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Curriculum mapping: a strategy for effective participation of faculty members in curriculum development

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Abstract

In the world of curriculum development, quality of education, actual move toward decentralization, and maximum participation of instructors in curriculum planning are the major concerns of specialists. After 1980s, curriculum mapping was introduced as one of the most important strategies for improving quality of education, culture of participation and collaboration in educational institutions. This strategy can help students' performance, improve the quality of education. In addition, researches showed that institutionalization of curriculum mapping in educational institutes has a positive effect on organizational culture and space. In this article, curriculum mapping is explained as a strategy for gaining these desired outcomes.

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Keywords: Curriculum Mapping; Instructor; Participation; Curriculum Development.

1. Introduction

Curriculum development is efficacious enough only if it draws the participation of the instructors in the learning process. In other words, efficiency of the curriculum as the crux of the learning development is not determined only by the curriculum package but the participation and cooperation of the instructors (Lunnenberg & Ornstein 1996). All the intellectuals of the field believe that it is not expected from any teacher to implement a predetermined and specified curriculum which is also in line with others (Fullan 1982, Fullan & Miles 1992, Connolly & Clandinin 1999). It is also in higher education where the professors do not implement the curriculum dispassionately as a result of their educational beliefs. Hawthorne (1990) states that the professors' beliefs about the learners, learning, teaching and curriculum directly affects their teaching (the materials and their qualities). Brown and McIntyre

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(1993) believe that one of the reasons for the failure of the reforming process in the curriculum development is ignoring the instructors' beliefs.

2. Curriculum mapping

The main objective in curriculum mapping is designing a written document about what has been taught during a term. It should be noted that a lesson plan is what a teacher is going to teach but curriculum mapping is what has actually been taught (Clough, James & Witcher 1996). Jacobs (1997) emphasizes the fact that curriculum mapping and lesson plan are never the same. Lesson plans show what the instructor is seeking for and it never presents a real picture of what actually happens in the class. English (1984) believes that curriculum mapping is nothing but representation of the content taught and the time spent on its instruction. Uchiyama & Radin (2008) have proposed a six stage process for curriculum mapping in higher education:

1. Every individual instructor designs their own curriculum mapping during one semester teaching.
2. All instructors agree upon certain curriculum mapping procedures at one specific period.
3. All faculty members are involved in the process of reviewing the plans of a certain program. In case there are not many instructors available, a large group can take care of it. In this group, a person is selected as responsible for gathering data and findings as well as announcing them to the colleagues.
4. All faculty members are involved in identifying special areas which are in need of specific adjustments, amendments and deletions.
5. At this stage, the areas identified at the previous stage are prioritized.

Before a thorough analysis of curriculum mapping procedures, we need to pinpoint some instructions for the planning group:

1. Appropriate time must be identified at university schedule at which people can use their time to perform their responsibilities regarding curriculum planning.
2. Key individuals in every group are identified based upon their attitudes and instructional competencies in order to facilitate the activities involved.
3. A certain time limit must be specified for the start of the curriculum planning project.
4. Meaningful understandable roles must be defined for all the colleagues.
5. All individuals must be kept involved in the curriculum planning process.
6. Research references such as books, articles, research reports, videos and websites must be provided. (Jacobs, 2004, p.7).

In the first place, every instructor designs their individual maps (Severino, S., & Messina, R. 2010). The instructors should prepare their curriculum maps five minutes before the end of the class. If an instructor presents a course several times during a week, one map is enough. It is very important to record the reports after learning. It is not necessary for the instructor to manage the time attentively, while careful time management is helpful. Clough, James & Witcher (1996) believe that although it is essential to provide the maps every day or every session, monthly reports would suffice. Besides, diversity of the maps can cause despondency which finally halts curriculum mapping processes. In every curriculum there should be at least three elements present which are content, skills and assessment. After finishing their work, the authorities distribute the final drafts of all the maps among the instructors. Everyone who reads the maps can come to an understanding about their contents, skills and evaluations. Sharing the maps provides an opportunity for the instructors to learn more and identify the repetitions, schisms and areas that are capable of improving (Tuncay, N., & Uzunboylu, H. 2010). Then the instructors form some groups to compare the maps. In higher education it's possible to compare the curriculum mapping of one semester both vertically and horizontally. Later on they specify where to make deletions and where to make additions, and this increases the cohesion of the maps. The immediate outcome of curriculum mapping is revealed in Uchiyama & Radin's report (2008):

In the first semester, the professors were asked to complete a map independently. In the first month of the following semester they were asked to bring together their maps and this process resulted in disclosing what has

been presented during the courses. The rest of the second semester was spent on some discussions which led to planning a comprehensive map including what has been taught in the previous semesters. The meetings were held in a conference room which was really comfortable and where they had access to a computer which made it possible for the audience to see the data on the screen. It was during these meetings that advantages, disadvantages and the overlapping parts were identified and decisions were made about the following questions: 1-What kinds of contents should be maintained? 2-What kinds of contents should be deleted? 3-What kinds of contents should be added? For example, in the meetings it was revealed that there has been enough discussion about the learning theory, so it was omitted from the second semester. (P. 15).

It is necessary to point out that professors should prepare a yearly map for every individual course. This map includes three elements of “content”, “skill” and “evaluation”. Koppang (2004) believes that an instructor can design the content map of every course for the whole year in 30 to 45 minutes. Then, he will identify the crucial skills. The list of skills is significantly longer than that of the contents. As a result, the skills are more time-consuming. The process of assessment mapping takes about 30 to 45 minutes for every course in a year. Some professors prefer to design curriculum mapping during the year and it takes about 15 to 20 minutes.

3. Cooperation in the universities and Curriculum Mapping

Independence and autonomy are the prevalent norms of universities these days. Younger professors talk about their isolated identities as the main reason why they quit their institutes (Barnes & et al. 1998). Fogg (2006) believes that “the main obsession of the faculty members is independence in their workplaces”. Contrary to educational institutes, there is a change of culture from independence and autonomy to cooperation and collaboration in different organizations. For example, U.S. Department of Labor (1998) stated that some skills and qualifications are required in the workplace two of which are cooperation and social skills.

Massy & Wilger (1994) found out that curriculum mapping increases professors’ interest and cooperation in terms of learning and teaching materials. It also plays a major role in updating their knowledge on the relevant discipline and meeting students’ needs. Hale (2008) referring to different research documents claims that employing curriculum mapping approaches can lead to collaborative behavior among the colleagues in educational settings. Hale has classified instructors’ working behavior into four categories, in his view, even the mere identification of such categories can promote the culture of cooperation, and modify the norms dominating educational groups. The four concepts of “parallel play”, “adversarial”, “congenial” and “collegial” encompass the categories related to the colleagues who are in interaction.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Curriculum mapping is a tool for improving the relationship among the professors regarding content, skills and evaluations of an educational course. In some regions, curriculum mapping is the the main strategy to improve student’s educational performance (Ohio State Department of Education, 2001). In curriculum mapping, curriculum is viewed from two perspectives: one is planned learning and the other is operationalized applied curriculum. The former may happen on its own but the latter shows the learning situations that have been arisen. The success of curriculum mapping procedures is determined by a personal understanding and a general and cooperative understanding among members of the group. Therefore, the members need to learn the complexities of curriculum mapping to raise their personal understanding. The maps are designed in a way that the organizations would have a better picture of the students’ learning (Jacobs, 1997). There is a possibility that curriculum mapping may make the instructors absolved from lesson planning. In the end, it is worth noting that curriculum mapping is not a method to evaluate the professors, but a way to assess the curriculum.

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