters, 1980, pp. 26–27):

1. Is the stated educational outcome potentially significant?
2. Does the goal begin with “The student knows . . .” if it is a knowledge goal and “The student is able to . . .” if it is a process goal?
3. Is the goal stated in language that is sufficiently clear, concise, and appropriate? (Can it be stated in simpler language and/or fewer words?)
4. Can learning experiences be thought of that would lead to the goal’s achievement?
5. Do curricular options exist for the goal’s achievement? (Methodology should not be a part of the learning outcome statement.)

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**FIGURE 2.1** Examples of Goals at Each Level of Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Goal:</th>
<th>The student knows and is able to apply basic scientific and technological processes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Goal:</td>
<td>The student is able to use the conventional language, instruments, and operations of science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Goal:</td>
<td>The student is able to classify organisms according to their conventional taxonomic categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Goal:</td>
<td>The student is able to correctly classify cuttings from the following trees as needle-leaf, hemlock, pine, spruce, fir, larch, cypress, redwood, and cedar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Does the goal clearly contribute to the attainment of one or more of the program goals in its subject area?

7. Can the goal be identified with the approximate level of student development?

8. Can criteria for evaluating the goal be identified?

Curriculum developers need to decide the types and definitions of goals most useful to them and to users of their materials. Some authors advise avoiding vagueness by using highly specific language. Mager (1962) and other writers insist that words denoting observable behaviors, such as “construct” and “identify,” should be used in place of words like “understand” and “appreciate.” Others reject this approach, claiming that behavioral objectives “are in no way adequate for conceptualizing most of our most cherished educational aspirations” (Eisner, 1979, p. 101). Unfortunately this dispute has developed into a debate about behavioral objectives rather than dialogue over the kinds of behavior appropriate for a humane and civilized person.

The debate is partly semantic and partly conceptual. To some persons the word “behavior” carries the meaning of an observable act, like the movement of the fingers in typing. To them, behavioral objectives refer only to overt behavior. Others use the term “behavior” to emphasize the active nature of the learner. They want to emphasize that learners are not passive receptacles but living, reasoning persons. In this sense, behavior refers to all kinds of human reactions.

For example, a detailed set of “behavioral goals” was prepared by French and others (1957). Organized under the major headings of “self-realization,” “face-to-face relationships,” and “membership in large organizations,” Behavioral Goals of General Education in High School includes aims such as “Shows growing ability to appreciate and apply good standards of performance and artistic principles.” These are expanded by illustrative behaviors such as “Appreciates good workmanship and design in commercial products.”

The other aspect of the debate over behavioral objectives arises from focusing on limited kinds of learning, such as training factory workers to perform specific tasks. The term “conditioning” is commonly used for the learning of behaviors initiated by clear stimuli and calling for automatic, fixed responses. Most driving behavior, for example, consists of conditioned responses to traffic lights, to the approach of other cars and pedestrians, and to the sensations a driver receives from the car’s movements. Conditioning is a necessary and important type of learning.

In some situations, though, an automatic response is inappropriate. A more complex model of learning compatible with development of responsible persons in a changing society conceives of the learner as actively seeking meaning. This implies understanding and conscious pursuit of one’s goals. The rewards of such learning include the satisfaction of coping with problems successfully.

Planning curriculum for self-directed learning requires goals that are not directly observable: ways of thinking, understanding of concepts and principles, broadening and deepening of interests, changing of attitudes, developing satisfying emotional responses to aesthetic experiences, and the like.

Even these goals, however, should use terms with clearly defined meanings. Saying that a student should “understand the concept of freedom” is far too broad and ambiguous, both because the meaning of the term “concept” is not sufficiently agreed on among educators and because concept words such as “freedom” have too great a range of possible informational loadings to ensure similar interpretation from teacher to teacher. If used at all, such a statement would be at the program level and would require increasingly specific elaboration at the course and lesson plan levels.
Some educators find it useful to refer to a particular type of goal as a competency. Used in the early 1970s in connection with Oregon’s effort to relate high school instruction to daily life (Oregon State Board of Education, 1972), the term “minimum competency” has become identified with state and district testing programs designed to ensure that students have a minimum level of basic skills before being promoted or graduated. Spady (1978) and other advocates of performance-based education point out that competency involves more than “capacities” such as the ability to read and calculate; it should refer to application of school-learned skills in situations outside of school.

One definition of competency is the ability to perform a set of related tasks with a high degree of skill. The concept is especially useful in vocational education, where a particular competency can be broken down through task analysis into its component skills so that teachers and curriculum planners have both a broad statement of expected performance and an array of skills specific enough to be taught and measured (Chalupsky, Phillips-Jones, & Danoff, 1981).

**CONSIDERATIONS IN CHOOSING GOALS**

Educational goals should reflect three important factors: the nature of organized knowledge, the nature of society, and the nature of learners (Tyler, 1949). An obvious source is the nature of organized fields of study. Schools teach music, chemistry, and algebra because these fields have been developed through centuries of painstaking inquiry. Each academic discipline has its own concepts, principles, and processes. It would be unthinkable to neglect passing on to future generations this priceless heritage and these tools for continued learning.

Another factor affecting school goals is the nature of society. For example, the goals of education in the United States are quite different from those in Russia. In the United States, we stress individuality, competition, creativity, and freedom to choose government officials. Russian schools teach loyalty to the state and subordination of one’s individuality to the welfare of the collective. One result is that most U.S. schools offer a great many electives, while the curriculum in Russian schools consists mostly of required subjects. For example, all students in Russia must study advanced mathematics and science to serve their technologically advanced nation (Wirszup, 1981).

U.S. schools have assumed, explicitly or implicitly, many goals related to the nature of society. For example, schools offer drug education, sex education, driver education, and other programs because of concerns about the values and behavior of youth and adults. Schools teach visual literacy because of the influence of television, consumer education because our economic system offers so many choices, and energy education because of the shortage of natural resources.

A goal statement by Ehrenberg and Ehrenberg (1978) specifically recognizes the expectations of society. Their model for curriculum development begins with a statement of “ends sought”: “It is intended that as a result of participating in the K–12 educational program students will consistently and effectively take intelligent, ethical action: (1) to accomplish the tasks society legitimately expects of all its members, and (2) to establish and pursue worthwhile goals of their own choosing.”

The curriculum development process outlined by the Ehrenbergs involves preparing a complete rationale for the ends-sought statement and then defining, for example, areas of societal expectations. The work of the curriculum developer consists of defining a framework of “criterion tasks,” all either derived from expectations of society or necessary to pursue individual goals. These tasks, at various levels of pupil development, become the focus of day-to-day instruction. In this way, all curriculum is directly related to school system goals.
A third consideration in choosing goals, sometimes overlooked, is the nature of learners. For example, because Lawrence Kohlberg (1980) found that children pass through a series of stages in their moral development, he believes schools should adopt the goal of raising students’ levels of moral reasoning. Sternberg (1981) and other “information processing” psychologists believe that intelligence is, partly at least, a set of strategies and skills that can be learned. Their research suggests, according to Sternberg, that schools can and should set a goal of improving students’ intellectual performance.

Recognizing that students often have little interest in knowledge for its own sake or in adult applications of that knowledge, some educators believe goals not only should be based on what we know about students, but should come from students themselves. Many alternative schools emphasize this source of goals more than conventional schools typically do (Raywid, 1981).

While knowledge, society, and learners are all legitimate considerations, the three are sometimes in conflict. For example, many of the products of the curriculum reform movement of the 1960s had goals based almost exclusively on the nature of knowledge. The emphasis of curriculum developers was on the “structure of the disciplines” (Bruner, 1960). Goals of some curriculums failed to fully reflect the nature of society and students, so teachers either refused to use them or gave up after trying them for a year or two (Stake & Easley, 1978).

In the 1970s, educators and the general public reacted against this discipline-centered emphasis by stressing practical activities drawn from daily life. Schools were urged to teach students how to balance a checkbook, how to choose economical purchases, how to complete a job application, and how to read a traffic ticket. Career education enthusiasts, not content with the reasonable idea that education should help prepare students for satisfying careers, claimed that all education should be career-related in some way.

Conflicts of this sort between the academic and the practical are persistent and unavoidable, but curriculum developers err if they emphasize only one source of goals and ignore the others. If noneducators are preoccupied with only one factor, educational leaders have a responsibility to stress the importance of the others and to insist on balance.

**SCOPE OF THE SCHOOL’S RESPONSIBILITY**

There have been many attempts to define the general aims of schools and school programs, including the well-known Cardinal Principles listed by a national commission in 1918 (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, U.S. Office of Education, 1918). The seven goals in that report—health, fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character—encompass nearly every aspect of human existence, and most goal statements written since that time have been equally comprehensive.

Some authors contend that schools are mistaken to assume such broad aims. Martin (1980) argued that intellectual development and citizenship are the only goals for which schools should have primary responsibility and that other institutions should be mainly responsible for such goals as worthy home membership. He proposed that schools undertake a new role of coordinating educational efforts of all community agencies.

Paul (1982) reported that in three different communities large numbers of teachers, students, and parents agreed on a limited set of goals confined mostly to basic skills. Paul contended that schools often confuse the issue when involving citizens in setting goals because they ask what students should learn rather than what schools should teach. Goal surveys conducted by her organization showed, she said, that adults want young
people to develop many qualities for which they do not expect schools to be responsible.

Undeniably, the aims and activities of U.S. schools are multiple and diverse. They not only teach toothbrushing, crafts, religion, care of animals, advertising, cooking, automobile repair, philosophy, hunting, and chess; they also provide health and food services to children, conduct parent education classes, and offer a variety of programs for the elderly. Periodic review of these obligations is clearly in order. However, in trying to delimit their mission, schools must not minimize concern for qualities that, though hard to define and develop, distinguish educated persons from the less educated.

A carefully refined statement of goals of schooling in the United States was developed by Goodlad (1979) and his colleagues in connection with their Study of Schooling. Deliberately derived from an analysis of hundreds of goal statements adopted by school districts and state departments of education so as to reflect accurately the currently declared aims of U.S. education, the list comprises 65 goals in 12 categories, including “intellectual development,” “self-concept,” and “moral and ethical character.”

An equally broad set of goals is used in Pennsylvania’s Educational Quality Assessment, which includes questions intended to measure such elusive aims as “understanding others” and “self-esteem.” School districts must give the tests at least once every five years as part of a plan to make schools accountable for the 12 state-adopted goals (Seiverling, 1980). An adaptation of the Pennsylvania goals was used by the ASCD Committee on Research and Theory (1980) in connection with their plan for Measuring and Attaining the Goals of Education.

In many cases, schools contribute modestly or not at all to helping students become loving parents and considerate neighbors. In other cases, school experiences may have lasting effects on values, attitudes, and behavior. We believe school goals should include such aims as “interpersonal relations” and “autonomy,” as well as “intellectual development” and “basic skills” (Goodlad, 1979), although the goal statement should specifically recognize that most goals are not the exclusive domain of schools but are a shared responsibility with other institutions.

ESTABLISHING LOCAL GOALS

It is usually helpful to begin identification of goals by listing all the promising possibilities from various sources. Consider contemporary society. What things could one’s students learn that would help them meet current demands and take advantage of future opportunities? General data about modern society may be found in studies of economic, political, and social conditions. Data directly relevant to the lives of one’s students will usually require local studies, which can be made by older students, parents, and other local people.

Consider the background of the students: their previous experiences, things they have already learned, their interests and needs—that is, the gaps between desired ways of thinking, feeling, and acting and their present ways. This information should be specific to one’s own students, although generalized studies of the development of children and youth in our culture will suggest what to look for.

Consider the potential of the various subject fields. What things could one’s students learn about their world and themselves from the sciences, history, literature, and so on? What can mathematics provide as a resource for their lives? Visual arts? Music? Each new generation is likely to find new possibilities in these growing fields of knowledge and human expression.

In the effort to identify possible goals, don’t be unduly concerned about the form in which you state these “things to be learned.” For example, you may find a possibility in “Learn new ways of expressing emotions
through various experiences provided in literature,” and another in “Understand how animal ecologies are disturbed and the consequences of the disturbance.” These are in different forms and at different levels of generality, but at this stage the purpose is only to consider carefully all the promising possibilities. Later, those selected as most important and appropriate for one’s students can be refined and restated in common form so as to guide curriculum developers in designing learning experiences. At that point, it will probably be helpful to standardize terms and definitions. At early stages, however, curriculum developers should use terminology familiar and understandable to teachers, principals, parents, and citizens rather than insisting on distinctions that others may have difficulty remembering and using.

The comprehensive list of possible outcomes should be carefully scrutinized to sift out those that appear to be of minor importance or in conflict with the school’s educational philosophy. The list should also be examined in the light of the apparent prospects for one’s students being able to learn these things in school. For example, we know that things once learned are usually forgotten unless there are continuing opportunities to use them. So one criterion for retaining a goal is that students will have opportunities in and out of school to think, feel, and act as expected. We also know that learning of habits requires continuous practice with few errors, so work and study habits should be selected as goals only if they are to be emphasized consistently in school work.

This procedure for identifying what students are to be helped to learn is designed to prevent a common weakness in curriculum development: selection of goals that are obsolete or irrelevant, inappropriate for students’ current levels of development, not in keeping with sound scholarship, not in harmony with America’s democratic philosophy, or for which the school cannot provide the necessary learning conditions.

A common practice when planning curriculum is to refer to published taxonomies (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl et al., 1964). Taxonomies can be useful for their original purpose—classifying goals already formulated—but they do not resolve the issue of the relevance of any particular goal to contemporary society or to one’s own students. The Bloom and Krathwohl taxonomies are organized in terms of what the authors conceive to be higher or lower levels, but higher ones are not always more important or even necessary. In typing, for example, so-called higher mental processes interfere with the speed and accuracy of typing.

A similar caution applies to uncritically taking goals from curriculum materials of other school systems. The fact that educators in Scarsdale or some other district chose certain goals is not in itself evidence that they are appropriate for your students.

Development of general goals for a school system should be a lengthy process with opportunities for students, parents, and others to participate. This can be done, for example, by sponsoring “town meetings,” by publishing draft statements of goals in local newspapers with an invitation to respond, and by holding and publicizing hearings on goals sponsored by the board of education.

A factor that complicates the matter is that some sources of goals are simply not subject to a majority vote. Knowledge—whether about physics, poetry, or welding—is the province of specialists. Educators sometimes know more about the nature of children and the learning process than many other adults in the community. Nevertheless, in a democracy there is no higher authority than the people, so the people must be involved in deciding what public schools are to teach.

Most general goals, because they are so broad and because they deal with major categories of human experience, are acceptable to most people. Few will quarrel with a goal such as “Know about human beings, their
environments and their achievements, past and present.” The problem in developing a general goal statement is usually not to decide which goals are proper and which are not, but to select among many possibilities the ones that are most important, are at the proper level of generality, and are at least partially the responsibility of schools.

While general goals are not usually controversial, more specific ones can be. For example, parents might not quarrel with “Understand and follow practices associated with good health,” but some would reject “Describe two effective and two ineffective methods of birth control.” Thus, parents and other citizens should be involved in formulating course and program goals as well as general system goals.

USING GOALS TO PLAN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

To some extent, well-stated goals imply the kinds of learning activities that would be appropriate for achieving them. For example, if an instructional goal is “Solve word problems requiring estimation involving use of simple fractions such as 1/2, 1/4, 2/3,” students would have to practice estimating solutions to practical problems as well as learning to calculate using fractions. In many instances, however, knowing the goal does not automatically help an educator know how to teach it. For example, to enable students to “understand and appreciate significant human achievements,” one teacher might have students read about outstanding scientists of the nineteenth century, supplement the readings with several lectures, and give a multiple-choice examination. Another teacher might decide to divide students into groups and have each group prepare a presentation to the class about a great scientist using demonstrations, dramatic skits, and so on. Forging the link between goals and other steps in curriculum development requires professional knowledge, experience, and imagination.

A factor that distorts what might appear to be a straightforward relationship between goals and activities is that every instructional activity has multiple goals. The goal-setting process is sometimes seen as a one-to-one relationship between various levels of goals and levels of school activity. For example, the mission of a local school system might be to “Offer all students equitable opportunities for a basic education plus some opportunities to develop individual talents and interests.” “Basic education” would be defined to include “Communicate effectively by reading, writing, speaking, observing, and listening.” A middle school in that district might have a goal such as “Read and understand nonfiction at a level of the average article in Reader’s Digest” or, more specifically, “Students will be able to distinguish between expressions of fact and opinion in writing.”

While similar chains of related goals are basic to sound curriculum planning, developers should never assume that such simplicity fully represents the reality of schools. When a teacher is engaged in teaching reading, he or she must also be conscious of and teach toward other goals: thinking ability, knowledge of human achievements, relationships with others, positive self-concept, and so on.

Not only must teachers address several officially adopted “outside” goals all at once; they must cope with “inside” goals as well. Although Goodlad (1979) uses declared goals to remind educators and the public what schools are said to be for, he cautions that the ends-means model doesn’t do justice to the educational process and offers, as an alternative, an ecological perspective. Insisting that school activities should “be viewed for their intrinsic value, quite apart from their linkage or lack of linkage to stated ends” (p. 76), he points out that in addition to “goals that have been set outside of the system for the system” there are also goals inside the system—“students’
goals, teachers’ goals, principals’ goals, and so on—and . . . these goals are not necessarily compatible” (p. 77).

The message to curriculum developers is that although “outside” goals and objectives are fundamental to educational planning, the relationship between purposes and practices is more complex than it may seem.

**USING GOALS IN CURRICULUM EVALUATION**

Some writers argue that specific objectives are essential in order to design suitable evaluation plans and write valid test items. The work of the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows, however, that even evaluators may not require objectives written in highly technical language. National Assessment objectives do not contain stipulations of conditions or performance standards; in fact, they are expected to meet just two criteria: clarity and importance. The educators, citizens, and subject matter experts who review the objectives are asked, “Do you understand what this objective means? How important is it that students learn this in school?” Objectives are often considered clear and important even though they are stated briefly and simply. When the objectives have been identified, National Assessment staff members or consultants develop exercises designed to be operational definitions of the intended outcomes. Conditions, standards of performance, and so on are specified for the exercises, not for the objectives.

Setting goals is difficult because it requires assembling and weighing all the factors to be considered in selecting the relatively few but important goals that can be attained with the limited time and resources available to schools. The demands and opportunities of society, the needs of students, the resources of scholarship, the values of democracy, and the conditions needed for effective learning must all be considered.

A common error is the failure to distinguish purposes appropriate for the school from those attainable largely through experiences in the home and community. The school can reinforce the family in helping children develop punctuality, dependability, self-discipline, and other important habits. The school can be and usually is a community in which children and adults respect each other, treat each other fairly, and cooperate. But the primary task for which public schools were established is to enlarge students’ vision and experience by helping them learn to draw upon the resources of scholarship, thus overcoming the limitations of direct experience and the narrow confines of a local environment. Students can learn to use sources of knowledge that are more accurate and reliable than folklore and superstition. They can participate vicariously through literature and the arts with peoples whose lives are both similar to and different from those they have known. The school is the only institution whose primary purpose is enabling students to explore these scholarly fields and to learn to use them as resources in their own lives. Great emphasis should be given to goals of this sort.

Goals are frequently not stated at the appropriate degree of generality—specificity for each level of educational responsibility. Goals promulgated by state education authorities should not be too specific because of the wide variation in conditions among districts in the state. State goals should furnish general guidance for the kinds and areas of learning for which schools are responsible in that state. The school district should furnish more detailed guidance by identifying goals that fall between the general aims listed by the state and those appropriate to the local school. School goals should be adapted to the background of students and the needs and resources of the neighborhood, especially the educational role the parents can assume. The goals of each teacher should be designed to attain the goals of the school.
The test of whether a goal is stated at the appropriate degree of generality–specificity is its clarity and helpfulness in guiding the educational activities necessary at that level of responsibility.

CONCLUSION

When states list specific skills as goals and develop statewide testing programs to measure them, they may overlook a significant part of what schools should teach: understanding, analysis, and problem solving. If students are taught only to follow prescribed rules, they will be unable to deal with varied situations. Another common limitation of such lists is their neglect of affective components, such as finding satisfaction in reading and developing the habit of reading to learn.

The form and wording of goals and objectives should be appropriate for the way they are to be used. For clarity, we have generally used the term “goal” for all statements of intended learning outcomes regardless of their degree of specificity, but we recognize that no one formula is best for all situations. The criteria for judging goals and objectives are their usefulness in communicating educational purposes and their helpfulness to teachers in planning educational activities.

ENDNOTES

1. Available from Commercial-Educational Distributing Service, P.O. Box 4791, Portland, OR 97208.
2. Collections of “measurable objectives” may be purchased from Instructional Objectives Exchange, Box 24095-M, Los Angeles, CA 90024-0095.
3. National Assessment has developed objectives for a number of subject areas, including art, citizenship, career and occupational development, literature, mathematics, music, reading, science, social studies, and writing. Because they have been carefully written and thoroughly reviewed, the objectives and accompanying exercises are a helpful resource for local curriculum developers, although they are designed only for assessment, not for curriculum planning.

REFERENCES


20 PART ONE Curriculum and Philosophy


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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What should the goals of contemporary education be?
2. Should the goals of education be the same for all students?
3. What is the best method for defining goals: by behavioral objectives or by competencies?
4. Who should assume responsibility for determining educational goals: the federal government, the state board of education, local school districts, building principals, or the faculty at each school? Why?
5. What is the best criterion for judging goals and objectives?