

# *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

Report of a Regional Seminar

10-22 Sept 1979

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Report of a High-level Personnel Study and Seminar  
on Design of Curricula, Australia, 10-22 September 1979



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Convened by Unesco, this Regional Seminar was jointly organized by the Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra, an Associated Centre of APEID, and the Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID) with the co-operation of the Australian National Commission for Unesco.

1. Objectives of the Seminar  
2. Organization of the Seminar  
3. Participants

Part I : Discussion of Vision  
Part II : Theme Analysis

1. Planning and organization of curriculum development for primary and secondary schools  
2. Strategies of curriculum development  
3. Planning and curriculum development

Part V : Summary and recommendations

Annexes  
I. List of participants and resource persons

II. Officers of the seminar

III. Schedule of work

IV. List of institutions and schools visited

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Part I	:	Curriculum development in APEID countries:							
		Summaries of country position papers	.	.	.	.	.	.	5
Part II	:	Visits programme							
		1. National-level institutions	.	.	.	.	.	.	24
		2. State-level institutions	.	.	.	.	.	.	25
		3. Teacher's Centres	.	.	.	.	.	.	30
		4. Colleges of Advanced Education	.	.	.	.	.	.	31
		5. Visits to schools	.	.	.	.	.	.	33
Part III	:	Discussion of visits	.	.	.	.	.	.	41
Part IV	:	Theme analysis							
		1. Planning and organization of curriculum development for present and future needs							43
		2. Strategies of curriculum development	.	.	.	.	.	.	50
		3. Teaching and curriculum development	.	.	.	.	.	.	58
Part V	:	Summary and recommendations	.	.	.	.	.	.	64
Annexes	:	I. List of participants and resource persons							70
		II. Officers of the seminar	.	.	.	.	.	.	73
		III. Schedule of work	.	.	.	.	.	.	74
		IV. List of institutions and schools visited							76



## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Curriculum development is one of the areas of innovation included in the work plans of the Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) for its second-cycle period. Since the inception of APEID, three High-Level Personnel Exchange Workshops had been organized during 1975-1977, which enabled, at a sub-regional level, the Heads of Curriculum Development Centres in the participating Member States to deliberate on their experiences of the curriculum activities in their countries and identify common problems and issues, and possible ways and means of dealing with the problems.

At the Fifth Regional Consultation Meeting on APEID held by Unesco in Bangkok in March 1978, 'Curriculum for Development' was one of the five major concerns of the meeting. From the discussions of this meeting and the deliberations of the three High-Level Personnel Exchange Workshops, it appeared that there are divergences of opinion about the general mode of approach to curriculum development which might be resorted to by national-level agencies.

Considering the above, the Curriculum Development Centre of Australia, an Associated Centre of APEID, jointly with the Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID), Unesco, Bangkok, and in co-operation with the Australian National Commission for Unesco, planned and organized the present High-Level Personnel Project study and seminar on Design of Curricula.

The seminar was held from 10-21 September 1979 in three phases. The first phase, from 10-11 September, was devoted to visits to centres and schools in two groups, one in the Perth area and the other in the Melbourne area, to enable the participants to make an on-the-spot study of these programmes. The seminar then met from 12-18 September at Brassey House, Canberra. This phase also provided the participants with an opportunity to visit a number of institutions and organizations involved in innovative educational programmes. The seminar then moved to Sydney for the final phase of its deliberations from 19-21 September.

### Objectives

The purpose of the seminar was to provide an opportunity to the Directors/senior staff members who are responsible for designing and introducing curriculum innovation to meet together primarily for exchanging experiences and exploring problems and issues of common

## *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

interest; and secondly, to visit and study selected curriculum projects of the host country, thus fostering closer professional links between Australian educators and the visitors.

More specifically, the objectives of the seminar were to:

- i) Exchange national experiences in curriculum design and development;
- ii) Discuss curriculum design and development problems of common concern;
- iii) Reflect on and assess the underlying rationales and strategies of curriculum change;
- iv) Consider current and future needs for national-level curriculum development;
- v) Discuss the general strategies and models of curriculum design and development which are available; and
- vi) Suggest follow-up activities in order to foster collaboration among the APEID participating Member States in the area of curriculum development.

### Participation

The seminar was attended by participants and observers from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Unesco headquarters was represented by Mr. G. Vaideanu, Chief, Section of Structures and Content of Education, and ACEID by Dr. M.C. Pant, Science Education Specialist. The list of the participants and observers is in Annex I.

### Inauguration

The seminar was inaugurated by Dr. M. Skilbeck, Director, Curriculum Development Centre, Australia, on 12 September 1979, at Brassey House, Canberra. Welcoming the participants and observers, he explained the objectives of the seminar, the various arrangements made, and the proposed schedule of work, and expressed the hope that with the rich experience of the participants, the seminar would achieve its objectives.

On behalf of Unesco/ACEID, Dr. M.C. Pant expressed his thanks to the Curriculum Development Centre (Australia) for kindly agreeing to host the seminar jointly with ACEID, and to the Australian National Commission for Unesco for its co-operation and for providing the financial support for the internal cost of the activity. He also thanked the participants for accepting Unesco's invitation to come and attend the activity. He then briefly explained the long-range goals of APEID and some of the important activities in the area of curriculum development which have preceded this activity, and whose outcomes have been embodied in various APEID publications.

Ms. M. Gallagher, Australian National Commission for Unesco, associating herself with the remarks of the two previous speakers, welcomed the participants to this seminar, the first to be hosted by an APEID centre in Australia, and expressed the hope that the visit would provide the participants with a useful view of Australian education programmes.

#### Officers of the seminar

In the first plenary session, the seminar elected the following as its officers:

Chairman	:	Dr. M. Skilbeck (Australia)
Vice-Chairman	:	Dr. Yung Dug Lee (Republic of Korea)
Rapporteurs	:	Dr. Shib K. Mitra (India)
	:	Prof. P.J. Fensham (Australia)

The foregoing, together with Dr. C. Hughes and Dr. M.C. Pant, constituted the steering committee. For the group work, the following were elected by the groups as Chairmen and Rapporteurs:

#### Group A

Chairman	:	Mr. R.B. Thapa (Nepal)
Rapporteur	:	Prof. P.J. Fensham (Australia)

#### Group B

Chairman	:	Dr. Shib K. Mitra (India)
Rapporteur	:	Miss Asiah binti Abu Samah (Malaysia)

#### Group C

Chairman	:	Mr. G. Mendis (Sri Lanka)
Rapporteur	:	Mrs. Lee Sow Ling (Singapore)

Miss Marguerite Wells acted as the Assistant Rapporteur and Secretary of the seminar. The seminar support staff was provided by the Curriculum Development Centre and the Australian National Commission for Unesco.

#### Method of work

In the first plenary session, after the election of the officers, the seminar considered the provisional schedule of work and approved it with modifications. The remaining part of this session and the following two plenary sessions were devoted to the presentation of institution position papers and discussions thereon. Two sessions were then devoted to visits to institutions in Canberra. A plenary session then discussed these visits and visits made to institutions in Perth and Melbourne by participants en route to Canberra. At this session, a panel of Australian educators answered questions put by other participants and several crucial themes were identified for further analysis during the seminar.



## *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

The Steering Committee then held an evening meeting and drew up three groups of themes based on the work of the first three days of the seminar. These themes were issues and matters of concern which had arisen consistently during discussion of the country presentations and the visits programme. These themes were adopted in a plenary session. The seminar divided itself into three groups, and three sessions were devoted to group work for analysis of the seven selected themes. The first drafts of the group reports were considered in a plenary session and suggestions were made for modifications.

The seminar then moved to Sydney and had a group session for finalization of its report in the light of the comments of the plenary meeting.

In the last plenary session, the Chairman presented the draft report of the seminar which was adopted with modifications. The seminar also recommended that as the country papers contain some very useful information, these should be printed by ACEID/Unesco in extenso, after necessary editing by the Curriculum Development Centre.

Members of the Pacific Circle Project had been invited to attend the last two days of the seminar as observers. All members took up this invitation and arrived in Sydney in time to attend the last two sessions. At the penultimate sessions they joined in the group discussions. In the final session, after the adoption of the draft report by the APEID participants, a person from each institution in the Pacific Circle Project provided a brief overview of its work. The meeting also allowed considerable time for informal discussions and exchange of ideas between the two groups. Personal contacts and discussion led to suggestions for exchange of materials, ideas and possibly personnel.

## Part I

### CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN APEID COUNTRIES (Summaries of country position papers)

#### The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA)

The system of education and the curriculum in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan are centralized and the State administers, organizes and guides all the education in the country. Since the Saur Revolution of 27 April 1978, the government has initiated many new developments in education, such as:

- The new five-year educational plan based on stated aims of education and the need of the country for free, universal and compulsory primary and secondary education as well as higher education;
- Education in their mother tongue for all children;
- Modernization of the system of education;
- Preparing new curriculum based on educational aims;
- Attention to women's education and adult literacy;
- Providing new textbooks and teachers' guides in six different languages for primary schools and in-service teacher training.

The Department of Publications is a department of the Ministry of Education and has responsibility for accomplishing educational aims and preparing textbooks. The Department is also producing the curricula, syllabi and textbooks, and teachers' guides for primary and secondary schools and for those taking part in in-service teacher training workshops. The aim is to develop new textbooks and teachers' guides based on the present and future needs of the country.

The new textbooks and teachers' guides for the first and fifth grades are written by specialists and an objectives model of curriculum development is used. Each lesson plan has objectives, activities for pupils, extra information for teachers on teaching approaches and strategies, and homework. The new books are evaluated by well-trained and qualified primary and secondary school teachers before publication. All textbooks and teachers' guides for the first grade are prepared in six languages, but fifth grade books have so far been prepared only in two languages, Dari and Pashtu.

The success of any innovation connected with new curriculum, textbooks and teachers' guide materials will depend not only on how

## *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

well the materials are written, but on how effectively they are used by teachers in the classroom.

From this point of view, in-service training workshops are conducted by the Ministry of Education to introduce the new textbooks and teachers' guides to teachers. Selected teachers of the first and fifth grades are given a seminar for one month to ensure that they understand the new curricula as well as how to use effectively the new textbooks and teachers' guides. Those teachers then go back to conduct seminars for other teachers in their region. Resource teachers in each subject visit schools to help teachers use the new books effectively.

The government of the DRA is introducing new curricula to modernize its schools; but there are major problems. Particular problems inherited from previous governments include:

- a) A lack of basic educational provision such as buildings, resources, educational equipment and facilities and trained teachers;
- b) Textbooks which were written in only two languages, Dari and Pashtu. Languages of all other nationalities were completely ignored in schools and other educational institutions;
- c) The low proportion of girls in high schools and the need to provide education suitable for girls;
- d) Women's and adult education and non-formal education were completely ignored; and
- e) Nearly 90% of the people were illiterate.

At present there are many different departments under the Ministry of Education which deal with curriculum development materials, textbook production, research and evaluation of developed materials, revision of textbooks, etc.

For the purpose of avoiding duplication, the Ministry of Education has decided to have one institution to undertake all these activities. This new centre will have the responsibility for work in curriculum development, educational psychology, teaching methods, textbook production, research and evaluation of newly developed materials, workshops for in-service teachers, audio-visual aids for schools and revision of textbooks.

### Australia

In the Australian federal system of government, the maintenance and conduct of public schools is the responsibility of State Governments. Decisions on the nature of the curriculum of schools, the extent to which schools have the freedom to develop their own curriculum, the methods of student assessment and the level and kind of support structures for curriculum development are taken at the State level and vary considerably from State to State. Any Federal educational agency therefore has to work

co-operatively with State, Catholic and other independent schools and systems.

The Curriculum Development Centre is a national body which was established by Act of Parliament in 1975 to develop school curricula and school educational materials. Its tasks include research, development, evaluation and publication of materials, and the collection and dissemination of information about curricula, educational materials and curriculum development theories and processes. It is a co-ordinating body, working with school systems and other educational bodies in the States on co-operative programmes of work. The Council, which determines the policy of the Centre, is composed of people from a range of educational institutions and organizations such as school systems and tertiary institutions, parent groups and teachers' unions.

Amongst the major current issues in curriculum in Australia are the responsiveness of schools to the multicultural nature of Australian society, to changing social and economic conditions, and the definition and maintenance of educational standards. Questions which have to be addressed include the following:

- . How much freedom should be given to schools to develop their own curricula?
- . Is there a core of common learning experiences which are essential for all children? If so, what are these experiences and who should define them? What provision should be made for teaching English and mother tongue languages to migrant children?

With the trend to school-based curriculum development, questions arise as to what are the functions and roles of the Federal and State curriculum development agencies. In particular, dissemination is seen as a matter of concern to the Curriculum Development Centre. What sort of processes and networks need to be established to ensure that the ideas and materials produced by the Centre are understood and used effectively by schools? The research, development and diffusion model of curriculum development and the philosophy of education underlying it are being challenged and analysed. Thus the Centre must concurrently both foster and strengthen current dissemination practices and bring under critical scrutiny the curriculum designs and models which treat dissemination as a culminating stage of the development and diffusion model which is no longer adequate either as concept or in practice. Thus a major task for the Centre is addressing the nature of educational change processes and seeking the most effective ways of implementing in schools the curriculum changes which Australian society most needs.

### India

In India, education is a joint responsibility between the Centre and the States. The National Council of Educational Research

## *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

and Training in New Delhi plays a key role in this context, as a Centre for curriculum development, through the involvement of State-level educators and specialists at various levels through committees, seminars and conferences.

Curriculum development, since the Education Commission of 1964-1966 submitted its report to the Government of India, has taken place through a wide-ranging participation of people at all levels. The philosophy of curriculum development follows, broadly, the main features of the Gandhian system of basic education, particularly its emphasis on learning through socially useful productive work and bridging the gap between the school and the community.

Curriculum development in India is concerned with four important aspects, viz.:

- 1) Ever since western education was introduced in India in the nineteenth century, there has been discontinuity in the history of education in India, and attempts are being made to recover Indian identity through a linkage with tradition;
- 2) Modernization of curriculum is necessary in order to link education to productivity and to development;
- 3) Curriculum has to be work-centred, but traditional attitudes to manual labour stand in the way; and lastly,
- 4) A value orientation in keeping with the development of a secular democratic state is necessary.

Contemporary issues in curriculum development in India are (1) whether, in order to make curriculum relevant to the diversities of the Indian social groups, curriculum should not be decentralized; (2) whether, in view of rural-urban differences and in view of the importance of developing a unity in diversity, a common core curriculum should not be developed, allowing additional units to be developed locally according to the needs and aspirations of the people; (3) in order to modernize curriculum and decentralize its development, it is necessary to improve the competence of teachers through pre-service and in-service education, but in view of the large numbers involved, whether distance learning systems should not receive higher priority over the traditional methods.

During the course of discussion, it was pointed out that a minimum learning core for the primary schools was being developed by the NCERT, and this is based on competences to be achieved, including those in the affective and psychomotor domain, rather than subject or discipline-wise cognitive objectives. It was also pointed out that there is scepticism in rural areas about the value of a middle-class urban-oriented formal curriculum, accompanied by a doubt about the validity of the school teacher imparting instruction in agriculture-based work, because the villagers who are also farmers, carpenters, masons, etc., know the work better. Political interference is reduced by having all Education Ministers as members of the Council of the NCERT.



## Indonesia

The Centre for Curriculum Development of the BP3K was established in 1969. It is the agency at the national level which has the responsibility of organizing and co-ordinating activities dealing with the development of the curriculum, and supervising units of curriculum planning and development within the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Centre undertakes the various stages of curriculum development, starting with identification and formulation of educational objectives and ending with basic course outlines. Tyler's model has influenced the approach to curriculum development in Indonesia, and centralized curriculum development is accepted.

Although curriculum development in Indonesia is centralized, the actual process of development involves various kinds and levels of people, especially those in the educational system, in planning and development.

The underlying philosophy of education in Indonesia is Pancasila which, when used in curriculum development, makes basic assumptions about the critical role which the school plays in developing nations in influencing the development and growth of the younger generation. While it is recognized that the school is only one of the many educational and social environments that influence and shape the young generation, it is also recognized that the school is the most potent, strategic and effective institution for bringing about social change in developing nations.

The curriculum developed at the central level is followed by all schools in the nation in terms of basic objectives and content. Variation is allowed only in terms of translating the same objectives and content into instructional programmes. This is because it is believed that all individuals, whether rural or urban, should develop the same competencies which modernization requires.

There is a problem of quality in a mass education system, and various education techniques are used to assess curriculum outcomes.

The Development School Pilot Project, started in 1973, is a long-term research and development activity to develop a curriculum system which can achieve the goal of quality education for the masses. In this project, various innovations such as mastery learning strategies, modular instructional systems and activity-based learning materials are introduced into a group of schools and evaluated.

## Japan

As part of post-war reconstruction, the education system was reformed and today Japanese education is remarkable for the number of bodies involved in research, surveys and in-service training - as many as 960 at present. The National Institute for Educational

## *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

Research (NIER), established in 1949, is an independent institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and aims to conduct high-standard, practice-oriented research using scientific methods. Four other national institutes are engaged in educational research: the National Institute for Special Education, the National Training Institute for Social Education, the National Centre for University Entrance Examinations and the Development Centre for Broadcasting Education. Local educational research bodies contribute greatly, jointly with school authorities and teachers, to the enhancement of educational standards. Also 200 prefectural and municipal research institutions form the National Federation of Educational Research Institutes of Japan. With the NIER at its core, the Federation conducts joint research, and exchange and dissemination of outcomes.

There has been a close relationship between research projects of NIER and the history of education and shifts in educational policy; though research cannot be expected to have immediate direct effects on policy, it does have a marked, if indirect, influence. NIER's Board of Counsellors represents educational, academic and business circles, and advises the Director-General. Of a full-time staff of 103, 79 are research staff. Funding is from the budget of the Ministry of Education. Most NIER projects are directly or indirectly concerned with curriculum development at a national or international level.

In-service training is sponsored jointly or independently by the Ministry and Boards of Education or by the teachers, depending on the nature of the programme. Most programmes are large-scale, as is voluntary research by teachers. Publishers must submit draft manuscripts of elementary and secondary school textbooks to the Ministry of Education for authorization by textbook inspectors. In the Ministry, subject specialists assess, review and examine curriculum development strategies being adopted. School advisers at local or district Boards of Education also perform this function. They visit schools as occasion demands, to advise teachers or consult with principals about school management. The school curriculum appears to be uniform, inflexible and lacking scope for creativity, but curricula are developed by schools and teachers and in fact the process is far from uniform.

Major areas of curriculum development are now: education for individual character development; education for Japanese children abroad and after returning from abroad; and education building closer contact with the people of Asia and Oceania. Special stress in the future will be on international understanding and co-operation as a basis for school and life-long education. Technological forecasts for Japan emphasize the importance of co-operation with Asia and Oceania on matters such as food resources, energy, communications and ocean development.

In future, new teaching-learning materials and new scholastic structures for more open educational systems must be devised. Computer-assisted instruction and diagnosis of aptitudes, and information systems based on TV, will be increasingly important.

### Republic of Korea

Responsibility for school curricula and curriculum development is divided between the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) and the Ministry of Education. The latter has the tasks of overall planning and co-ordination. KEDI is responsible for the designing and development of curricula and textbooks and basic research related to curriculum development.

There is one common curriculum for all schools in the country. The major source of educational goals is the Charter of National Education. Education is seen as a means of accelerating national development by serving the nation's political, economic and social needs and for promoting the realization of the aim of an industrialized, free and democratic society in which every individual is guaranteed a higher quality of life.

KEDI's approach to curriculum development is research based. The curriculum is revised every six years. The educational goals are translated into curricular objectives for each grade and area of learning. Syllabuses are developed and textbooks and instructional materials written and tried out in schools. The curriculum and materials are then revised, approved by the Ministry of Education, and printed for use in schools. Evaluation is built in at each stage and opinions are sought from subject experts, teachers and the public.

Since there is only one standard curriculum in the nation, there is no provision for alternative curricula to meet the unique needs of local communities and the varying interests and abilities of pupils. At the present time, little freedom is given to teachers to develop their own curriculum, and this may need to be improved as teachers become better qualified.

The question of what should be taught and the problem of maintaining a balance between knowledge and higher mental processes, between national needs and individual needs, and between cognitive and affective learning are matters of concern.

Decision-making about school curricula needs to be based on sound data. At the present time, judgements are made more on feelings and intentions than objective information. There is also a need to build into curriculum development mechanisms for wider participation of people representing various disciplines as well as teachers, in setting up of major goals and objectives. The consequences of curriculum decisions are so far-reaching that they cannot be left to any single professional group.

## *National strategies for curriculum design and development*

There is difficulty in ensuring that desired curricular outcomes are achieved. Relating teacher education to new curriculum development efforts is crucial to the success of curriculum programmes. Pre-service and in-service education are seen as integral parts of curriculum development.

Integrated curricula are being developed for first and second grades and the effectiveness of this work is being evaluated.

There is also concern with the 'hidden' or 'latent' curriculum and the effect on student outcomes. In-school activities are not the only influences on children's learning, and links are made between out-of-school activities and classroom teaching by including relevant principles and methods in the teachers' guides, in order to ensure that the hidden curriculum becomes conducive to achieving the curriculum objectives.

### Malaysia

As a developing country composed of multicultural communities, Malaysia is concerned that education should contribute to national unity and the expansion of the economy. Under the Education Ordinance of 1957, Malaysian-oriented syllabuses common to all schools, with Malay, the national language, as a basic component were introduced, and a place in school assured for every primary school-age child. The gradual implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the main medium of instruction, with English as a second language, was started in 1970 as a means of achieving the national goal of unity.

Until the mid sixties, curriculum was determined by ad hoc committees, which circulated syllabus drafts to schools for comments, trialled the redraft, and amended it on the basis of the trials. The final product became the common syllabus for all schools.

Subsequently, the Ministry of Education recognized the need for major curriculum reconstruction in terms of objectives, content and teaching methods. In 1971 a study team proposed the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) which was set up in 1973.

The CDC is at present responsible for more than 30 curriculum development projects, aimed at improving the quality of school education, bearing in mind the national goals of unity and socio-economic development. The CDC takes essentially the centre-periphery approach, but teachers and other relevant agencies and bodies within and outside the Ministry are also involved in the process. The CDC does subscribe to the objectives model, but does not tie itself rigidly to any theoretical curriculum design or model, preferring to adapt models in order to accommodate the needs of a developing country.