

# The curriculum design and development education essay

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Curriculum models and their application to Special Education Needs in the Further Education Sector

The Wolf Report said: " Many of our 16 and 17 year olds move in and out of education and short-term employment. They are churning between the two in an attempt to find either a course which offers a real chance for progress, or a permanent job, and are finding neither (Wolf Report, 2011, p. 7)." Executive Summary

Within SEN there have been moves by the present coalition government to provide one overriding assessment model post 16 that will give a legal right to education for the students and an assessment that will link health, social care and education. However, with current concerns over funding this has been put in doubt. The Wolf Report raised concerns about students being placed on post 16 courses that did not lead directly to jobs or offer a chance of progress. Within my own role as an FE lecturer in charge of an ASDAN course I show that my course links the students into their environment and prepares them well for being members of their local community. I show that a narrow, constricted, curriculum does not work and that we require a curriculum that appreciates the individual and takes stock of their own individual learning needs. Critical analysis and comparison of theory underpinning a range of curriculum models. There is perhaps nothing surprising in the opening statement from the Wolf Report, and if anything the hardening economic climate of recent years has made the situation for school leavers at the lower end of the qualification scale even worse. With the raising of the age in which our young must remain in compulsory education we must also assume a collective responsibility with what is actually happening, whether the experience of education for our young is as good and as beneficial as we could make it. Unfortunately this is

not always the case, " when we consider what has happened by the time the children reach adolescence, we are forced to recognize that the promise of the early years frequently remains unfulfilled. Large numbers leave school with the bitter taste of defeat in them, not having mastered even moderately well those basic skills which society demands, much less having become people who rejoice in the exercise of creative intelligence" (Donaldson, 1987, p. 14). This neatly sums up the situation many lecturers in Further Education, such as myself, find. As a Lecturer working with Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LLDD) I work in a Further Education College and have met many young adults with the feelings Donaldson describes and then fall into the trap the Wolf Report outlines, they search for a course that will give them some real chance in life, or they seek a job. But they all too often find neither. The curriculum is the means that is constructed for the student to obtain access to a range of learning opportunities and the actual word curriculum is derived from currere which means ' to run' in Latin. In the Curriculum 5-16 (1985) it was said:" The curriculum should aim to be broad by bringing all pupils into contact with an agreed range of areas of learning and experience. It should also be balanced in that it allows the adequate development of each area. In addition, each major component should have breadth, balance and relevance and should incorporate a progression in the acquisition of knowledge and understanding" (DES, 1985, p. 7). In the past the curriculum was referred to as a " walled garden," something beyond the remit of the politician as if the curriculum somehow operated outside of the world of party politics. Professor Alistair Ross warns us: " the curriculum is a major tool in the construction of identity, and it must be used with care"

(Ross, 2000, p. 1). However in the 1979 Ruskin Speech the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, said there was a right for government to have a say in what happened in schools and this was followed by the " great debate" in education in which there was a watch over school curricula. Callaghan pointed out that, " There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills. Nor at the other extreme must they be technically efficient robots. Both of the basic purposes of education require the same essential tools" (Callaghan, 1976). Within curriculum study two main ideologies of progressive (child centered, creative, co-operative and full of experience) and the traditional (hierarchical, subject centered and full of book knowledge) have vied for attention. These are reflected within the models of curriculum, of which there are variants of these as you read through the literature. Progressive models can be seen exemplified within the 1967 Plowden Report, one of the most child centred models released at government level. This was full of discovery learning and experiencing the learning. Classical Humanism with its emphasis on knowledge appears to conflict with this. Lastly Reconstructionism (Socially relevant, problem solving & vocational) and Instrumentalism (utilitarian, practical & technological) both place their emphasis on society. There are four key models of curriculum within literature , these being the content model, the product (or objectives) model, the process model and the situational model. In all respects there are three basic curriculum stages: The Content Model. The content model of curriculum is one developed largely from the ideas of philosopher Paul Hirst in which there was an emphasis on intellectual

development. Hirst said: " There can be no curriculum without objectives. Unless there is some point to planning the activities, some intended, learnable outcome, however vague this might be, there is no such thing as a curriculum" (Association of Teacher's and Lecturers, 2005, p. 13 citing Hirst 2005). The content based curriculum was one that emphasised intellectual development and identified eight forms of knowledge that people learn about the world, these being maths, science, people, literature, fine arts, religion, philosophy and morals. Within the content model a range of subjects are separated and within that curriculum some are considered of higher status than others. Within my work in Further Education I have seen and heard NVQ qualifications being described as " No Valid Qualifications," and there is in the words of the ATL Union " some subjects can find it difficult to gain academic respectability, particularly among sceptical traditionalists, who sometimes refer to them disparagingly as " Mickey Mouse" subjects" (Association of Teacher's and Lecturers, 2005, p. 14). In this case there is a system where there is a tension between the older and newer subjects, where the City and Guilds has a high status and in schools the A level has status, the content model and its associated examinations divides learners into high and low achievers. These exams divide our students up and present to me, as a lecturer of Pre-entry/Entry 1 - SLD and PMLD students, many students who have been stigmatized as failures enter and seek a course that will gain some meaningful employment. Others in top independent schools take subjects such as Latin as entry points to universities. It is possible to see the content based approach as " standing in the way of progress towards a more equitable and equally-capable society" (ibid). The curriculum is of

course dictated from those in power in society, and to an extent the business world as well looks to influence the curriculum, especially at college, in order to gain the skills in the workforce it requires. The Product ModelThe product model focuses tightly upon measured outcomes and in this model education is largely viewed as a technical exercise. This is an objective led model in which the outcome, or product, is measured. The 1980's with its debate on the National Curriculum was more concerned with objective and content, it was concerned with measurability and developed from the work of Bobbitt (1918) and Tyler (1949). On the curriculum Bobbitt had written that " The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of obtaining those objectives" (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42). This approach can be witnessed in further education where tasks have to be analysed and broken down to the information people need in order to work and live their lives. Another name associated with the product method is Tyler (1947) who looked at four essential questions on curriculum: 1. What are curriculum aims and objectives? 2. Which experiences meet these? 3. How can these experiences be organised? 4. How can the programme be evaluated (Tyler, 1949, p. 1)? For Tyler the objectives of a school must focus upon the changes that are taking place in the students (ibid, p. 44). At all times within my own classes I focus upon the learning improvement I wish to see in the class, setting clear objectives that they should strive toward. In this sense the product model can be seen as ' A programme of activities (by teachers and pupils) designed so that pupils will attain so far as possible certain educational and other schooling ends or objectives" (Grundy, 1987, p. 11). In this regard there are questions always concerning the nature of

objectives and with regard to objectives measurability is a key and on my course the learners add credits by finishing their elected units and giving precise evidence that they have obtained the complete necessities for the unit. The Process Model. Figure 1 Aristotle's Model If the product model utilizes setting behavioural objectives, then we may see the curriculum as the documents that require implementation. If we instead see the curriculum as existing in the interaction of teachers and students then the curriculum changes to what is actually happening in the classroom, how the teacher prepares and how the teacher evaluates. There is a constant interaction between a number of elements seen in the chart which is based upon the Aristotle model of thinking and reasoning. A leading exponent of this method is Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) who defined curriculum as 'acting' on content and not receiving passively. He sought a curriculum that was in a sense rather like a recipe for a meal, a curriculum in which the teachers need to define content and make clear to students what it is they do. In the words of Stenhouse, does the curriculum nourish the students and does it taste good?" A curriculum, like the recipe for a dish, is first imagined as a possibility, then the subject of experiment. The recipe offered publicly is in a sense a report on the experiment. Similarly, a curriculum should be grounded in practice. It is an attempt to describe the work observed in classrooms that it is adequately communicated to teachers and others. Finally, within limits, a recipe can varied according to taste. So can a curriculum" (Stenhouse, 1975, pp4-5). In this regard there is a need for the teachers to define content and make very clear to the students what they do, the curriculum therefore becoming " an organic process by which

learning is offered, accepted and internalized" (Newman and Ingram, 1989, p. 1) But if we take this wide scope as a definition then it is hard to separate it from education and why would we need the term curriculum if the word process would actually apply? Figure 2The process model taken from Colin Marsh (2009)The Situational ModelLastly, the situational model is posited by Lawton (1983) and Skilbeck (1976) who felt the emphasis should be placed on the context where the curriculum is. Lawton saw education as transmitting elements of culture and curriculum should therefore be organised in terms of appropriateness. Skilbeck (1976) saw the culture of the college as determining the curriculum. He suggested a 'situational analysis' of the institution reviewing the internal and external issues that affect it. Context is of course vital in delivering a meaningful curriculum and this is extremely pertinent in further education when teaching special needs. Without a curriculum that is constructed toward achieving achievable goals for the students disenchantment can arise and the opening quote from the Wolf Report in which students are moving in and out of study and employment, not really achieving in either becomes a reality. By taking account of situational context the curriculum could address some of the concerns raised by Ball (1994) who felt we had a national curriculum that was one that 'eschews relevance and the present... Made up of echoes of past voices, the voices of a cultural and political elite, a curriculum which ignores the past of women and the working class and the colonized... a curriculum for the dead" (Marsh, 2009, p. 41 citing Ball, 1994). The hidden curriculum lies underneath the official curriculum. Defined in the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, the hidden curriculum, "refers to the way in which



cultural values and attitudes (such as obedience to authority, punctuality, and delayed gratification) are transmitted, through the structure of teaching and the organization of schools," (Marshall, 1998: 274). One example would be the way that a teacher selects students for an activity, how they are grouped and what this may say about them. The hidden curriculum also connects into gender, disability, race and culture; if something is being promoted or suggested. In my own classroom I look to present equality of opportunity at all times. Critical evaluation of curriculum models in practice in relation to my own professional context and identification and critical examination of factors affecting curriculum control and change in own professional context -including key policies and initiatives driving current curriculum change. I work in special needs with young adult learners, these are very much the children the Wolf report is writing on, concerns raised about them and their needs strike an apt cord. The curriculum is one that can be identified as a situational curriculum as it is set to meet the needs of these students and try to help them obtain useful skills that can then be taken to an employer. All of my students are working toward qualifications in personal progress: Entry One- ASDAN. The Unit seeks to offer students working within Entry 1 (although not usually at the very earliest stages of the level) with the chance to have documented their achievement connected into the skills they require to fully use their local area and resources. There are achievement continuum stages in which the degree of achievement is most likely to relate to the development to application stages on the achievement continuum. Each of these units has a credit value, with one credit equal to approximately ten hours of learning. To obtain their

qualification the student needs to finish the units they have chosen and show a clarity of evidence that they have met all the needs of the unit. The Wolf Report (2011) called for "employability skills" and noted that these were essential in an increasingly troubled economy and job market. It says: "Progress on this front is particularly important for students on vocational programmes who are not planning to enter higher education in the immediate future. Obviously, formal education matters - but the skills it develops are only a sub-set of those valued in the labour market (and life)" (Wolf Report, 2011, p. 130). Essentially employability breeds employability and for many of my students there is also a mindset of possible failure and rejection that they have to overcome. In my circumstances I couldn't really work with a content model as we are not in a school environment with subjects neatly divided and prioritized. We work in a situation where we really have to guide these students through to success, they are sometimes not able to plan and organise themselves well. As a tutor I am expected to provide a record for every section finished by the student; this will outline the individual skills and/or content that the student has established. Following on I complete the Achievement Continuum which notes student accomplishment and development and this will be written on the unit transcript. As a tutor I am able to choose my own units and these can be utilized by my class in a combination of their choice, so reaching the required credit value for the qualification. The overall content of the curriculum for the course would look as follows as regards learning outcomes and assessment criteria: LEARNING OUTCOMES The learner will: 1. Know that they have a place in the community 2. Use local facilities and services 3. Use

local shop4. Use local eating and drinking placesASSESSMENT CRITERIAThe learner can: 1. 1 Be familiar with parts of their association as individuals to the area to which they live. 2. 1 Demonstrate that they can use regional amenities and services such as post offices, ATMs and leisure services. 3. 1 Show that they can use local shops4. 1 Show that they can use local eating and drinking places such as cafés, restaurants and pubsWith ASDAN we clearly have a situational model of curriculum development as it is in place to enable my students to escape the dangers the Wolf report raises. The ASDAN courses looks towards the learners and is appropriate for the SEN level for these students in Further Education. It links to the situational model and has at heart a student centred approach to education that would be connected to progressivism. Progressivism prepares students for life and the skills the Wolf Report highlights as being so important, work skills employers can relate to. It is student centred and we work closely with the students to make sure they stay on the course and are doing the units best suited to them. Linking to the ideas in the Wolf Report and the way the units of the ASDAN course links to the learner needs of SEN students corresponds with the ideas of John Dewey and also begins to see the curriculum within the process model, focussing upon the learner activities and the conditions in which learning takes place. The present coalition government's green paper on SEN, ' Support and Aspirations,' notes that " many young people who are disabled or who have SEN can face additional challenges during their teenage years. Too often the opportunities and support available to disabled young people and young people with SEN fall short of what they need to make a successful transition to adult life" (Department for Education, March

2011, p. 80). The document further goes on to highlight that " poor planning of support is exacerbated by a lack of choice and opportunities for young people: for example, a limited choice of entry-level courses in further education that do not build on what has gone before, or prepare young people for life and work; poor quality work experience; and a lack of supported employment opportunities to help them prepare for, find and retain work" (ibid. p. 80). There may be some truth in this, but I feel that close attention is paid to previous learning and the aim is very much work and life preparation with the young adults funded to study for three years, a transition into adulthood for vulnerable people. However, in spite of the intentions for wider support within the Green Paper the current fiscal crisis hitting Europe has impacted into a potential funding crisis for our FE students who are seen as having SEN. A shortfall in funding has been driven by increasing demands by students with high needs and creates a problem for a government who are looking post 2014 for one assessment, it will cover all aspects of health, education and social care through to the age of 25 and in so doing bring everything under one umbrella; giving legal rights to post 16 students for the first time. The Times Educational Supplement warns that a situation in which the " Education Funding Agency (EFA) reports that demand outstripped the £640 million budget for post-16 students by 40 per cent... It has been forced to cap the increase in student places at 24 per cent" (Lee, 25th January 2013) seriously endangers the intended reforms and places curriculum chances in jeopardy for many SEN students. To conclude therefore my own experiences working with SEN students in the further education sector has taught me that a narrow confined curriculum does not

work. You have to consider the young adult as an individual, grasp what they need and try to provide them with the skills they need to survive in the future work place. When the Wolf Report talks of students churning in and out of short term work and study and achieving little I am pleased that we try to retain students and see them through their course to gaining their certificate. Clearly there is a commitment to continue supporting SEN students through to the age of 25; we must hope that the funding crisis does not derail this for the good of our SEN students, who already are at a disadvantage. 3069 words