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John D. Woods
Nedlands Campus, W.A.C.A.E.

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CURRICULUM EVALUATION MODELS: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

John D. Woods
Senior Lecturer, Education
Nedlands Campus W.A.C.A.E.

INTRODUCTION

The scope and focus of evaluation generally, and of curriculum evaluation in particular, has changed markedly over recent times. With the move towards school-based curriculum development attention has shifted away from measurement and testing alone. More emphasis is now being placed upon a growing number of facets of curriculum development, reflecting the need to collect information and make judgements about all aspects of curriculum activities from planning to implementation. While curriculum theorists and some administrators have realized the significance of this shift many teachers still appear to feel that curriculum evaluation activities are something which do not directly concern them.

However, the general public, as well as the authorities, expect teachers to know about the effectiveness of their teaching process and programmes. Given the range of alternatives possible we need to be confident that our choices are valid. If we are to make adjustments in the future we must know why we are changing and the direction in which change should proceed. This emphasizes the fact that evaluation is not something which takes place after a decision has been made. Rather, it is the basis for proposing change and its value lies in its ability to help clarify curriculum issues and to enable teachers, as well as schools and systems, to make informed decisions.

Given the need, why is it then, that teachers may not become as involved in evaluation as we might like. Hunkins (1980, p 297) suggests that it might be because the teacher has to be:

> "the *doer*, the person who reflects on his own behaviour during the planning and implementation phases;
>
> the *observer* of the students and the resources used during the implementation;
>
> the *judge* who receives and interprets the data collected; and
>
> the *actor* who acts upon and makes informed decisions based upon the date collected."

Expressed this way it does appear that this task may simply be too onerous when forced to compete against all other activities in which teachers must engage. Seiffert (1986, p 37) expands on this point by noting that

> "... there are limitations to the amount and nature of the evaluative role that a teacher may take. First, a teacher's life is a busy one, and time constraints will limit the amount of effort that most teachers may put into evaluation. Second, because a teacher is a teacher, and thus a significant person in the learning process, her roles as evaluator will be limited. It is possible to be too closely involved in a situation, politically and emotionally, to ask questions that might challenge one's own interests."

The problem cannot be ignored, however, as it is only through the processes of marshalling information and mounting arguments that interested individuals are able to participate in critical debate about curriculum matters and issues.

What can be done? The solution would seem to be to share the tasks. In this way, co-operative group efforts can spread the load and reduce the pressure on individual teachers. As our approach to teaching opens up we are able to identify more and more examples of teachers working together to plan and deliver the curriculum - it involves only one further small step to allow evaluation also to benefit from this sharing approach.

Co-operation does bring problems, however! A classroom is a very complex place and it is impossible to evaluate everything. Even with the best intentions two or more people evaluating a lesson may see different things. The task is to enable people to look through the same eyes. We need to be able to agree on what is to be observed, when, by whom and for what purpose. We then need to be able to discuss our findings in such a way that individuals do not feel threatened, so that positive and constructive evaluation can be made. Unless structures are established to facilitate interaction and free-flowing discussion throughout the evaluation exercise, there is a danger that the benefits of evaluation will be eroded by unresolved conflict.

There is no simple way of ensuring that such agreement will be reached. There does exist, however, a range of curriculum models which can provide a useful structure for teachers wishing to make more effective their role as curriculum evaluators. Three that have been selected for special attention in this paper include Davis' Process Model (1981), Stake's Countenance Model (1967) and Eisner's Connoisseurship Model (1979).

CURRICULUM EVALUATION MODELS

Davis' Process Model

This model provides a simple overview of the processes involved in curriculum evaluation. It is suitable for use by either individual teachers or teams of teachers.

The first stage of this model involves what Davis (1981, p 49) calls the delineating sub-process. No investigation of classrooms or curricula will ever be able to

capture the total picture so decisions must be made which structure and focus the evaluation. Evaluators should begin by asking for whom is the evaluation intended and what does the audience want to find out. Examples of prospective audiences might include :

* an individual teacher
* a group of teachers (year level, subject department)
* senior administrators (senior masters/mistresses, deputies, principals)
* Ministry of Education Officials
* parent and community groups
* commercial organizations

The type of information will also vary and could include :

* teacher attitudes
* student performance
* community perceptions
* organizational structures
* curriculum performance
* strategy selection

Such decisions need to be made in consultation. The types of questions which need to be asked have been comprehensively documented by Hughes, et. al., as part of their work on the Teachers as Evaluators Project (CDC 1982, pp39-42). Some thirteen sub-groups were identified, ranging from questions related to purposes through those involving roles and audiences to those focussing attention upon judgements and, finally, outcomes. Each of these sub-groups contains further dimensions which provide a comprehensive structure from which the evaluator may select a framework of questions to define and delineate the particular task in hand.

Once the basis of the investigation has been determined the task of collecting information, described by Davis (1981, p 51) as the obtaining sub-process, can commence. At this stage it would appear to be appropriate to enlarge upon the steps identified by Davis to clarify some of the factors which impact upon this aspect of effective evaluation. Thus Stake's Countenance Model may be useful in describing a procedure which groups may need to follow when involved in a team approach to evaluation.

Stake's Countenance Model

This model can be readily inserted into the Davis model at this stage. The rationale referred to by Stake allows for the influence of presage factors which Davis subsumes as part of his delineating sub-process. The greatest strength of Stake's model is the manner in which intents and actions are defined and observed, together with standards and judgements.

Stake believes that the starting off point is to determine the "intents" of a particular curriculum. These need to be described in terms of antecedents, transactions and outcomes. Antecedent intents relate to any conditions prior to the commencement of a curriculum and might include both students' and teachers' backgrounds and interests. Transaction intents are the procedures and events which it is expected will transpire as the curriculum unfolds. They take place in the classroom or teaching/learning environment. Outcome intents are the intended student outcomes in terms of achievements, together with the anticipated effects upon teachers, administrators and other parties.

Prior to any data collection those involved in the performance and those involved in the evaluation must meet to establish a common frame of reference with respect to the three sets of intents. Not only does this clarify the purpose of the evaluation but it also allows for checks of what Stake refers to as logical consistencies between the intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes. In a similar fashion the intended standards which will be used to determine the appropriateness of the curriculum need also to be discussed and agreed upon. Again, logical consistency between the various elements can be monitored at this stage.

Once agreement has been reached the next step involves collecting observational data about the dynamics of a particular curriculum. As well as informal observations Stake suggests that all kinds of empirical data collection should be employed, including instruments such as questionnaires and psychometric tests. Such data needs to be collected to determine the extent of discrepancies between intents and observations, standards and judgements. If discrepancies do appear, they may be either discrepancies of empirical contingency (i.e. between antecedents, transactions and outcomes) or discrepancies of congruence (i.e. between intents and observations or between standards and judgements).

Completion of the data collection activities leads to the third phase of the Davis model, the providing sub-process. At this stage evaluation and interpretation of the data needs to be undertaken. This is almost inevitably a crucial time in any curriculum evaluation as the performers and the evaluators reassemble to discuss the information which has been collected. Just as the Stake model fills out the earlier process, so too Eisner's Connoisseurship Model appears to be most appropriate at this junction. In particular, it is the second component of his model, which focuses upon what Eisner calls the 'art of disclosure', which has greatest significance.

Eisner's Connoisseurship Model

In the post-mortems which follow data collection it is essential that rational and unemotional discussion is allowed to take place. The process described in this paper requires colleagues to collect data about each other and to submit

themselves to self-reflective activities. As Marsh and Stafford (1984, p 70) point out:

> "it will undoubtedly lead to data being presented which shows that some discussion segments were not very productive, and that arguments enunciated by some colleagues were superficial, critical or downright fallacious! Teachers in a planning group have to be sufficiently empathetic towards each other to accept candid, but positive criticism."

The three stages identified as Eisner's art of disclosure (1979, pp 202-213) would appear to aid in the development of such empathy. Eisner begins by suggesting that first discussions should simply involve a description of what took place. This is the least threatening type of evaluation as few, if any, judgements are being made at this stage. The intention here is simply to get all parties to agree in order to proceed to stage two.

In stage two particular aspects of the curriculum may be singled out for further attention. Having agreed that certain events took place the task is now to explain and interpret why these events occurred. As different theories may be used to assign meaning to these events, it is again important that a consensus is reached. Such consensus will be easier, Eisner argues, if we have previously reached agreement at the level of description. While interpretation is potentially more threatening, the constant emphasis upon first establishing agreement before moving into new areas underpins the way in which this aspect of the evaluation should be conducted.

The final stage in the process of disclosure is that of appraisal. This is where value judgements will be made and again constitutes an area in which individuals may perceive themselves as under attack. Such recommendations must stem from the evaluation exercise, however, hopefully in the form of consensus statements from both performers and evaluators. Eisner believes that the process of moving from the least threatening situation through to the final stage by securing agreement throughout all stages is the one most likely to lead to success.

Davis's last sub-process is that of utilization. The way in which this will be done will be determined by the particular audience for whom the evaluation is intended. For an individual teacher it may simply involve modifying lesson plans or programmes. For groups of teachers it may involve making wider decisions about the type and sequence of units which they are prepared to offer.

Administrators may relate the evaluation to changes in school policy, while for commercial organizations the whole process may be viewed as an exercise in market research. In any or all of these instances formal reports may be written but at all levels some form of written summary should be made. What may be a conclusion at this point in an evaluation of a curriculum will inevitably provide presage material for ongoing investigations.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to highlight a number of factors focussing on the importance of evaluation in curriculum management. It has attempted to avoid the tendency noted by numerous authors for teachers to view curriculum evaluation as a spectator sport. By the same token it has recognized that individual teachers can only engage in a limited range of evaluation activities if left to their own devices. The opportunity for collective evaluation by groups of teachers appears to be on the increase, in terms of both logistics and desires.

The effectiveness of cooperative evaluation may be significantly reduced, however, unless we remain aware that staff require guidance in developing group skills. Some of these skills entail understanding the behaviour and motives of others, together with a willingness to adapt one's own behaviour to the needs of the group. Most importantly though, effective evaluation requires that the task is undertaken with a clear purpose and shared understanding of what is involved.

By welding together the essential elements of the three models described in this paper a workable blueprint for evaluation emerges. This blueprint would seem to provide the framework around which the purposes and understandings referred to above can be built. While difficulties involving consensus may still emerge the use of the various models described in the paper should provide structure and encouragement for those engaging in what Marsh and Stafford (1984, p 52) see as 'arguably the major component of the curriculum decision-making process.'

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