THE ROLE OF CURRICULUM PRESAGE in the
CURRICULUM DESIGN PROCESS

MAJOR PRESENTATION

by

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Issues from the frontline in designing a training
curriculum based on a competency approach

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Lessons from the frontline in designing a training curriculum based on a competency approach

I'd like to be a little provocative and hopefully in the process somewhat challenging. As experienced curriculum designers and developers have you ever wondered why some curricula are clearly more successful than others? Some are a runaway success while others limp along and yet others never really get off the ground. The reasons are multifarious but when you probe curriculum contexts and conduct curriculum evaluations one reason keeps recurring - the quality of the written curriculum.

Any task involving the designing and developing of a curriculum incorporates a factor not well described or analysed in the literature, namely curriculum presage. We are all aware of the phenomenon in some way though rarely the extent of its influence on the final curriculum product. Often we are aware of the concept but do not know what to call or label it. In essence, what has been called curriculum presage (Print, 1988, 1993) appears 'hidden' from those applying, and frequently those designing, a curriculum.

This paper examines the concept of curriculum presage, suggests reasons for its inclusion in approaches to or models of curriculum development and then applies the concept to the development of a workplace curriculum with strong competency based training and problem-solving emphases. Through intertwining theory of curriculum design and development and its practice, this presentation will enable participants to appreciate and respond to the power that curriculum presage has over the entire process of curriculum design and development. By reflecting on their personal experiences in curriculum development participants may also appreciate the role curriculum presage has to play in their future curriculum work.
Recently I received a draft copy of the forthcoming second edition of the *User's Guide to Course Design for Competency-Based Curriculum* (1994). The publication's intention is clearly and explicitly stated in the introduction.

The purpose of this guide is to assist curriculum developers in all sectors of vocational education and training to prepare a course or training program for accreditation. The guide applies equally to all providers of vocational education and training, including private providers whose business is training.... It is particularly recommended to managers of national curriculum projects funded by ACTRAC....

Yet in analysing the guide I could find no mention of the concept of curriculum preage, by that or any other name. This is not an uncommon occurrence in curriculum development.

Before addressing curriculum preage directly, some qualifications are necessary. In analysing this concept I am referring only to the design and development of a curriculum product such as a syllabus. That is, a document which has been specifically designed to address a curriculum need. Consequently I have not addressed the significant and important role teachers and instructors play when they implement and adapt any predetermined written curriculum. These different uses of the concept of curriculum have been referred to in the literature as the intended or written curriculum and that which is actually taught as the implemented curriculum (Glatthorn, 1887; Print, 1993).

Many educational systems are highly centralised in their curriculum policy and curriculum development procedures. If one teaches in such a system, and is consequently required to teach specific curricula through the means of a subject syllabus, then one's role is different from that of devising a curriculum from a blank page. Both roles are important and more significantly we, as curriculum designers and developers, should be knowledgeable about the complexities of both. This paper specifically addresses the complexities related to the design and preparation of curriculum documents.

A second qualification is needed due to the terminology employed. The literature separates the terms curriculum design and curriculum
development though clearly they are integrally related. By referring to curriculum design as the process of conceptualising and arranging the elements of curriculum into a coherent pattern, I argue that it is essentially a conceptual task which takes its manifestation in the curriculum development product. Most thought and decision-making about curriculum design occurs early in the development process, but all stages and the final product are influenced by design decisions.

Curriculum development refers to the process of planning, constructing, implementing and evaluating learning opportunities designed to produce desired changes in learners. The outcome of the curriculum development process is a product which is implemented in an educational context. To develop a curriculum product one must first design what it will look like. Subsequent developmental decisions are then influenced by the nature of the initial design decisions.

Finally I assume that as experienced curriculum designers and developers you have multiple functions to fulfill, two of which include designing and developing TAFE curricula and secondly teaching about curriculum design and development to colleagues. The latter may occur in many, non-formal ways but is nevertheless an important task. Many of the comments made here address that teaching function.

**Curriculum Presage**

Most curriculum writers who discuss the process of designing and developing a curriculum and many of the traditional curriculum models give the impression that curricula are designed in some form of vacuum. That is, a group of people get together and somehow design a curriculum which is subsequently developed and implemented. For many, curriculum development logically commences with the conducting of a needs assessment or some form of situational analysis. These are indeed important components of the total process but to consider them as the initial step in say designing a competency curriculum in TAFE would be erroneous.

If we wish to gain a more effective understanding of curriculum, particularly the process of curriculum development, we must first understand more about how curriculum developers think about curriculum.
Specifically we need to know more about the forces that shape curriculum thinking of those who undertake the task of curriculum development.

We could pose some questions fundamental for an understanding of this process. From where do curriculum developers obtain their views and attitudes towards curriculum and what sources influence them before they commence the developmental phase of their task? In what ways does conceptualisation of curriculum occur before the actual construction is initiated? Where does curriculum development begin? These are important questions in the process of curriculum development and unfortunately there is little consensus amongst either writers or practitioners as to the answers.

Frequently curriculum practitioners also have quite different views, particularly from theorists, as to where the process of curriculum development should best begin. As curriculum developers many TAFE teachers, for example, would argue that curriculum development should begin with a clear statement of curriculum content. As they are familiar with content and know how it relates to student learning this is not an unusual response. But such an approach leads to numerous difficulties for both the curriculum developer and those who try to understand the ensuing curriculum. (Zumwalt, 1989; Cohen and Harrison, 1982; Hughes, 1973; Print, 1988, 1993).

Curriculum presage has been defined as "... those activities and forces which influence curriculum developers in their curriculum decision-making tasks. These activities and forces are brought with the developers when they come to the task of constructing a curriculum. As such they consist of the curriculum backgrounds, curriculum conceptions, curriculum representations, curriculum foundations of the various curriculum developers and the curriculum context in which they work. This combination of past activities and current forces will have a profound effect upon the final curriculum through the nature of the input from the individuals involved" (Print, 1993, 25-6)

We refer to this phenomenon as curriculum presage for two principal reasons. First, because everyone involved with curriculum development has been influenced by some combination of these factors, though in different ways, as a result of their life's experiences. Consequently we cannot talk in absolute or definitive terms when
discussing curriculum presage, rather we discuss the concept to explain why differences occur in curriculum processes and outcomes.

Second, curriculum presage can best be explained as a set of experiences and understandings brought with curriculum developers to the curriculum development task. Thus this phenomenon is present prior to the actual construction of a curriculum document and has a profound effect upon the final form that a written curriculum might take. Consequently the more we know about this phase in the curriculum process, the more we are able to account for, explain, and perhaps adjust, subsequent developments.

Curriculum presage is an integral component of curriculum design and development as it acts as a major influencing factor on those processes. When a curriculum development team is formed the earliest discussion and analysis by the members relates to their perspectives about curriculum and the process by which it might be constructed. Increasingly this is an explicit act as developers realise that their behaviour is substantively influenced by their perceptions, conceptions and past experience. Sometimes developers are largely unawarfe of the position they are taking as in the case study below. If that is the case then curriculum developers need to take the time and effort to address these issues within the group.

When commencing curriculum development it is, therefore, useful to ask the following broad questions of the developers involved. Additionally, curriculum developers themselves should reflect upon these very questions before they commence their task.

1 Who are the individuals involved in this curriculum development task and what, if anything, do they represent?
2 What conceptions of curriculum do they bring with them and how will this factor influence the curriculum outcome?
3 What underlying forces have influenced their way of thinking about curriculum matters?

The beginnings of the concept of curriculum presage are quite recent but then so is the study of curriculum as well as the development of curricula. Decker Walker (1971), in his model of curriculum development, devised the concept of platforms to help explain how curricula were constructed. He came from a background that deliberately eschewed the
traditional, linear models of curriculum development such as those of Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962) and sought to explain the curriculum development process as dynamic and interactive rather than lineal and rational.

Walker argued that curriculum developers do not bring with them a blank slate upon which to write a curriculum document. Rather they bring a collection of ideas, values, conceptions, preferences and points of view about curriculum with them which serve as a base or platform from which curricula are conceptualised, designed and developed. As a driving force in the curriculum development process Walker saw the platform as "... an idea of what is and a vision of what ought to be and these guide the curriculum developer in determining what he should do to realise his vision" (1971, p52).

More recently Michael Apple (1992; 1993) has asked the pertinent question and derivation of the classical curriculum question 'Whose knowledge is of most worth?' Such a question raises significant questions about how curriculum development might be considered, the role that curriculum developers might play in selecting knowledge and more broadly, the influence of curriculum developers in the curriculum development process. The significance of Apple's question in addressing the process of design and development is the realisation that those involved in the process make a significant impact upon the final outcome. Their knowledge, or that which they represent, therefore becomes of great worth in the final product.

Curriculum Teams

That curriculum is a cultural construct has been well established in the literature. Nowhere is this more evident, however than in curriculum presage, particularly as it relates to curriculum developers. The singlemost influential factor in accounting for the final curriculum product, it can be argued, is the composition of the curriculum development team. Those individuals will make the significant curriculum design decisions that dominate the final structure and appearance of the curriculum document.

Once the need for a curriculum has been acknowledged the starting point for any curriculum development is the selection of those individuals
who compose what may be called the curriculum development team. This is a group of people who will devise the curriculum required and, in many situations, see it implemented into practice. As soon as we initiate a curriculum task the first step is to pose a multitude of questions relative to the curriculum developers.

Who should these people be?
What group, if anything, do they represent?
What views about curriculum do they hold?
What has influenced them to think that way?
What are the dominant views about curriculum currently?
e.g. what do we mean by competencies and competency standards? How are they linked in a curriculum?

These questions, and associated derivative questions, become the basis of understanding curriculum presage. Indeed, every curriculum design and development activity is dependent upon curriculum presage which for many managers and developers is, unfortunately, either assumed or overlooked.

Yet the very inclusion of certain individuals in the curriculum team may become highly problematic. Some examples will illustrate the complexity of this issue. A curriculum team may consist of a group of TAFE teachers undertaking a site-based curriculum initiative, a subject syllabus / curriculum committee constructing a tertiary entrance course, a group of teachers and consultants developing a Year 11 or 12 non-tertiary course, TAFE staff and industry representatives devising a trade course. In all these cases, and even in the instance where curriculum development is undertaken by an individual, the very nature of the persons concerned will have a significant effect upon the final curriculum outcome.

In recent years it has become more commonplace in systemic curriculum development within Australia to ensure a widely dispersed base for the construction and consultative processes. This enables curriculum development agencies not only to be broadly based in the collection and representation of information but it also forestalls possible problems that might arise through non-representation of significant groups. This is may be referred to as the inclusive curriculum as demonstrated in the example
below where no single group has significantly large enough numbers to control the curriculum development process, though most groups have some representation. Furthermore the consultative process provides additional opportunities for teachers to engage in some aspect of the curriculum development process.

Table 1  Curriculum committee composition (BoS NSW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(K-6)</th>
<th>(7-12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University representatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Teachers Federation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of School Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Education Commission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Teachers Association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Council of Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. Heads of Independent Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Parents Council &amp; P&amp;C Associations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE Commission</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Studies officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional members (specific expertise if needed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Print, 1993

Table 1 shows the composition of a typical curriculum or syllabus committee for Years K-6 (primary school) and Years 7-12 (secondary school). Each committee is also supported by a consultative network that the committee has created to assist it with its preparation of curriculum documents and which provides valuable feedback on the suitability of curriculum documents. It is not surprising when analysing the products of these teams to identify strong subject-based curricula in the secondary contexts. The emphasis of university and teacher representatives has
produced an emphasis upon academic subject curriculum design which has been well grounded in tradition.

Examples like these reveal that not only do participants bring with them differing individual perspectives towards the curriculum development task but they also bring differing contextual understandings and needs. To this we can add the obligation to 'represent' what may be quite different perspectives and agendas from quite different organisations. In the above examples, membership reflects a strong commitment to an inclusive curriculum approach.

The question of what role 'outside' bodies should play is important. For example, should a TAFE curriculum being developed on environmental studies include representatives of the various environmental protection groups in its developmental team? If so, which ones should be included? What of the more radical environmental 'action' groups which promote violence as a solution? And to provide a more 'balanced' point of view, should such groups preclude representatives from the specific industries using that environment?

One area where TAFE teachers have become directly involved in the process of curriculum development is through participation in curriculum or syllabus committees. Regardless of the form that a curriculum committee may take, teacher participation in such committees is of vital importance as they bring an understanding of classroom reality to the decision-making process. TAFE teachers can explain what will work in a classroom, what won't and why, as well as provide feedback on student interests and capabilities. I have dwelt on this section due to its overpowering influence on the curriculum product. Two other aspects need to be considered, albeit briefly, as they significantly affect the way in which individuals behave and contribute within curriculum teams.

Curriculum foundations

The role played by curriculum developers in the preparation of any curriculum is clearly significant. Yet curriculum developers do not come to this task without having thought about curriculum as well as being affected by a myriad of influences over a long period of time. Furthermore, their thinking about curriculum does not exist in a vacuum,
nor does the curriculum development of which they are an integral part. There exists a number of influences which affect developers and from which they subsequently draw their conceptual requirements and together this amalgam has become known as the curriculum foundations upon which individual curriculum conceptualisation is built. Thus curriculum foundations may be defined as those basic forces that influence and shape the minds of curriculum developers and hence the content and structure of the subsequent curriculum.

Three categories of curriculum foundation sources have been identified in the literature (Tyler, 1949; Lawton, 1978; Tanner and Tanner, 1980; Taba, 1962; Saylor, Alexander and Lewis, 1981; Eisner, 1979).

1 Studies of the nature and value of knowledge (philosophy).
2 Studies of life (sociology and culture).
3 Studies of learners and learning theory (psychology).

Dennis Lawton (1978) has devised a useful conceptual tool for examining the role of these foundation disciplines in the curriculum development process. A modification of his model can assist curriculum developers, whether at systemic, regional or classroom level, to conceptualise their task more effectively. It will also assist us to understand the process of curriculum more easily.

Curriculum foundations significantly influence curriculum developers' consideration of curricula. These influences affect developers' way of thinking about curricula as can be seen below.

**Table 2 Influences of curriculum foundations**

1 Curriculum developers have opinions about the nature of knowledge and what is worthwhile (philosophy).
2 These opinions are then set in the context of the developers' understanding of society and culture and future social needs (sociology and culture).
3 The contribution of psychology—the nature of students and how they learn—then acts to modify the previously assembled
opinions and data (psychology).
4 Together these foundation sources provide a background of information upon which the curriculum developers rely to make future curriculum decisions.
5 Merged with the curriculum developers' past experiences in curriculum, we can see how developers tend towards particular conceptions of the curriculum task.
6 When these foundation sources and curriculum conceptions are seen in relation to differing curricula contexts, we can explain why the final curriculum products are, and need to be, somewhat different.

Conceptions of curriculum

When asked to reflect upon their practice, curriculum developers describe it in many different ways (Eisner, 1979; Tanner & Tanner, 1980; Goodlad & Su, 1992). Curriculum writers have long been aware that developers bring different perspectives to the task of curriculum development which have been variously labelled as 'conceptions', 'orientations', 'traditions' and even 'paradigms'. Quite naturally curriculum developers have different points of view as to what curriculum is concerned with, what it should try to achieve, let alone how one should be constructed. When they get together to design and construct curricula, they bring with them these different ways of thinking about curriculum matters and the curriculum development process. These points of view are referred to in the literature as conceptions of curriculum.

A myriad of sources create these differing conceptions. To some extent the sources of our curriculum ideas discussed previously in this chapter help influence the way we think, write and act about curriculum. Our experiences in past curriculum development activities will probably have a major influence over our curriculum decision-making. And our perception of the curriculum task at hand, the organisations, if any, that we represent and our reading in the curriculum field will all have an impact upon how we perceive curriculum design and development. To study different conceptions of curriculum is useful because this exercise helps us to understand different perceptions of curriculum as well as to clarify our
own curriculum position. If we are able to understand where curriculum developers are coming from, we can better understand the curricula that have been devised and can thus be more consistent with the curriculum's intentions when it is implemented.

In the phase of curriculum presage, developers instinctively reflect in terms of what they bring to the development process as well as the nature of the early stages of their interaction. At the very beginning of curriculum development those involved spend some time discussing the proposed curriculum before the development phase actually begins. At this time the different conceptions or points of view about curriculum will come to the fore. In Walker's (1972) terms, participants have begun 'deliberations' using their 'platforms' as a basis for those deliberative discussions. Consequently it is important for curriculum developers to understand the range of curriculum conceptions to be found in the literature (Eisner, 1979; McNeil, 1985; Skilbeck, 1984; Print, 1988, 1993).

**TAFE Curricula**

When the *User's Guide* was examined in greater detail there was evidence that the writers were at least aware of the concept of curriculum presage, albeit indirectly. In the schematic overview of the processes involved in curriculum design and development, for example, the authors indicated that curriculum developers should:

- identify the need for training
- develop the concept
- prepare a course proposal
- develop the course document using the template, and in all of these steps
- to consult with key people and organisations

Thus awareness exists of part of the concept of curriculum presage though a clear understanding is not apparent. More importantly the powerful impact that curriculum presage can have over the final product is not evident in this conceptualisation. In undertaking a curriculum design and development task, participants will need to be aware of curriculum
presage. They can commence by posing and discussing questions derived from the points above such as:

Who is identifying the training need? What will they look for? How divergent will the identification be amongst them?
In developing the concept who will be in the curriculum team? What perceptions do they hold about curriculum?
How and why was I selected to participate?
What influences them in their preparation of the course proposal?
What do they understand as the necessary subject matter?
What directions do individuals favour about competencies and competency standards?
To what degree and in what ways will the template been applied to the development of this course?
Which people will be consulted and why?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions. A clear message from this paper is the need to identify overtly the influence of curriculum presage upon any curriculum as well as the process whereby it may be influenced. Take the case of a TAFE curriculum committee that is to be formed to design a course in computer studies. In the first case perhaps the head of department decided to devise the course with people from within the department. The second case hypothesises a curriculum team composed from a diversity of backgrounds.

Table 3 TAFE Curriculum Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario A</th>
<th>Scenario B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject department representatives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Technical Teachers Federation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry representatives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University representative</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Teachers Association</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of departments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Total</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the first scenario the curriculum team is composed essentially of internal staff with minimal external representatives. This approach could encourage an essentially in-house approach which would be dominated by prevailing perceptions about curriculum, subject matter, learning and curriculum design and development processes. Depending upon the membership of that department and the curriculum team, their agendas and the interaction within the team, the product could be little more than a minor revision of existing practices as this would produce less disruption.

How different would the curriculum document be if it was designed and constructed by the group in the second scenario? Apart from being larger and potentially unwieldy, the input from industry, union and university representatives could be powerfully productive.

To illustrate this more concretely take the case of learning theory. Each of us has a theory about how people learn effectively, particularly our students. This theory may be well conceptualised, empirically verified and clearly articulated; or it may not. Nevertheless it is present and it substantially influences our individual approaches to curriculum design and development. In the context of the specific curriculum to be designed, curriculum developers argue their cases based upon this position.

In the example above would the team in Scenario A approach curriculum from a more integrated perspective of learning such as advocated by many cognitive psychologists (Flavell, 1985; Anderson, 1989; Biggs, 1993; Montague & Knirk, 1993). He argues that learning is holistic in nature where the learner acquires progressively more complex understanding. This is due to the formation of both vertical connections with previous and subsequent learning as well as horizontal connections with concurrent learning. Thus learning is interpreted in an individually-derived contextual base which helps explain why people have different points of view about the same thing.

Would the inclusion of numerous external members into the curriculum team in Scenario B, with different views of learning, substantively change the curriculum product? Perhaps the industry representatives would have a significantly different approach to learning about computers from the TAFE staff?
Clearly the inclusion of particular individuals in a TAFE curriculum team is significant, particularly where these are assertive persons. Consequently the composition of curriculum teams requires both consideration and debate. And merely considering that a curriculum team might be composed differently, bringing together different points of view and drawing upon a diversity of experiences, can be a positive challenge.

Case Study in Curriculum Design

The Context

The context for this curriculum design and development case study is a major, government organisation with a significant, high profile, community responsibility. Say the Customs Department. The organisation has traditionally trained a large section of its staff in their dedicated, diverse task through an in-house program. Nearly a decade ago the program was found to be ineffective and some years ago training was farmed out to an outside agency but in recent years that has also not proved to be successful. The organisation has now accepted that not only is a highly specialised, security-oriented form of training required for its staff but also one which requires a sophisticated, modern competency-based, yet problem-solving approach. This necessitates an in-house training program which we shall refer to as the curriculum project.

On appointment to the project as the external curriculum consultant, I anticipated a range of things I would be able to do in order to be effective - create a team; unite into a cohesive group; explore curriculum perceptions, examine educational backgrounds, discuss approaches to learning, reflect upon training views; and in particular to familiarise the team with curriculum design and development processes that were appropriate - including the model of curriculum development in my book.

Curriculum Team

The first task was to weld a cohesive curriculum team from a group of dispirite individuals who worked with high levels of autonomy.
The team consisted of four experienced officers as well as myself. A curriculum manager led the team, but it soon became evident that his skills were largely management in nature and not technical or curriculum based and that he would have minimal role in designing the curriculum.

Participants were all trained and very experienced Customs Officers with the exception of one who came from a teaching background and was now in the human relations division. As a senior officer each of the others had not only at least ten years experience but was probably a section head as well. All had experienced the principal areas of the job as well as some teaching experience in aspects of staff professional development. They were seconded to the curriculum development task for a twelve month period.

We began the over all task with team building activities - sharing experiences, creating a sense of unity and common purpose, encouraging enthusiasm and participation and above all creating a sense of security. One has to feel secure, and valued, in order to contribute freely and effectively. We established a supportive arrangement and a 'not personal' rule about responding to each other. This task is primarily the responsibility of the team leader and can be facilititated through an external consultant.

Soon after the team was first assembled the inevitable, anticipated question was posed by some team members 'When can we start writing the curriculum?' As with most non-curriculum specialists they believed their subject matter knowledge and work experience, together with their limited understanding of teaching and learning, meant they were ready for immediate commencement on curriculum development.

Indeed they didn't pose questions about curriculum design - that was a given. Somehow that would occur of its own volition. They knew the content new recruits needed to learn though it is fair to say that most of the team had a quite open perspective to the task ahead. In the initial meetings we set about examining those points of view and challenged them vigorously so that after those first few sessions the team had a broad understanding of curriculum design and development processes, their task, the nature of adult learning and the context for the curriculum product.

In the process we addressed the questions posed above in a personally-oriented way.
How and why was I selected to participate?
What perceptions do I hold about curriculum?
What do I understand as the necessary subject matter?
What should the curriculum look like?
How do adult learners learn?
How can they be best taught?
What do I favour about competencies and competency standards?

In addressing these questions in the supportive, non-threatening yet open environment, a vital prerequisite for effective curriculum design and development, the curriculum backgrounds and curriculum conceptions of team members were brought forth.

Curriculum Backgrounds

It became clear from an early stage that only two members of the team had a university educational background, though they all had forceful views about the subject matter of the program. None had formal learning of adult teaching-learning activities and none had formally studied curriculum.

None were there as representatives of any particular groups, though in a sense they represented customs officers, particularly the experienced ones. All had participated in teaching some internal professional development courses to their colleagues and saw this as an opportunity to address what they perceived as problems with the training program.

Curriculum Conceptions

Early in our deliberations we began a discussion of what the team thought curriculum was concerned with. Their conception of designing curriculum, based largely on their own training and teaching experience, was subject-based. Yet all were sufficiently disenchanted with their own training they realised that a subject designed curriculum was highly problematic.

One of the earliest task in designing the curriculum was to analyse and discuss competency-based approaches with a strong problem-solving
flavour. The team realised that the nature of the work had changed considerably, was continuing to change rapidly and would become increasingly technologically-oriented. Preparing officers as they were currently trained was not the team's vision of meeting future needs.

Curriculum Design Process - Beginnings

From the beginning the team identified the key factor in the project was to design a competency-based curriculum for the training of officers. To achieve this successfully we realised that we must first formulate an agreed performance model. We began the design task by examining what makes a competent customs officer. We examined the full range of competencies, not only behaviours, but also attitudes, values, knowledge requirements and contextual understanding of the organisation to produce the first full performance model. It was surprising that such a task had not been undertaken previously and highlighted the power of conventional wisdom, and who creates that wisdom, within the training task.

A modular curriculum was conceptualised as necessary to meet performance model based around a comprehensive set of competencies. This would provide resource flexibility as well as the opportunity to make curriculum revisions over time as described in the curriculum development model (Print, 1993). We then set about constructing the respective modules in such a way that their acceptance and fidelity of implementation in the application phase would be ensured.

In addressing these tasks other considerations had to be taken into account as part of the design process and within the curriculum presage phase. Probably the most important was the agreement that we would not prepare a curriculum that trained officers just to achieve certain competency standards. Given the changing nature of the job, the advent of technological change and the need for staff conceptual and behavioural flexibility we argued for a strong problem-based learning component in the final curriculum. Others (Quirk, 1994) concur on the importance of including problem-solving skills in a curriculum even if they are not specified in a set of competency standards.
Major considerations raised at this stage because they represented team backgrounds, conceptions and understandings about curriculum, learning and the context included:

1. Creating a new culture for the organisation due to the problems associated with the existing culture. While security was a prime concern the culture was excessively sexist, vigorous, blame-related and 'safe' but sure in orientation. Change was considered not desirable.

2. A range of powerful, new technology required an increasingly computer literate, technologically-oriented workforce. This was also largely resisted within sections of the workforce.

3. Group learning techniques were advocated as part of a new approach to effective learning and particularly to addressing problem-solving skills. This was to become an important part of the new training approach as well as part of the approach to recreate organisational culture.

4. To reinforce and integrate problem-based learning, as well as to enhance technology-based learning and work environments, comprehensive computer-based simulations were to be integrated in the training program. These would also serve to extend student learning and facilitate remediation.

All of this produced an eclectic curriculum design which emphasised a competency approach based around linked curriculum modules, problem-solving exercises and the use of technology. Gone was the traditional subject-based training curriculum, replaced by a comprehensive, competency-based curriculum oriented to current needs and with flexibility to adjust to future demands.

Conclusions: Lessons from the process

What can we learn from this case study and the concept of curriculum presage? First that curriculum presage is a phenomenon present in every curriculum design and development task. Unfortunately many developers' level of awareness is low and we must encourage greater accountability for understanding the power of curriculum presage.

Second, the selection of participants and the overall composition of any curriculum team is clearly a vitally important procedure. Those
associated with the selection of curriculum teams need to be aware of the impact that differential composition will potentially have upon the curriculum product.

Within team building activities, an early discussion about such issues as the nature of curriculum; participant points of view; design procedures; previous curriculum development experience, the nature of adult learning and the image of the final curriculum product is necessary. These need to be frankly and freely conducted. In these early settings communication between participants needs to be effective or barriers to progress will quickly emerge and become counterproductive.

Fourthly, the limitations of appointing an external consultant may be overshadowed by the benefits of early and frequent curriculum advice; team building assistance; curriculum process expertise and the ability to take a neutral position about internal issues which can have polarising effects on staff.

Team membership stability is an important asset in effective curriculum development. We were faced with several changes after an initially stable period due to organisational demands and individual agendas such as promotion. This meant team bonding, familiarisation with curriculum understanding and so forth had to be repeated to the point of distraction from the curriculum task. In reality there may not be a lot that can be done about this except to negotiate a period of stability for members of the team from the outset.

Finally, all curriculum developers should avoid making too many assumptions about the curriculum development and design process which are not discussed openly. To enhance curriculum design and development it is necessary early in the process to address aspects of procedure, roles of individuals, team goals to be achieved and to set these in an understanding of the curriculum context.
References


Hughes, P (1973) *The Teacher's Role in Curriculum Design* Sydney, Angus & Robertson.


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