Brief Note of Presentation

International Workshop on Need for Change in the Course Curricula of Business School: Positioning, Competency of Business School in BIMSTEC Region

DEVELOPING RELEVANT CURRICULUM

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The role of curriculum in higher education is unmatched & holds high importance. Regardless of its size, type or origin, it is considered the heart and soul of all educational institutions. Curriculum is crucial for the well-being and effectiveness of higher education (Barnett & Coate, 2005) both in the short and long term. It is widely accepted concept in academia that the approach to develop appropriate curriculum requires thorough understanding of various strategic elements such as institutional leadership, social trends, industry factor, y6govt and profile of learners. The real challenge lies not in the developing the curriculum but in the approach and method that an institution chose to build on any curriculum. Somehow, education system is conveniently believed to have large storage of subjects and curriculum to offer for two generations of a family with strong belief of having no change in the fundamental concepts of a subject. Just in this impression, many institutions don't feel necessary to develop curriculum considering it limited to just adding or deleting topics as a formality to showcase through various Boards/Committees at Institutions level.

Curriculum is inherently linked to individual and institutional growth. Peter M Senge outlines this aptly in the 'Art and Practice of the Learning Organization' in his seminal book, The Fifth Discipline. It would always be far more beneficial for Institutions to adopt many routines and procedures taken from other professionals. An academic institution will not be a learning organization if students do not learn; however, individual learning automatically does not

necessarily produce a learning organization (Senge 2006). Unlike other reforms or programs imposed from outside sources, the basis for Senge's model requires "ongoing bodies of study and practice that people adopt as individuals and groups" (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Durtton, & Kleiner, 2000). Could this be adapted for designing a system curriculum?

Curriculum is the backbone of the teaching-learning process. It involves developing programs of study (study plans), teaching strategies, resources allocations, specific lesson plans and assessment of student, and faculty developments (Alberta Education, 2012). Educational institutions and employers alike are of the opinion that education should help students gain knowledge and basic skills. (Bounds, 2009).

Curriculum development requires an integral approach, a system of systems thinking. The Fifth Discipline writer Peter Senge lists several "laws" for systems thinking. While all are important, it is perhaps the violation of his last law that most undermines growth in educational institutions – "there is no blame" (Senge, 2006, p. 67). In true systems thinking, all stakeholders are a part of a single system and "there is no separate 'other'" (p. 67). In practice, the situation is far different. When explaining low student proficiencies, a pipeline of blame game starts. College and university faculty blame high school teachers; high school teachers blame their counterparts in middle school, and middle school teachers conveniently shift the blame to elementary faculty, and most all educators blame the parents (Feldman, 2012). The reality of education is that most faculty members, regardless of grade level taught, see "other" and targets "other" for blame. Senge sees the relationships being the "cure" in creating and maintaining a learning organization and hence a wholesome curriculum. With relationships come dialogue and discussion and a start to systems thinking.

The word "curriculum" has been hot topic in academia and it has been interpreted differently besides differences in approaches to curriculum design. Importantly, the word "curriculum" and "education" are indivisible in practice. Therefore, designing appropriate curriculum is need to be taken as foundation stone of high quality programs. But difference is largely seen in many institutions between how curriculum is developed and how curriculum is supposed to be developed in theory. It is noticed that the institutions have large difference of curriculum published and actually taught by teachers in the class rooms. Curriculum is considered as a foundation stone for the "well-being effectiveness of of higher education" (Barneet & Coate, 2005, p 7).

Curriculum development is a process, which goes through different phases and is undertake after every specified period defined by an institution concerned. An approach to develop curriculum therefore, should encompass design, implementation and assessment. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009, p.15) suggest that curriculum development encompasses; how a curriculum is planned, implemented and evaluated, as well as what people, processes and procedures are involved.

Process of Curriculum development should not be misunderstood & limited to a process of having few meetings of Academic boards, paper work and its presentation to some regulators/assessors. It is much more comprehensive and responsible task for any institution. It has to have a connect of various perspectives from all stakeholders and immediate relevance to the cause of teaching-learning process. Appropriateness of the curriculum for an institution is as important as breathing to an individual. There are three important requirements to understand the process of curriculum development, first is framework which we wish to follow for our institution, stages through which curriculum development will pass through with clearly defined importance of those stages and third is understanding the life of a learner.

Referring to a framework given below, it is well understood that curriculum development is a systemic process and applies to all institutions of higher education regardless of their types, origins and size :
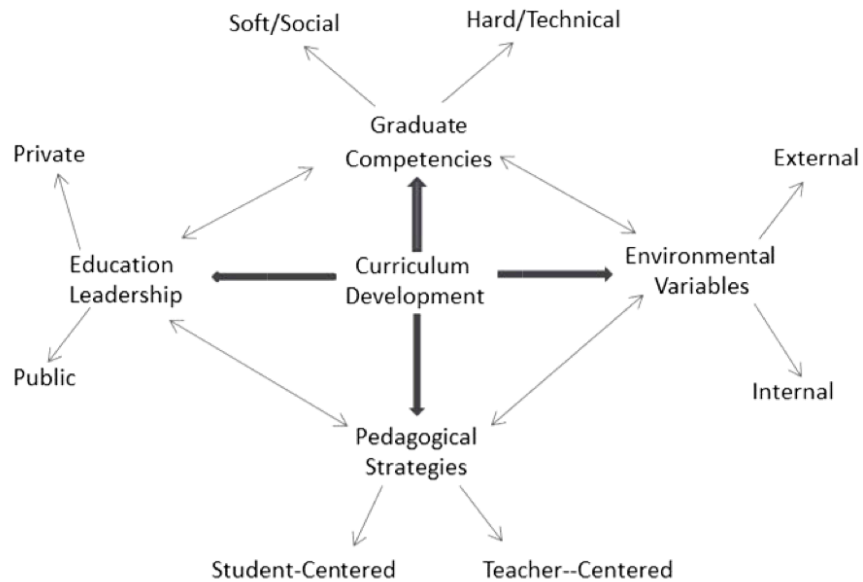
An integrated approach to curriculum development

Figure 1

Table 1 Description of components of Curriculum Development framework

Environmental Variables	There are two types of environments, internal and external. Internal is related to Institutional leadership, culture, operations, people, strategies and structure. The external

	environment covers education sector or industry and macro environment. Developing and graduating students with diverse competencies such as critical thinking, coping, creativity, problem solving skills and normative/applied ethics is the responsibility of all educational systems (Sibley, 1998)
Pedagogical strategies	It is related to teaching method. It includes both teaching and learning methods. It is also the art and science of teaching (Webster's college Dictionary, 2010). Some institutions follow systematic and formal methods of teaching & learning and others follow informal or less systematic methods.
Graduate Competencies	Competency refers to the skills, knowledge, attitude that enables one to effectively perform the activities of a given occupation or function to defined standards of employment by organization. It is directly related to the outcome of education/training effort put in by any institution on a student.
Educational Leadership	Powerful, Flexible, Forward-looking, and supportive leadership is vital in the process of developing, implementing and evaluating curriculum. The roles of the education leader are many: coach, teacher, counselor, facilitator, director and sometimes parent (Pieffer,2009 ; Quick & Normore, 2004).

Educational institutions irrespective of their type and size (public or private), nature of programs (Engineering, Management, Healthcare, Pharmacy, social sciences, Architecture etc.) require modern dynamic, pragmatic, participative, strategic and future oriented, socially inclusive ethical standards.

Contemporary world of education is more competitive and fast changing. It has great influence of external events happening. The entire world and events are inter connected. Technology is playing role of catalyst. With the presence of globally accessible e-library like "Google" the real challenge is to build curriculums, which bring application part of education into the classroom rather just sticking to the fundamentals and concept description by Teachers. Teachers by themselves need to be more equipped than the students in the classroom because of easy access to information. So dynamics have changed everything right from deciding what to teach till what the students learn, graduate and start contributing to the society. So in such challenging times curriculum development process should be systematic which is described in Figure 2 below
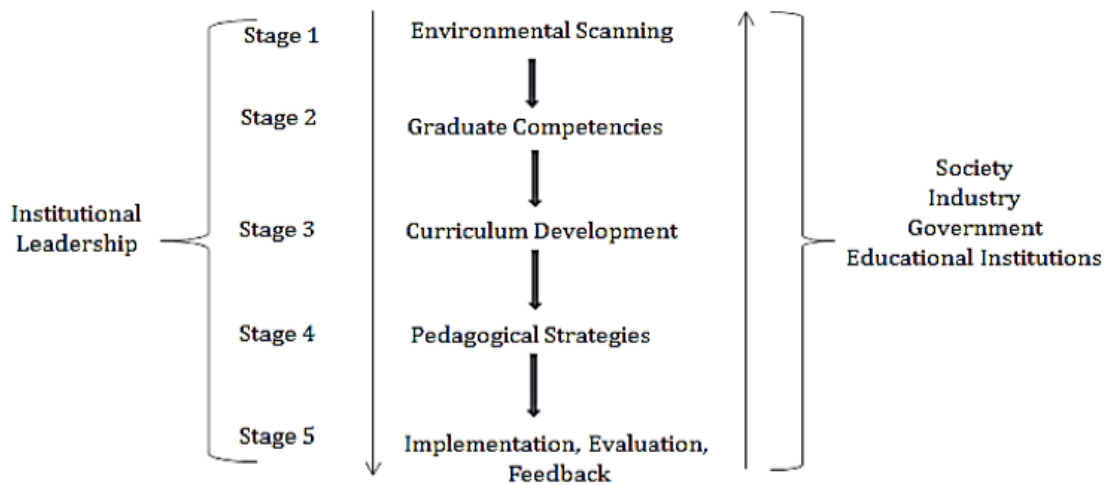

Figure 2 : Curriculum development process & system

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The figure above depicts various stages through which process of curriculum development can pass through. Stage 1 is more of internal and external environmental scanning, Stage 2 is to be largely decided on the basis on the inputs from stage 1, Stage 3 is where we decide actual curriculum based on stage1 and stage 2 inputs, Stage 4 decides on teaching-learning methods & procedures and Stage 5 is more on implementation, critical evaluation and feedback for further improvement in curriculum.

While developing curriculum, we need to be extremely careful regarding educational life of a learner. Life of a learner is not a cycle, it is straight forward pathway.
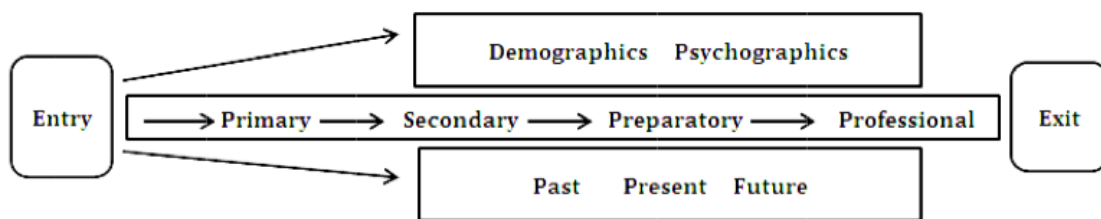

Figure 3 – Life of a learner

It is straight. It is difficult to switch over the stages. So each phase of learning has to be necessarily qualitative which is a prime responsibility of educational institutions. Consequently curriculums at every stage of education have to be relevant, latest and contributing to the life of a learner. Above of all, strong curriculum makes the academic environment of any institution more relevant and well grounded. Teachers and students both enjoy and appreciate the environment.

Conclusion:

The discussion on importance of curriculum development in institutions is historical as well as contemporary and the debate will continue (Bounds, 2009). We should not replace the process of curriculum development by just adding

few new courses or changing a few topics in the existing curriculum, which is done by few academic administrators. It is a complete process and should be highly inclusive, participative and democratic as demanded by various quality standards set in by national and international accreditation agencies. The systematic approach of curriculum development is beneficial for institutions in short run and long run.

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