

The Importance and Necessity of Curriculum Evaluation

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Abstract: *Evaluation in educational organizations is of particular importance in comparison with other organizations. As education is an uncontrollable process and its evaluation is very difficult and delicate. The present paper studies the concept of curriculum and its related elements at first. Then, it addresses the curriculum evaluation and evaluation processes. Finally, the importance and necessity of evaluation in educational system are discussed.*

Keywords: *curriculum, evaluation, importance and necessity*

1. Introduction

Although curriculum development has been introduced a few decades ago, several definitions have been proposed for it. These definitions show the evolution and various approaches of the curriculum development course. The definition of the curriculum should be able to include all the learners at all ages, and learning at all situations. In this regard, the curriculum is as a plan to prepare a range of learning opportunities for learning people. On the other hand, the educational organizations need to evaluate their programs to achieve their goals and to determine to what extent performed operations comply with the foreseen criteria. Today, the evaluation in educational organizations is a good aid for managers and teachers, by which they are able to make appropriate decisions about termination, continuation, modification, adjustment, or development of educational programs and curriculum. The main reasons for problems of Iranian educational system are poor or lack of proper evaluation and lack of attention to the evaluation doctrine. Evaluations are not considered as a resource for decision-making and evaluations concept has not yet found its scientific and real place. Educational evaluation is still assumed as a synonym for inspection and unmasking because of cultural and historical background. And several factors such as inadequate administrative procedures and lack of educational evaluation professionals will unfortunately strengthen false assumption, So that the fear of evaluation and resistance against it are always among the problems the educational system confronts.

The evaluation also indicates the success rate of targets and measures continuously educational programs. Thus, if the educational programs, curricula and teaching-learning process are not constantly being evaluated, they would lose their dynamism and would become static, because their advantages and disadvantages would not be specified and this situation is not consistent with the spirit of education.

Due to the importance of curriculum evaluation, the present study aims to discuss curricula evaluation process and its importance and necessity.

2. The concept of curriculum

The curriculum means planning for achieving educational purpose. Curriculum is a design for learning opportunities, activities and experiences.

Audrey and Nicholls (1972) describe the concept of curriculum within following four areas:

- a) Providing all available knowledge resources and informed judgments about teaching goals, whether about a particular subject or about curriculum in general, and examining them accurately;
- b) Preparing and testing those educational methods and materials used in schools that are judged to have the highest probability of achieving the goals teachers have agreed on them.
- c) Assessing the extent to which scheduled activities have met the goals. It might also be expected that this part of the process will provoke new ideas about the goals.
- d) Thus, the final element is the feedback from all the experiences to provide a starting point for further studies (translated by D. Dehghan, 1998, p. 10).

Curriculum is defined in one of the most comprehensive definitions as:

Curriculum of a school is a formal or informal content and process to increase students' knowledge, develop their skills, and modify their attitudes, appreciations, and values under school supervision (Maleki, 1995).

In this definition, both formal and informal aspects of education, as well as the content (what is learned), process (how it is learned), output and product of learning in the form of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, appreciations, and values are included.

In his book, Ronald C. Doll classifies and summarizes the definitions provided for curriculum as follows:

- a) Direction and selection of experiments that children should receive;
- b) Plans for learning;
- c) Learning objectives and outcomes;
- d) A system for achieving learning outcomes (Norouzi and Noorian, 2003).

3. Curriculum Elements

Curriculum specialists have discussed relatively similar elements to the curriculum. For example, Stark and Lattuca discuss following elements for the curriculum (McNeil, 1983):

- 1) The purpose which directs knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward the learners;
- 2) The content;

- 3) Sequence that includes the discipline of issues of interest to direct the learning process;
- 4) The learner;
- 5) Educational processes;
- 6) Educational resources;
- 7) Evaluation;
- 8) Modification or change of the curriculum based on evaluation results (mirzabeigi, 2001).

Understanding the characteristics of children, adolescents, and youth and their diversity at different ages of growth and development and different academic courses are among the most important tasks of educational planners.

Since planning at each stage should be based on needs assessment and training course requirements and due to the features of high school course, a special method is needed to regularly conduct the activities of this course toward the identified goals and objectives.

Devising the events in an educational situation, where the instructor and learners interact with each other, requires the components of the curriculum that is a guide for participants in the interaction. Some questions are proposed in foresaid interaction such as how, why and among what people this interaction should occur? To answer these questions, access to resources and principles needs to influence decision-making and is treated as a power supply.

4. The concept of evaluation

Arthur Weber (1985) considers the evaluation in common sense as determining the value or importance of a thing; more specifically, he considers the evaluation as determining their initial success. Dehkhoda dictionary defines evaluation as the act of finding the value of anything, and evaluator as one who evaluates the value of something.

It might be argued that there are definitions for evaluation as many numbers as the experts who are famous in this field. These definitions are in many ways similar and in some cases are different. The first formal definition of evaluation is registered to Ralph Tyler (1949). He considers the evaluation as a mean for determining the program's success in achieving the desirable educational goals. Guy (1991) believes that the evaluation is called a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. That is why we determine whether desirable goals have been realized or are being realized, and to what extent. Papham (1975) suggests that evaluation means determination of the value, and systematic educational evaluation involves formal assessing of the value of educational phenomena.

Cronbach (1984) considers evaluation as collection and use of data for decision-making about a training program. Marvin Alkin treats evaluation as a process to identify areas of targeted decision-making, selecting the appropriate data type, and data collection, purification, and analysis to prepare an appropriate report for the decision-making (Experts of Office for International Cooperation of Education Ministry, 2000).

Worthen and Sanders (1987), two experts in Educational Evaluation, have stated that in education, the evaluation is said to be a formal activity that is conducted to determine the quality, effectiveness, or the value of a program, project, process, program, or curriculum.

Abbas Bazargan defines educational evaluation and accounts it suitable to respond to three questions, he writes: "Educational evaluation includes reflecting the activities of one educational unit or phenomenon in order to improve and develop programs and activities to achieve the desired efficiency and outcome."

Educational evaluation can answer the following three questions:

- 1) How desirable is educational goal?
- 2) How desirable is the plans that should realize the goals?
- 3) Desirability (Bazargan, 2001).

5. Curriculum Evaluation Process

Curriculum development and educational planning consist of three basic stages: planning, implementation and evaluation. In curriculum development and educational planning and their stages, evaluation is the most critical step for curriculum development process, which should be done at all stages.

Evaluation plays a prominent and determinant role in the implementation of the curriculum.

In addition to implementation at large scale, what has designed by the teacher is judged, reviewed, changed and adjusted concurrent with implementation in the classroom. After implementation, evaluation will be carried out on learners' progress, as well as usefulness of the program.

According what was stated, we can consider two vital points in the evaluation study:

- 1) The concept of evaluation
- 2) The importance and benefits of evaluation (Mirzabeigi, 2001).

6. The importance and necessity of evaluation

Although evaluation has only one fundamental objective (determining value of something), its roles are much. The main objective of the evaluation is judgment. One purpose of evaluation is to determine whether the already established objectives have been accomplished and whether the performance is satisfactory or not. Therefore the judgments are needed. Another objective of evaluation is to provide information for decision-making. Another important role of evaluation is to determine the value of curriculum itself. Does the curriculum meet the purposes for which it has modeled? Does the curriculum is appropriate for a certain group of students for whom it is being used? In higher education, which is fundamental to society, the necessity of evaluation is obvious, because by evaluation it can be

directed in the direction of change and transformation appropriate to social shifts. And in this way, one can judge its programs in conjunction with the social needs and try to improve it. In other words, for the higher education system to enjoy the necessary dynamics, an evaluation system, as its subsystem, should continually judge essential factors to provide feedback to decision makers (Khorshidi, 2003; Khoeinejad, 2001).

Since the evaluation is as a specialty, it tests and judges the value, quality, significance, amount, degree, or conditions of the phenomena, and it continues during implement of the program to make it possible to accommodate the performance with program objectives. So conducting the evaluation as one of the key activities in educational technology is essential and educational goals cannot be achieved without it. Evaluation, by its new concept, is known as a part of the educational process and the right means to modify the goals, programs, and teaching methods (Experts of Office for International Cooperation of Education Ministry, 2000).

The importance and necessity of evaluation in curriculum development can be considered from three viewpoints:

1. Curriculum developers: one of important roles of evaluation is to determine the value of curriculum itself. Curriculum developers need to know whether the curriculum meet the purposes for which they have been designed, and whether the curriculum content has been well made of learners' knowledge and targeted knowledge structure.
2. Teachers: in teaching planning and judgment for educational activities, teachers need to have a large and reliable data on students' readiness and academic progress and effectiveness of classroom activities. Evaluation provides such information and data for them.
3. Students: Effective evaluation helps student to improve their learning. Because it informs the students and increases their accuracy and efforts and enhance their motivation regarding academic progress. On the other hand, by evaluation, the learners will know their positive and negative aspects of learning activities and will attempt to resolve them (Ebrahimi, 2008).

During evaluation, components and elements of the curriculum will be reviewed and criticized. It can be said that the curriculum perpetuity depends on its evaluation. Due to the lack of accurate evaluation of curriculum, two things may happen in education. First, the faulty and problematic curriculum may remain in program for many years, and the students will be under stress by the teachers. So, the curriculum imposes an unfair burden on the students. Second, criticisms on the curriculum may not be clearly resolved due to lack of evaluation. Thus it can be said that learning justice will be realized in curriculum through its evaluation (Maleki, 2003).

7. Conclusion

The evaluation process is to determine how the program works and how effective or ineffective it is, and to explore possible reasons. Evaluating the performance of students in the program process and determining what they have learned or experienced forms a part of the curriculum evaluation. The evaluation objective is to clarify the errors, biases, defects and merits of the curriculum and to achieve more information, which in turn can influence decision-making related to the curriculum. Therefore,

the evaluation will help those involved in the education system to achieve the objectives by discover effective solutions.

Evaluation in educational organizations is of particular importance in comparison with other organizations. Because education is an uncontrollable process and its evaluation is very difficult and delicate. School is an educational organization where the educational goals are achieved. Therefore, evaluation of all its elements and phenomena, particularly teaching-learning process, is of great importance. The school-oriented program, which has recently been proposed in Iranian educational system, emphasize on this issue. In this plan which involves the concepts of further delegation, decentralization, participation, and so, school and all of its elements and programs must be continually evaluated.

Educational evaluation is a method to compare the current situation with the ideal situation, an effective means for performance of educational system. Teachers, as managers of the classrooms, should profit from evaluating academic progress for educational decision-making. The evaluation is naturally a continuous and permanent process, and students' academic achievement like other educational elements will create many problems to educational society if it is not evaluated continually.

Accepting continuous evaluation in the educational system and developing it will always follow such purposes:

1. A fundamental change in the evaluation system in education
2. A fundamental change in the structure and rules relating to the evaluation and academic progress assessment
3. A fundamental change in the continuous evaluation system
4. A fundamental change educational design and curriculum development
5. A fundamental change in teaching-learning process.

Achieving the above objectives will pave the way to integrate educational evaluation system with global educational changes, and will improve the dynamics of the national education.

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