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Compare and Contrast models of curriculum

Currently, the standardized test system holds teachers accountable for student achievement and uses test results as a measure of achievement to determine the school performance. Therefore, teachers are expected to teach students in what is believed appropriate for students. For this reason, some teachers have turned their classrooms into testing preparation centers. Many educators disagree with this strategy because it puts too much stress on standardized test, reduces the depth of instruction in specific subjects, narrows the curriculum and emphasizes memorization rather the application of new skills and knowledge in a novel situation. There are many models of curriculum that are being used to develop and prepare students to meet or exceed instructional standards that specify what students should know and be able to do. This paper will compare and contrast the four models of curriculum and design, that is, 1) Standards-Based Curriculum, 2) Curriculum Based Assessment, 3) Wiggins and McTighe's Backward Design, and 4) the Universal Curriculum Design; can be extremely helpful to teachers when incorporating standard-based curriculum into their instruction.

The standards-based curriculum is the curriculum which is a way to develop curriculum by the basic use of content standards. The content standards are the statement of the skills and knowledge that students should possess in a given subject by the end of their secondary schooling (Glatthon, Bragaw, Dawkins, & Parker, 1998, p.21). This curriculum model helps teachers to have opportunity to provide the ways to develop standards, benchmarks, and final products. There are three processes in developing this

curriculum. First, that is to develop a comprehensive list of standards by using multiple sources and then refine that comprehensive list by eliminating any duplication and combining standards that seem very similar. Lastly, that is to secure teacher input to identify teacher priorities and then use data to develop the final draft of standards and enrichment standards. After the content standards are developed, teachers and administrators will collaborate to identify and elaborate benchmarks to be an initial draft. During the process of developing the final products, one must draw on the combination of existing standards and the developed benchmarks to produce scope and sequence chart before deciding on curriculum guide content and analyzing benchmarks into learning objectives.

Using this model is a great benefit to public education. Not only the educators will be confident that their curricula are following the standards, but also supports teachers to design the performance assessment, which can create the meaningful learning, involve students to a real-life situation, and improve students in the writing and the critical-thinking skills. Consequently, some teachers who are worried about preparing their students for tests may think that this assessment cannot be useful. However, I believe that this model still works very well with the subject matter of language art and social studies thus these subjects require students to be the problem solver and critical thinker, rather than emphasizing memorization. If teachers use this model to develop their lesson plans effectively; they can prepare students for tests and provide them with meaningful learning experiences.

The curriculum-based assessment is to measure what knowledge students know. That is a procedure to determining the instructional needs of a students based upon the

student's ongoing performance within existing course content (Gickling, 1981) or it was defined as "testing what is taught." This is why the curriculum-based assessment differs from the standard-based curriculum because this mode uses the content validity to develop curriculum, not the content standards. The curriculum-based assessment offers the eight step systematic approach; each step affects decisions at the other steps. The first step is to specify reasons for the decision. Teachers need to have a clear and precise understanding of their educational goals, objectives, and teaching methods for each student they are teaching. Teachers will then analyze curriculum, which they consider to be taught or has been taught and ultimately decide what to teach and then formulate the behavioral objectives. The next step is to develop the assessment procedures and develop/find an appropriate assessment tool. After they have completed, teachers will systematically collect, summarize and display data. The last step is to interpret data and make decisions, if the criteria for decision-making are no longer appropriate, they are needed to be revised (Salvia, & Hughes, 1990)

According to Kovaleski, Tucker, & Duffy (1995), the curriculum based-assessment can be used to develop instructional adaptations by examining the mismatch between curriculum and students' skill. I believe that the application of this model can reduce the problem of the divergence among curriculum, teaching, and assessment. It was designed to determine the instructional needs of individual students by measuring the percentage of item known to unknown (Burns, MacQuarrie & Campbell, 2002) and the measurement is brief and can be completed quickly. Therefore, I believe that this model can improve the ability of an individual student who has difficulties learning or doing various academic tasks. Although the curriculum based assessment model has various

benefits, some limitations are also found. Because this model is likely to place the emphasis on the student's individual needs and instructional environment, teachers will have to put their effort to find an appropriate assessment procedure and carefully collect, summarize, and display data. During the final step, when data are needed to interpret and a decision is to be made. If data are inappropriately collected, then a terrible and expensive mistake has been made. Therefore, teachers who are applying this model need to understand each process comprehensively to develop the appropriate assessment procedure as well as to collect, summarize, display and interpret data that can lead to an appropriate decision.

Honestly, I am not clear about the Backward Design which is created by Wiggins and McTighe. This standard is an instructional planning process that reverses the traditional order, and begins with the end in mind (Sorgen-Goldschmidt, 2005). The traditional instruction, teachers have been guide by national, state, district, or instructional standards, then they must consider the needs of their students. By beginning with the end in mind, teachers are able to avoid the common trap of planning forward from activity to activity, only to find that some student are prepared for the final assessment while other are not. The logic of backward design suggests a planning sequence for curriculum with three stages. The first stage is focus on the learning goals. There is also a focus on a number of essential, or guiding, questions to identify desired results. Teachers consider their goals, examine established content standards, and review curriculum expectations. The second stage is to their students will demonstrate their understanding. Wiggins and McTighe describe 'six facets of understanding' (Wiggins& McTighe, 1998, p.44). They believe that students truly understand when they can

explain, interpret, apply, empathize, have perspective, and have self-knowledge. The last stage is teachers design the sequence of learning experiences that students will undertake to develop understanding. The learning experiences require the students to '*theorize, interpret, use, or see in perspective what they are asked to learn (or) they will not likely understand it or grasp that their job is more than recall.'* (Wiggins and McTighe, Understanding by Design, p.100). The emphasis is clearly on an inquiry-based approach that requires uncovering the chosen content.

The backward design provides many useful concepts, which teachers can apply to create effective instruction and gauge the true understanding of learners. Teachers can assure that their teaching goals are following the standards, as the first stage is to consider goals by reviewing standards and find what essential content to learn is. Knowing about the six facets of understanding, teachers can apply them to write the effective performance objectives and design the assessment. They will have the clear concept that can evoke and develop the desired understandings to create the effective instructional activities, which can engage learners in learning experiences, allow them to explore the big ideas, encourage them to think deeper, and make excellent performance more likely. However, I feel that designing the assessment before creating the learning activities would be unsuitable. I do feel that having the goal of learning activities would be easy to assess students.

The Universal curriculum design for learning is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting. Universal Design also allows the student to control the method of accessing information while the teacher monitors the learning process and initiates any

beneficial methods. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) provides the essential features of universal design for learning into 3 principles: the curriculum provides multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement. Teachers who want to begin the implementation of universal design must begin by using curricular materials that are flexible.

As a trend of classroom changes continue, teachers should be able to effectively teach students with and without disabilities in the same class. The universal curriculum design does not only benefit the students with disabilities, but also students with English as a second language, and the general students who benefit from the application of universal design principles as well. This design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities, and can remove barriers for accessing. This design also accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and ability, and is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. However, because the universal curriculum design requires the multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement. It is likely to be difficult for teacher to implement the plan in order to meet all the needs. Teachers must take much time to plan instruction to collaborate on curriculum, and select software or equipment to meet the needs of individual students.

According to the all purpose of the design models, I have found that each model has the different goal-- the Standards-based curriculum model focuses on the development content and benchmarks from standards and the use of performance and authentic assessment. The Curriculum-based assessment model focuses on assess individual students' performance and gathering assessment data to make the decision.

The Backward design underlines designing curriculum, assessment to measure the true understanding of learners. The Universal design focuses on providing equal access to learning for all students, especially students with disabilities. All of those models do view the opportunities to learn as either standards to be met or as indicators of educational quality. The first three models are similar at the beginning process as they set off by examining the curriculum standards before setting the goals by reviewing standards. The Standards-based curriculum emphasizes on developing the standards to create content outline and performance assessment, while the Curriculum-based assessment and Back design are similar in that they clearly provide the step process to implement the instruction from the beginning until the evaluation. And the Universal curriculum design emphasize on developing instruction to cover wide range of students' abilities or disabilities. In my view, the Curriculum-based assessment and the Universal curriculum design have the similar focus on developing curriculum and assessment to approach the needs of each student.

Eventually, the standards movement is one that public school teachers are facing because teaching process has been changed from textbook standard to content standard teaching. Although the movement suggests that teachers must use the standards to cover their curriculums, some educators embrace and others detest. Many educators disagree with teaching to the test because it overemphasizes basic skill subjects and neglects high order thinking skills. In order to the assessment process, the assessment, which would be implemented to properly evaluate students in a new concept, should be the standards-based assessment. Therefore, teachers can create the learning activities engaging students to the meaningful learning tasks emphasizing thinking skills while they still

follow the standards. The aforementioned four models of curriculum and design could and should be critically considered by all teachers for appropriate use with the subject taught and students they are teaching.

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