Despite all the fanfare about innovations, teacher preparation programs in the United States haven't really changed all that much, says curriculum professor Moore. He suggests that an open-access competency-based program might hold considerable promise.

a plausible competency/curriculum approach to improved educational programs

By Arnold J. Moore

Dr. Moore has been Head of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Kansas State University for six years. For interest and research, his particular professional concerns are in the areas of student self-concept, classroom learning environment, theories of curriculum and instruction, and evaluation of instruction. In the Fall of 1973, he will become the new Dean of the School of Education, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio.

There is little question that reform, modification, and improvement in teacher and public school education are topics that have been discussed at considerable length, but there is also little evidence that practice has been significantly affected. Any extensive examination of today's teacher education programs across our nation would reveal that they are quite similar to those existing several years ago. With few exceptions, most institutions have programs in operation that function without any comprehensive theoretical base which provides for or incorporates research data and societal needs. Whether or not competency/performance based education, one of the current trends in teacher education, has such a theoretical base is the subject of many polemics by Broudy[1] and others. It is only when a program has a sound theoretical base with the capability of generating significant hypotheses that we can expect meaningful and predictable outcomes. Such a strategy means the rejection of a simplistic, dogmatic justification of activities and discussions associated with the total educational enterprise.

A number of teacher education research findings concerned with the analysis of teacher behavior strongly imply the conception of such behavior as a complex of skills which can be identified and practiced systematically under given conditions.[2] Unfortunately, most preparation programs do not incorporate such research data in the determination of their program designs. Innovations such as interaction analysis and microteaching usually are appended to such programs rather than made an integral part. As a consequence, such efforts reduce the innovation's potentiality and the total program does not change significantly.

Is it possible that we can consider as a mode of operation the development and continuance of a variety of program alternatives? If that is the case, then it is possible to formulate a series of tenable options that function as alternatives in relationship to the improvement of learning for a diversity of individuals. Of course, challenge has to be maintained even in the midst of diversity. Paramount in such a situation would be a willingness to continue scientifically to examine the claims and contentions of the various approaches, whether they be conventional or innovative. But remember that context is also important, in that such a conclusion suggests that each program component needs consideration in terms of the total teacher education system and the means by which the component can effectively be integrated.

Critics and reformists are challenging teacher educators and others to make substantial changes in their programs, especially to incorporate some of the concepts of an open access curriculum, an idea which has applicability at all levels of education. There are and will be many versions of the open access curriculum. Perhaps the best is Wilson's.[3]

The foremost characteristics of an open access curriculum, which does have a theory base and has applicability in elementary, secondary, and higher education, as postulated by Wilson, can be summarized in six statements. These are (1) multiple entry points to each large body of content usually beginning at the exploratory level and proceeding toward in-depth facts, (2) guidelines for student study that facilitate a self commitment to fully personalized projects, (3) students assuming direct responsibility for a significant part of their own education, (4) differentiated teacher roles, (5) both the teachers and students helping to define and implement the meaning of the concept of open access, (6) assuming that all students will succeed.

Many times discussions pertaining to curriculum research, theory, and development are disconcerting, primarily because the discussants have failed to define clearly the terms "instruction" and "curriculum." Mauritz Johnson has defined curriculum as a set of intended learning outcomes which stands in an anticipatory relationship to the learning process and not in a reportorial relationship to that process.[4] According to Johnson, curriculum deals with expectations or intentions, and, more specifically, with the learning outcomes intended to be achieved through instruction, that is, through the experiences provided, through what happens and what learners do. In his discussion he indicates that these outcomes — cognitions, affects, and performance capabilities—must be selected, on the basis of sort criteria, from that vast expanding pool of knowledge, competencies, and belief that constitutes "cultural content," and they must be ordered on some basis or other. The resulting curriculum is not an instructional plan, for it deals only with the intended ends of instruction, not with the proposed means.

The acceptance of this concept of curriculum, couched in the framework of an open access approach, seems to hold considerable promise. Certainly students with diverse educational and economic backgrounds who enter an educational milieu and program generated from this conceptual basis will have an entirely different kind of experience.

Because education programs traditionally have lacked a theoretical base with accompanying systematic evaluative processes, there is increasing pressure to incorporate accountability into the educative process. Performance or competency based education programs have a design whereby the intended outcomes are clearly described in explicit observable terms and made public to all concerned. Such an approach is goal oriented and based on the development of competencies thought to be essential for the learner. Activities then are designed to facilitate the students' acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competence which can be demonstrated as they display achievement of objectives.

Efforts to implement program modifications require a variety of considerations and possible strategies. There are at least four major problems associated with the adoption or modification of a program. These can be identified as (1) resistant groups, who engage in a variety of holding actions, (2) resource allocation, human, physical, and monetary, (3) phasing, so that the induction of students and faculty can be accomplished with a minimum of frustration, and (4) role expectations for faculty, students, and administrators.

The apparent facilitating processes for a program are (1) information handling, which includes analysis and the concomitant process of defining variables, (2) a communications network which includes a feedback mechanism that provides information about both the successes and the opportunity of making revisions based on feedback data, (3) resource allocation, and (4) logistical support.

Castelle C. Gentry, of the University of Toledo, has delineated four principles of management having some degree of applicability. These are (1) successive approximations, (2) selective negligence, (3) structured induced practice, (4) accumulative feedback effect.

Successive approximation means that with minimal support by faculty and administration, in the long run, an objective can be more effectively and efficiently reached by the systematic determination of successive approximations than by any other means, provided the heuristics of organizational change are followed. The principle of selective negligence can best be described as an approach whereby energy and resources can be used most effectively when we identify and neglect what is unimportant or of low priority. Structured induced practice implies that familiarity and habit resulting from practicing activities reduces opposition and increases understanding and acceptance. This may even involve faculty in activities contrary to their present interests or philosophies. When faculty become interested and involved to the degree that they possess relevant information and knowledge of effects of their decisions and of how decisions affect them, the principle of accumulative feedback effect is operative.[5]

The curriculum models being proposed here ought to be considered by all educators concerned with improving the quality of decision-making. Historically speaking, our society, which is dynamic in nature, has been innately susceptible to change; thus it is essential that we attempt to resolve our common problems through experimentation and reasoned change. Tentative guidelines are essential as facilitators and will need to be incorporated and kept under critical surveillance with the assumption that revisions will be necessary as progress is made. Certainly, proponents of any idea considered "new," different, or nontraditional must be willing to respond to challenges and insightful questioning.

FOOTNOTES

1. See, for example, Harry S. Broudy, *A Critique of Performance-Based Teacher Education* (Washington, D.C., American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, May 1972), 25 pages.

2. For example, see M. Donald Carriker, "A Study of Teacher Attitudes Toward Educational Research," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, 1971. Carriker's study indicated that an important difference between average public school teachers and those selected as outstanding was simply a much more favorable attitude of the latter toward educational research.

3. L. Craig Wilson, *The Open Access Curriculum*, Boston: Allyn, and Bacon, 1971.

4. Mauritz Johnson, "Appropriate Research Directions in Curriculum and Instruction," *Curriculum Theory Network*, vol. 25, Winter 1970-71.

5. Castelle C. Gentry, "Defining Characteristics of a CBTE Management System—A Rationale," paper presented at the Regional Invitational Conference on Performance Based Teacher Education, January 8-9, 1973, Dallas, Texas.