

Is It Cu ... or Ci ... , and What is Curriculum?

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As a post graduate education student at the University of Calgary, I remember a professor chiding us about the misspelling of the word curriculum, audibly wondering how we could master the course if we couldn't even spell the word. Spelling aside, curriculum and its twin, instruction, represent the core of the teaching/learning process.

Webster defines curriculum as the courses offered by an educational institution; but in today's schools, curriculum could be best thought of as the vehicle which conveys all content knowledge/skills, and provides the basis for problem-solving, reflection, and action.

Two authors (Glathorn & Jailall, 2000) have used the metaphor of streams to describe how different curriculum orientations have operated concurrently in curricular history-ebbing and flowing, together or separately, as they have been influenced by complex societal and cultural forces. It must be admitted that Seventh-day Adventist schools have been influenced by these curricular streams; however, at the same time, educators have struggled tenaciously to uphold the educational philosophy which was clearly articulated by our theorist, Ellen G. White in the book *Education* (2000).



The North American Division (NAD) Office of Education, which is responsible for curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist schools in North America, has given diligent study toward setting the focus for Adventist curriculum for the 21st century (FACT 21, 2000). Similarly, the Office of Education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC) has produced a Master Plan (1997-2001) in which goals and action plans support the implementation of excellent curricular guidelines.

The action plan for curriculum and instruction (Master Plan, 1997-2000, p.19) states as its goal: to develop and teach a curriculum that covers the provincial requirements, integrates faith and learning, and takes into consideration the preferred teaching practices. In practical terms, we look to our Seventh-day Adventist schools to:

- Grow schools with "heart," characterized by meaningful aims, human and spiritual values, personal responsibility, and strong relationships.
- Adopt curriculum that makes connections with the real world by selectively integrating content, focussing on problem solving, emphasizing both skills and knowledge, and providing for individual differences.
- Use technology to enhance curriculum.
- Focus on competencies.

Recently, the Independent School Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Education (MOE) commissioned a study comparing North American Division Seventh-day Adventist curriculum goals to provincial learning outcomes. With minor adjustments, Seventh-day Adventist curriculum can be taught with the "blessing" of the Ministry. Similarly, other projects are underway: Kingsway College is

currently engaged in a secondary school reform implementation project; and the British Columbia Office of Education is producing curriculum summaries for Grades K-3 and 4-7 which co-ordinate NAD and MOE curricular goals/learning outcomes. With vision in place, the SDACC Office of Education is giving full support to these and other actions which will produce academic excellence in a Christ-centred context.

Whether one is an educational practitioner or a constituent member, we all have a role to play as we develop, finance, and implement teaching/learning that the 21st century demands. Students are our most valuable resource; they are dependent upon us. Their future, measured only by their God-given potential, is affected by the decisions we make and the action we take.

Even as did Aaron and Hur (Exodus 17:12), let us uphold the hands of those who are educating children and youth for time and eternity.

References:

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