CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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Currently, he is writng the second edition of his book, *Changing Schools from the Inside Out,* based on field research in secondary schools, and has completed a study of restructuring in two Vermont high schools.

Second Edition

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By

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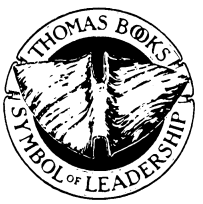

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second and revised edition of the original book released by Charles C Thomas in 1987. It remains true to the thrust of the first edition, but much new content has been added and old content modified, resulting mainly from interactions with students and the culling of their questions and responses through a course taught by one of the coauthors at The University of Vermont. Everything in the first edition was put up against the yardstick of student feedback. Nearly ten years of student papers, projects, and solicited feedback after completion of the course, have rounded out and polished the principles, concepts, processes, and practices presented in 1987. In addition to the classroom laboratory, most of the material has also been tested by participant feedback in national in-service programs focusing on curriculum auditing and the development of curriculum guides.

All organizations have a curriculum. Look around in schools, colleges, businesses, and in human service and government agencies; there will be pieces of paper with varying labels but which will bear upon the tasks which comprise the roles and jobs people *do* in those organizations. *Curriculum* is the descriptor for defining the tasks which comprise human work. Sometimes the work is incomplete. Most often the curriculum lacks a full delineation of the assumptions which lie behind the words, but the collectivity of paper defining work *is the curriculum.* Curriculum is the work plan(s).

Although schools (and implicitly colleges and other higher education institutions) are the target of the book, we have been pleasantly surprised, since the first edition was published, that most of the content, with some adaptation by the consumer, is also highly relevant to social service organizations. Students employed as administrators or staff developers in United Way agencies, hospitals, and agencies of state government (e.g., Departments of Corrections, Education, and Social and Rehabilitation Services) have applied curriculum management ideas to their internal needs.

In schools, curriculum represents all the paper that a teacher may use to guide her/his instruction. That collectivity includes lesson plans, textbooks, board policies, student work and feedback, parental input, colleague reviews, locally produced guides, state prescriptions, and even national standards where they exist. All of this paper represents an attempt *to influence* the act of teaching in the classroom.

Teachers make choices. From one perspective a curriculum spreads out the choices, enriches them, defines them. From another the paper *controls* them. In the former view curriculum promises diversity. In the latter view it may be a form of oppression. In some situations both may be occurring simultaneously.

Curriculum development in the United States has been a peculiar blend of national task forces, state initiatives, and local prerogatives. This strange amalgam has produced a patchwork of curricula with occasional spots of brilliance popping up in a sea of mediocrity. Local curriculum too often is anchored to the lowest common denominator of teacher interest and local board and administrator support. The American penchant for resisting external governmental controls has consistently failed to produce continuity of improved curricula and student expectations for high achievement, particularly on international comparisons. It has allowed textbook publishers and test makers to dominate local curriculum development practices.

We do have a national curriculum. That is the "textbook collectivity" of six or seven publishers who control much of the marketplace. In turn, the national curriculum has been established by textbook adoptions in California, Texas, and recently Florida. This curriculum is the set of expectations that exist for the greatest number of potential school systems in these three states. This situation hardly represents "quality" or "the highest ceiling of expectations for student learning." In other words, as long as curriculum practices are driven by textbook adoptions in a handful of states, the occasional "local spot of brilliance" will be drowned in the sea of low level, minimal expectations for student learning. Trying to improve achievement by bootstrapping local expectations never gets beyond the boots.

The sad fact is that too many Americans do not expect enough from our students. Local politics have produced both educational and political compromises that have left huge holes in systematic instruction unaddressed for long periods of time. The empirical base for these judgments is from interactions with students who are employed in a

wide spectrum of schools and school systems, from our experiences for four decades each in the field, and from national curriculum audits that show again and again the pitfalls and potholes of local politics combined with state agencies failing to intervene effectively to improve pupil learning via a focused and connected curriculum.

Curriculum design in the United States is much like baking a layer cake. Each layer rests on the other and has its own set of problems. Imagine the top layer being the state government, the second layer being the local board, the third layer being the local school, and the fourth layer being the classroom. State pronouncements are part of the cake, but they don't affect the bottom layer, in most instances, in a substantive way. Board policies are part of the whole, but they don't impact what really happens in the classroom.

Some of the critics think that the problem of the layer cake can be solved by giving all the authority to the bottom two layers, schools and administrators and teachers. We disagree. The problem is with the structure. Uncoordinated "bottom-up" approaches will not improve student achievement, particularly if achievement, as measured by tests, is seen as cumulative, focused learning. Rather, assessment (to use a broader term than "testing") requires connectivity between classrooms in schools. This is produced by a *managed curriculum.* A managed curriculum requires coordination and articulation. These are the results of *control.*

We believe that what is required is a *marble cake,* a true mixture of the elements which consist of a high level of interactivity and influence across and between the layers. These, in turn, must be geared to the highest levels of expectations for students on the *international* scene, and not the lowest common levels of the bulk of the school systems in California, Texas, and Florida. High expectations are *uncommon.* We raise averages by raising ceilings, not adopting minimal expectations for the majority. In this sense, improving educational attainment is not a democratic enterprise. It lies, rather, in the relentless pursuit of excellence for the largest number of students. It is democratic in that we believe nearly all students are capable of learning more than they do now in the nation's classrooms, whether they be located in the public, private, or home arenas.

A long time ago, a scholar of teacher behavior and student achievement explained that all of the research could be effectively summarized by the idea, "You get what you teach for." The concept of "what you teach for" is contained *in the curriculum.* This second edition still aims to

define, clarify, and provide examples which respond to the queries "for what?", "for whom?", and "by what means?" In this sense, the book is eminently *practical.*

In another sense it is practical, too. What is in these pages revolves around the *common, everyday activities, events, and infrastructure of organizations.* Rarely does anything new have to be created to utilize the principles, concepts, processes, and practices contained in these chapters. Thus, curriculum management promotes organizational *efficiency as well as effectiveness.*

In concluding this introduction, we want to express our appreciation to several people for their encouragement and support for our tackling a second edition, or for their assistance in developing it. At the risk of skipping someone, here they are: the students in our courses who provided feedback in class, responded to mail questionnaires, and who gave permission for their words to be quoted; Doctor Robert Henry of Campbell University; Doctor Albert Pautler of the University of Buffalo; Doctor Betty Steffy of Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne; Michael Dooley for demonstrating time and again how curriculum management principles and practices could be applied to the field of human services; Wayne Kenyon for his editorial critique of the first edition; George Voland for his editorial work on this edition; Christa Greaney for several new illustrations; and Joyce Keeler for typing the final manuscript within a short time frame.

F.W.E.
R.L.L.

CONTENTS

CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Chapter 1

CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

Nearly all complex organizations have a curriculum. For some like industrial work organizations, human services agencies, government bureaus, the military, and religious organizations it may be in the form of operational manuals, work guides, procedure and policies, program descriptions, job descriptions, and historic documents.

For educational organizations, curriculum may exist in the form of course catalogs, curriculum guides, lesson plans, scope and sequence charts, and textbooks. Human work in complex organizations is defined, shaped, coordinated, evaluated and regulated by a vast array of expectations cast into documents that provide purpose, content, and structure to it. Such documents are both a result of top-down and bottom-up development.

Work in complex organizations cannot be improved unless it can be sufficiently defined, described, discussed, assessed, and made intelligible to the people who must perform it. In the larger society, organizations delineate their purposes and create boundaries around their societal functions. Schools educate and train the young and old. Factories make things. Hospitals restore health. Prisons punish and reform criminals. Governments provide services to their peoples from collecting and redistributing money to national defense. Churches, temples and synagogues provide meaning and structure to human spiritual life.

It can be seen that more than one organization educates and trains people. For example, religious organizations, military organizations and industrial organizations are all involved in education and training. But their education and training is specific to their purposes. Certain skills are redundant across many types of human organizations such as calculation, analysis, and communication. Curriculum is the name of an interrelated set of codified expectations that define and provide the regulatory framework for different types of work in the organizations where it is located. The key to improving work in organizations lies in shaping it so that it is consistent, i.e., *repeatable.* This does not mean that

the work is exactly the same, though it may be. For example, in factories the creation of products usually involves a series of repetitious acts, though workers doing the production may not always do exactly the same thing.

In medical, educational, legal, and religious organizations the scope and content of the work may be structured differently according to the needs of the clients served, but there is a certain consistency to it. If this were not so, it would be impossible to separate good from poor performance for the clients, or good from poor practice on the part of the people doing the work. The only way judgments can be made about the quality and nature of human work is that there is some consistency to it. Work is, therefore, not random acts which once seen occur no more. What makes work peculiar to other kinds of human activity is its quality of being reproducible and the results obtained from it.

For instance, "going to work" indicates a certain predictability, and economic remuneration is present even though the work itself may be quite different in application. A medical doctor "going to work" is quite different from an auto worker "going to work." Both occupations involve repetition, but the nature of the repetition is different in scope, content, and application. Even play has a certain repetitious quality. One may play golf, i.e., the game (the rules which define what golf is and isn't) provides the consistency. The golfer may be playing, but the caddie is working. One may go to see a play as entertainment. The audience is playing; the actors, ushers and stage hands are working.

Curriculum in the broadest sense is therefore the codification of expectations of work around: (1) what is to be done, produced or performed, or work content and process, and (2) the expected result or outcome of the production of an object or the rendering of a service. In educational organizations the work to be performed is called *teaching.* The expected result is *learning.* Curriculum spans both the definition of teaching and the production of knowledge as manifested in learning. Curriculum is profoundly influenced by culture, politics, class, and economics as well as by conceptions of the nature of teaching and learning. None of these are neutral activities. They all involve decisions about the nature of the good life and even the afterlife, the purpose of human society and its responsibilities to its citizenry, conceptions of wealth and class, economic activity, and decisions about acceptable and unacceptable human responses to moral, ethical, economic, political and spiritual situations which spe-

cific people confront, cope, and resolve during their individual lives and the life of their civilization or tribal or communal activity.

Curriculum Development Is Not a Neutral Activity

There was a time when curriculum development was considered similar to engineering, relying on a set of principles that resulted in the creation and definition of work content in educational organizations. This view no longer prevails. It was naive. Since schools are not neutral or apolitical places, neither can the curriculum that defines the work teachers do in them or defines what learners are to learn in them be considered neutral or apolitical. The "value free" curriculum is an oxymoron. All human work and its results represent value-laden decisions, i.e., *choices.*

Curriculum in schools and colleges is both a process and a product. It encompasses choices made about what is considered appropriate teaching and desired outcomes or results from that teaching. The two are interrelated. The desired result or outcome often determines what the teacher does and how the teacher does it.

For example, if the desired outcome is that students learn how to make decisions derived from a consideration of alternatives, the teacher may decide to establish certain conditions in an environment which represents those alternatives and structure activities so that students practice confronting them and discerning how they engage in a process of deciding which ones are most desirable. The conditions may be in a special location (classroom, gymnasium, laboratory, library, auditorium) within a work organization devoted to such activities typically called a school or college, or it may be outside such a place on a field trip, athletic field, and the like.

Curriculum is integral to making decisions about the work to be done; it should have an impact on it. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of any organization requires searching for what determines how the work being done *gets done.* An absence of written documents having utility, such as those described above, leads to work decisions being made largely by individual employees whose personal "curriculum" may or may not mesh with the organization's mission and goals. What makes a school system possible is its *commonality* of purpose and content. Otherwise the opposite occurs, a system of *individual* schools. Complex learning requires focus and connectivity (not uniformity) within and

across grades or other significant learning-related grouping criteria. For this reason a curriculum cannot be simply a series of unrelated "exposures" to what teachers feel comfortable doing.

A school does not have a curriculum simply to have one, but most teachers' experiences with curriculum are that they are "shelf" documents, hauled out only to prepare for a state department or accreditation visit. A functional curriculum provides the means for work to be restructured and renewed to improve total organizational performance, *despite* faculty and administrative turnover. Without a curriculum, educators would have to resort to exhortation and good intentions to improve pupil learning.

Curriculum also provides a boundary for the organization in terms of the services it does or ought to provide, and gives consistency to activities. Curriculum also serves as a sort of institutionalized memory to perpetuate the best of what has been accomplished, what has been taught and learned, and what needs to be changed in the future. It provides a data base upon which to alter teaching and learning. Curriculum represents the sum total of decisions reached over time.

The Matter of Organizational Focus and Control

When looking at schools or school systems it is assumed that their collective performance can be improved. What makes this assumption workable is that it is taken for granted that the school or system is in control of itself, that is, it could pursue a different course of action if it chose to do so. Schools and school systems are collectivities, i.e., wholes. The whole is more than the sum of its parts, just as a team should be more than individual players. The idea behind this assumption is *synergy.* When a team plays like a team it is better than any of its individual members, no matter how good they might be.

What makes *synergy* possible is *control.* Control can take many forms. It can be imposed externally and/or developed internally by consent of its members. In schools control works both ways. Public schools function within a state framework which has usually been imposed by legislative mandate. Within that framework schools and school systems may have initiatives to create responses and alternatives. Control is both *top down* and *bottom up.* Control is central to the idea of the existence of a synergistic organization.

Control means that there is some regulation and guiding tasks, activi-