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Piecemeal Change in Higher Education: An Example of Curriculum Re-conceptualization

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Analysis and Re-conceptualization of a Psychology Curriculum
Dessy S. Stoycheva

Abstract

Curriculum adjustments are sometimes necessitated by the increasingly diverse student populations served in community colleges. An applied curriculum analysis and re-conceptualization is performed on a college psychology course to demonstrate how curriculum components' weaknesses can be addressed to improve academic experiences, based on Anderson and Rogan’s (2011) model.

Background

- **Operationalized curriculum definition**: teaching, learning, assessment practices, and materials available for a specific course (Anderson & Rogan, 2011)
- **Standard curriculum elements**: introduction, objectives, content of unit, methods and activities, teaching materials and resources, and assessment of student learning (Parkay, Anctil, & Hass, 2014)

### Curriculum Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Analysis</th>
<th>Curriculum Re-conceptualization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Vision</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Operationalization of the Vision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Globally informed community of successful lifelong learners*</td>
<td>• Broad course objectives vs topic specific learning/student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Course objectives: provide an understanding of the scientific method; introduce the basic facts, concepts, and principles of psychology; build a foundation for further study in the field of psychology.</td>
<td>• Topics in a logical sequence enabling vertical transition between courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applicable institutional outcomes: critical thinking, problem solving, and individual development.</td>
<td>• Teaching and learning activities and materials adequate for reaching the outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Delivery</strong></td>
<td><strong>4. Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Various modes of teaching, learning, and assessment addressing each learning outcome as outlined in the syllabus and aligned with the book chapters.</td>
<td>• Systematic emphasis on inquiry, problem-based, self-directed learning, aspects of “flipped classroom”, and science readiness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Utilizing aspects of inquiry and problem-based learning and student-centered approach.</td>
<td>• Formative and summative assessments planned by the instructor; student survey distributed by the college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Evaluation</strong></td>
<td><strong>5. Technology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formative and summative assessments planned by the instructor; student survey distributed by the college.</td>
<td>• Requirement for utilizing online platform CANVAS for each course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent evaluation criteria for diverse students; student surveys - insufficient indicator of instructor performance.</td>
<td>• PD in instructors’ knowledge in educational technology design.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Results

- **Influences on the Curriculum**
  - Adherence to local and state policies related to disabilities, non-discrimination, accessibility of resources, cancelation of classes, etc.
  - Compliance with the accreditation standards.

### Method

- **Curriculum artefacts used**: syllabus, course and college information online
- **Analysis tool**: describes curriculum components with an emphasis on the dynamic nature of curriculum design and the non-linear connections between the curriculum components (Anderson & Rogan, 2011)
- **Procedure**: curriculum components are identified, described, and analyzed; weaknesses are highlighted and used for curriculum re-conceptualization.

### Conclusions

- **Practical suggestions** for analyzing any higher education curriculum;
- Better understanding curriculum components can help identify weaknesses that need to be addressed;
- Piecemeal curriculum change can be triggered with a positive academic impact.
- **Some of the weaknesses identified** here: broad institutional goals vs specific student outcomes; lack of sensitivity to diversity while reconsidering the traditional university time and space, the role of the scholar, and student communities (Bridges, 2000); few support structures for instructors.

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*References*


Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986.

*Images*

- Analysis and Re-conceptualization diagram
- Table of curriculum components analysis and re-conceptualization

*Figures*

- Diagram of curriculum components

*Tables*

- Table 1: Curriculum Analysis vs Curriculum Re-conceptualization

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*Images*

- Diagram of curriculum components

*Figures*

- Diagram of curriculum components

*Tables*

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