

---

## UNIT 2 FOUNDATIONS OF CURRICULUM

---

### *Structure*

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Philosophical Foundations
  - 2.2.1 Philosophy and curriculum
  - 2.2.2 Educational philosophies
- 2.3 Sociological Foundations
  - 2.3.1 Society and education
  - 2.3.2 Social change and curriculum
  - 2.3.3 Planning for curricular change
- 2.4 Psychological Foundations
  - 2.4.1 Learning theories and curriculum
  - 2.4.2 Basic human needs and curriculum
- 2.5 Trends in Curriculum Development
  - 2.5.1 Twentieth century curriculum
  - 2.5.2 Possible future trends
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Check Your Progress: The Key

---

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

---

Having talked about curriculum theory, its developments, transactions and future directions for curriculum in Unit 1, we shall now deal with the foundations of curriculum. When we develop a curriculum, we depend primarily on ideas that stem from three major fields: philosophy, sociology (with historical overtones) and psychology. An understanding of these fields is crucial to the study of curriculum since they have traditionally been and still are considered its foundations.

Philosophy involves an inquiry into the nature and meaning of life including ideas about the nature of human beings, social values and purpose of education. One's perception of Philosophy largely influences one's view of learners and of various learning activities. A study of sociology provides, among other things, necessary clues about the characteristics of contemporary life and the future in which the learners will lead the rest of their lives. These clues help to make a curriculum socially relevant. Psychology provides an indispensable base for identifying the types of curricular arrangement that will most benefit the learner's growth and development.

In this Unit, it may be noted that we have talked about curriculum-foundations in general which may be applied in the context of distance education wherever needed.

---

## 2.1 OBJECTIVES

---

After completing this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe various philosophies and their implications for the field of curriculum;

- identify philosophical issues that need to be considered in framing a curriculum;
- describe the importance of sociology for the field of curriculum;
- explain various social and historical trends/issues that influence curriculum formulation;
- describe the importance of psychology—basic behaviours and needs—in the field of curriculum; and
- identify particular contemporary issues that should be considered while framing a curriculum.

Having set out our objectives, let us now involve ourselves in a discussion of the topics under consideration.

---

## **2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS**

---

Based upon fundamental beliefs that arise from one's philosophy of education curricular decisions involve consideration of several topics and issues. Precisely for this reason, we consider philosophy one of the major foundation areas in curriculum. In this section, we shall explore several different philosophies of education that influence curricular decisions.

### **2.2.1 Philosophy and curriculum**

Studying philosophy helps us deal with our own personal systems of beliefs and values, i.e., the way we perceive the world around us and how we define what is important to us. As philosophical issues have always influenced society and institutions of learning, a study of the philosophy of education in terms of curriculum development is essential. In essence, a philosophy of education influences, and to a large extent determines, our educational decisions and alternatives. Those who are responsible for curricular decisions, therefore, should be clear about what they believe. If we are unclear or confused about our own beliefs, then our curricular plans are bound to be unclear and confusing. One important step in developing a personal philosophy of education is to understand the various alternatives that others have developed over the years. Here we shall look into the following four major philosophical positions that have, hitherto, influenced curriculum development.

- i) Idealism
- ii) Realism
- iii) Pragmatism
- iv) Existentialism.

#### **i) Idealism**

The doctrine of idealism suggests that matter is an illusion and that reality is that which exists mentally. It emphasises moral and spiritual reality as the chief explanation of the world and considers moral values absolute, timeless and universal.

If we apply this view to education what would be the implications for the role of teachers and curriculum in education?

Obviously, teachers would act as role models of enduring values. And the school must be highly structured and ought to advocate only those ideas that demonstrate enduring values. The materials used for instruction, therefore, would centre around broad ideas particularly those contained in great works of literature and/or scriptures. Since it is based on broad ideas and concepts, idealism is not in line with the beliefs of those who equate learning with acquisition of specific facts from various disciplines.

## ii) Realism

Proponents of realism view the world in terms of objects and matter. They believe that human behaviour is rational when it conforms to the laws of nature and is governed by social laws.

Applied to education, those ideas begin to reveal a second possible philosophy of education.

What kind of philosophy will that be?

'Realists' consider education a matter of reality rather than speculation.

**Application,** The paramount responsibility of the teacher, then, is to impart to learners the knowledge about the world they live in. What scholars of various disciplines have discovered about the world constitutes this knowledge. However, like the idealists, the realists too stress that education should reflect permanent and enduring values that have been handed down through generations, but only to the extent that they do not interfere with the study of particular disciplines. Clearly, unlike the idealists who consider classics ideal subject matter for studies, the realists view the subject expert as the source and authority for determining the curriculum.

## iii) Pragmatism

In contrast to the traditional philosophies, i.e., idealism and realism, pragmatism gives importance to change, processes and relativity, as it suggests that the value of an idea lies in its actual consequences. The actual consequences are related to those aims that focus on practical aspects in teaching and learning (Nash, 1995). According to pragmatists, learning occurs as the person engages in transacting with the environment. Basic to this interaction is the nature of change. In this sense, whatever values and ideas are upheld currently would be considered tentative since further social development must refine or change them. For instance, at a particular period of time it was generally believed that the earth was flat which was subsequently disproved through scientific research.

To consider, therefore, what is changeless (idealism) and inherited the perceived universe (realism) and to discard social and/or perceptual change is detrimental to the overall development and growth of children.

You can now visualise how pragmatism would have influenced the framing of curriculum.

Curriculum, according to the pragmatists, should be so planned that it teaches the learner how to think critically rather than what to think. Teaching should, therefore, be more exploratory in nature than explanatory. And, learning takes place in an active way as learners solve problems which help them widen the horizons of their knowledge and reconstruct their experiences in consonance with the changing world.

What then might be the role of the teacher?

The role is not simply to disseminate information but to construct situations that involve both direct experience with the world of the learner and opportunities to understand these experiences.

Before we proceed further let us stop here to work out an exercise.

<b>Check Your Progress 1</b>	
'Idealism' and 'realism' emphasize values and subject matter, respectively. What does 'pragmatism' emphasize?	
<b>Notes:</b> a) Space is given below for your answer. b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.	
	.....
	.....
	.....
	.....
	.....
	.....
	.....
	.....

Having seen three basic philosophical positions that have influenced curriculum development, let us now look at the fourth one.

#### **iv) Existentialism**

This doctrine emphasizes that there are no values outside human beings, and thus, suggests that human beings should have the freedom to make choices and then be responsible for the consequences of those choices.

According to this philosophy, learners should be put into a number of choice-making situations, i.e., learners should be given freedom to choose what to study. It emphasizes that education must centre on the

perceptions and feelings of the individual in order to facilitate understanding of personal reactions or responses to life situations. Of primary concern in this process is the individual. Since life is based upon personal meanings, the nature of education, the existentialists would argue, should be largely determined by the learner. Individual learners should not be forced into pre-determined programmes of study.

Whatever the learner feels he/she must learn should be respected and facilitated by the system.

An existentialist curriculum, therefore, would consist of experiences and subjects that lend themselves to philosophical dialogue and acts of making choices, stressing self-expressive activities, experimentation and media that illustrate emotions and insights. The teacher, then, takes on a non-directive role. The teacher is viewed as a partner in the process of learning. As a professional, the teacher serves as a resource facilitating the individual's search for personal meaning rather than imposing some predetermined values or interests on learners.

Existentialism has gained greater popularity in recent years. Today, many educationists talk about focusing on the individual, promoting diversity in the curriculum and emphasizing the personal needs and interests of learners. Here, perhaps, we can recall the philosophy that underlies the open distance education system. Learner-autonomy, which the existentialists seem to suggest, has been and remains the prime characteristic feature of the distance mode of teaching-learning.

Because of the explosion in knowledge and tremendous growth in information technology, the curriculum of the past seems to be obsolete. To plug the gap between the needs of the learner, the society and the curriculum content, rethinking in the area of curriculum development appears to be unavoidable. What might have been relevant in a particular situation need not necessarily always be so. In essence, social changes demand changes in the existing pattern of education. The inherent potentiality of the system of distance education enables it to accommodate and cater to these changes.

It should be clear from the above discussion that by and large, in operational terms, both pragmatism and existentialism find ample expression in open distance education.

### Check Your Progress 2

How tenable is the existentialist view of curriculum as far as learning/teaching at the school-level is concerned?

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

c) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

.....

.....

.....

	.....
	.....
	.....
	.....

Each of the four major philosophies just described begins with a particular view of human nature and of values and truths, and then proceeds to suggest what such a view implies for curriculum development. Before we conclude our discussion on the philosophical foundations of curriculum, we should make note of a few educational philosophies in order to reinforce what has been said so far.

### **2.2.2 Educational philosophies**

Although aspects of educational philosophy can be derived from the roots of idealism, realism, pragmatism and existentialism, a common approach is to provide a pattern of educational philosophies which derives from the major schools of philosophy some of which have been touched upon above. Here, we shall be looking into the following four educational philosophies for their implications in the area of curriculum development.

- i) Perennialism
- ii) Progressivism
- iii) Essentialism, and
- iv) Reconstructionism.

Let us discuss each one of these in this very order.

#### **i) Perennialism**

It advocates the permanency of knowledge that has stood the test of time and values that have moral and spiritual bases. The underlying idea is that education is constant, absolute and universal. Obviously, "perennialism" in education is born of "idealism" in general philosophy. The curriculum of the perennialist is subject-centered. It draws heavily on defined disciplines or logically organised bodies of content, but it emphasizes teaching/learning of languages, literature, sciences and arts.

The teacher is viewed as an authority in a particular discipline and teaching is considered an art of imparting information/knowledge and stimulating discussion. In such a scheme of things, students are regarded immature as they lack the judgement required to determine what should be studied, and also that their interests demand little attention as far as curriculum development is concerned.

There is usually only one common curriculum for all students with little room for elective subjects. According to this point of view putting some students through an academic curriculum and others through a vocational curriculum is to deny the latter genuine equality of educational opportunity.

Such views appeal to those educators who stress intellectual meritocracy. Their emphasis is on testing students, enforcing tougher academic standards/programmes, and on identifying and encouraging talented students.

## **ii) Progressivism**

This emerged as a protest against perennialist thinking in education. It was considered a contemporary reformist movement in educational, social and political affairs during the 1920's and 30's.

According to progressivist thought, the skills and tools of learning include problem solving methods and scientific inquiry. In addition, learning experiences should include cooperative behaviour and self-discipline, both of which are important for democratic living. The curriculum, thus, was interdisciplinary in nature and the teacher was seen as a guide for students in their problem-solving and scientific projects.

Although the progressive movement in education encompassed many different theories and practices, it was united in its opposition to the following traditional attributes and practices:

- the authoritarian teacher;
- excessive dependence on textbook methods;
- memorization of factual data and learning by excessive drilling;
- static aims and materials that reject the notion of a changing world; and
- attempts to isolate education from individual experiences and social reality.

Although the major thrust of progressive education waned in the 1950's with the advent of "essentialism", the philosophy has left its imprint on education and educational practices of today. Contemporary progressivism is expressed in several movements including those for a socially relevant curriculum, i.e., a match between subjects taught and student needs which is one of the theoretical bases of distance education.

## **iii) Essentialism**

This philosophy, rooted partly in idealism and partly in realism, evolved mainly as a critique of progressive thought in education. Yet, the proponents of essentialism do not totally reject progressive methods as they do believe that education should prepare the learner to adjust to a changing society. Thus, in essentialism learning should consist in mastering the subject matter that reflects currently available knowledge in various disciplines. Teachers play a highly directive role by disseminating information to students. According to this viewpoint, the main arms of the institution (be it a school or a college) get sidetracked, when, at the expense of cognitive needs, it attempts to pay greater attention to the social and psychological problems of students.

In recent years, the essentialist position has been stated vociferously by critics who claim that educational standards softened during the 1960s and early 1970s. The most notable achievements of the essentialists have been the widespread implementation of competency based programmes, the establishment of grade-level achievement standards, and the movement to reemphasize academic subjects in schools/colleges. In many ways, the ideas of essentialism lie behind attacks on the quality of education by the media and by local pressure groups, which includes, to a good extent, attacks on distance education.

#### **iv) Reconstructionism**

It views education as a means of reconstructing society. The reconstructionists believe that as school/college is attended by virtually all youth, it must be used as a means to shape the attitudes and values of each generation. As a result, when the youth become adults they will share certain common values, and thus the society will have reshaped itself.

As for the curriculum, it must promote new social, economic and political education. The subject matter is to be used as a vehicle for studying social problems which must serve as the focus of the curriculum.

The following gives you a view of the reconstructionist programme of education:

- critical examination of the cultural heritage of a society as well as the entire civilization;
- scrutiny of controversial issues;
- commitment to bring about social and constructive change;
- cultivation of a planning-in-advance attitude that considers the realities of the world we live in; and
- enhancement of cultural renewal and internationalism.

Stemming from this view, reconstruction expands the field of curriculum to include intuitive, personal, mystical, linguistic, political and social systems of theorizing. In general, the curriculum advocated by reconstructionists emphasizes the social sciences—history, political science, economics, sociology, psychology and philosophy—and not the pure sciences. The thrust is on developing individual self-realization and freedom through cognitive and intellectual activities, and thus, on liberating people from the restrictions, limitations and controls of society. The idea is that we have had enough of discipline-based education and narrow specialization, and that we don't need more specialists now, we need more "good" people if we want to survive. Before we proceed further, let us ask ourselves a question.

What insights do we gain from the discussion on the philosophical foundations of curriculum?



Ideas about curriculum and teaching do not arise in a vacuum. As curriculum development is heavily influenced by philosophy, those involved in such planning should be clear about contemporary, dominant philosophy. If we are unclear about our philosophy of education, our curriculum plans and teaching procedures will tend to be inconsistent and confused. This being so, we should be aware of the fact that development and awareness of a personal philosophy of education is a crucial professional responsibility. Further, we need to be constantly open to new ideas and insights that may lead to a revision or refinement of our philosophies. Our position should be that no single philosophy, old or new, should serve as the exclusive guide for making decisions about curriculum. What we, as curriculum specialists, need to do, is to adopt an eclectic approach, in which there is no emphasis on the extremes of subject matter or socio-psychological development, excellence or quality. In essence, what we need is a prudent philosophy—one that is politically and economically feasible and that serves the needs of students and society. It is here that open distance education comes forth with its promises for the future.

---

## **2.3 SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

---

Any discussion of curriculum should consider the social setting and its influence on curricular decisions. Social pressures influence the characteristics of students who experience the curriculum in the educational institutions which are established and maintained by society. Students live in a world larger than the college/school and learn a great deal from experiences in that part of their lives. What a learner acquires in the college/school and outside may be complementary or conflicting to each other. The latter case gives rise to the complaint that what is learned in college/school has little to do with the real world. But, in the former case the college/school may be a major factor in the improvement of society by helping young people to develop the capacity to respond intelligently to social problems. In this way, the curriculum serves not only the needs of the learner, but also the needs of society. For these reasons, in developing curricular plans, we must consider the characteristics of contemporary society as well as those that are expected to emerge in the future. Of course, curriculum planning and course-content basically depends on an analysis of the nature of society (Kelly, 1989).

Keeping these facts in view, we shall now discuss how society influences the making of curriculum.

### **2.3.1 Society and education**

Most of us regard education as synonymous with schooling. But, in actual fact even a society that has no formal colleges/schools still educates its young through ceremonies, rituals, stories, observation and emulation of parents, elders, etc. The norms of society govern interpersonal relations and produce a model personality—the attitudes, feelings and behaviour patterns most members of a society share. It also assigns specific roles to each of its members and expects them to

conform to certain established behavioural patterns. Sex roles—the way boys and girls, men and women are supposed to act—provide a good example for this type of socialisation. Sex roles vary from one culture to the other, but within a given set-up they are rather well-defined. This leads us to conclude that besides the classroom-curriculum, society also plays a vital role in shaping the attitudes of the young. Clearly, global aspects of human growth and development are accomplished partly by the structured curriculum in use in colleges/schools and partly by society. Does this mean that a curriculum should mirror current social forces?

A curriculum while reflecting contemporary social forces should also be able to respond to the dynamics of change. By implication, the curriculum should not only reflect society but also help to shape it.

### **2.3.2 Social change and the curriculum**

Contemporary society is changing so swiftly that we have difficulty coping with it, adjusting ourselves to the present and preparing for the future. Contrary to this fact, our colleges/schools appear to be conservative institutions that usually lag behind the change. To make education respond to social changes, a curriculum should be framed keeping in mind, among other things, the following:

- i) growth of technology;
- ii) structure of the family; and
- iii) cultural diversity.

What we mean by each of these is discussed below:

#### **i) Growth of technology**

Today, the young are growing up in a world that is very different from that of a generation or two ago. Connected with this is the fact that ours is a society based on information.

In addition to the creation of new kinds of jobs, this new information-society will influence all the other aspects of the workplace. At one level, such influence will motivate societies to use computers and other information-processing devices to replace manual workers, at another, the locale of the workplace will also be affected. In agricultural and industrial phases, workers have/had to be brought to a central location where goods are/were produced. Given the availability of communications technology, this kind of centralization will no longer be necessary for every activity. One can simply work at home using micro-computers. And, increased value will be placed upon persons who can network their credentials to fill the emerging needs of the information society.

Underlying all this is a serious challenge to the ethics of work that has pervaded our society and schools/colleges. Among the values the schools/colleges have promoted are those related to the productive industrial worker—punctuality, loyalty, acceptance, appearance etc. In

the decentralised information-society, workers will find themselves largely working alone, setting flexible work patterns, working hours and servicing more than one employer. Furthermore, having been replaced by new technology, many will have difficulty finding new jobs because they lack certain skills. Thus, the combination of the growth of technology and of the information society may lead to a serious review of the traditional ethics of work and its place in our society. Obviously, curriculum will have to undergo a change in order to match with and capture social changes.

## **ii) Structures of family**

The family has been viewed as the basis of the complex social fabric. The picture of the family consisting of both natural parents and their children is steadily fading, replaced by a much more complicated diversity of family structures. For example, separation, divorce and childbirth without marriage have given rise to the phenomenon of single parent homes. Geographical mobility is weakening the bonds of the centrally located, extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives. Traditionally, while men used to go out to work, women managed the home. Now we find increasing number of families in which both the father and the mother work.

How does this influence educational institutions?

The school/college as we know it today evolved in the context of the traditional family structure. Mothers were expected to provide a stable and predictable environment for young people.

When children had problems in school/colleges, parents could be called upon to devote time and energy to support the values and efforts of the school/college. Today, these expectations are no longer certain. As the structure of family has changed, so has its role and function in relation to the school/college.

Traditionally our lives have been focussed on common social features of life and even conformity. Today, however, people have begun to seek more diversity in life styles, seeking new pathways and alternative routes. Among the many institutions that are affected by the new wave of individualism and diversity is the school/college. The reason is that schools/colleges have served as major sources for promoting common values among youth. This new trend in life patterns and values poses serious questions in curriculum planning.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

Consequent upon the changing face of society, mention at least three factors that should be thought about while framing a curriculum.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.


Besides the structure of the family, changes in sex roles are also becoming more and more emphatic.

Symptoms of the breakdown in sex-role stereotypes are clearly visible in many areas of life. As women assume new roles and demonstrate excellence and ability in them, some disgust or resentment on the part of those who continue to cling to old stereotypes cannot be avoided. The changing perception and reality of sex roles and this opposition to such changes will also have a tremendous impact on curriculum development.

### iii) **Cultural diversity**

As we are moving away from "a melting-pot" society to a "salad bowl" one, the increasing trend away from a homogeneous culture towards one of diversity/plurality is quite conspicuous.

This shift of movement can be attributed to the following phenomena:

- diversity in values and life-styles (being different is now a socially sanctioned idea);
- renewed interest in ethno-history (people have developed a new interest in their own histories and personal heritage); and
- development in telecommunications (people have been reminded of their links with cultures in other parts of the world).

Traditionally, an educational institution has been viewed as the major social agent in the "melting-pot" process. Now it is caught in an ambiguous position between its traditional role and the emerging trend towards diversity. The question as to how the curriculum should portray cultural values, then gains importance in curriculum development today.

Having reviewed the social changes and pointed to their impact on curriculum planning, we might say that the human society is, in general, in transition from an industrial to post-industrial phase of our history, though at different stages of advancement.

Identifying the general direction that the new phase will take is particularly challenging since there is no historical precedent for post-industrialism. As long as a society is dynamic, the debate over the aims of education will stir up changes. Perhaps this is good, perhaps this is what makes society viable and able to resist decay.

### 2.3.3 Planning for curricular change

If we look into the aims and priorities of education from the turn of this century onwards, we can identify links in the chain of evolution which has caused socio-educational changes. To illustrate the point, in the early twentieth century, rigorous intellectual training was considered the ultimate goal of education. However, in the second and the third decades of the century, progressive educationists insisted on broadening the scope of school-curriculum, which was purely academic, by incorporating non-academic and vocational elements in the curriculum. This priority reappeared with emphasis in the 1960s and the 1970s. This appears to hold good even, at the close of twentieth century.

What do we deduce from what we have said above?

Educational aims should be flexible and able to change in accordance with changing social needs. If a major means for survival is to catch fish, lash horses and frighten away tigers, it is natural that the school/college in this society will have a curriculum to meet these needs. Suppose the conditions change—streams dry up, horses and tigers disappear—should not the curriculum incorporate new means for survival? Unquestionably, educational aims must be relevant to the times.

What is the mechanism, then, by which we can bring in social changes so as to make the curriculum serve the needs of society?

To ensure socially relevant curriculum, for example, the panels and commissions, which formulate educational priorities, should comprise the following representative groups:

- i) *Students*: Post secondary students are mature enough to provide appropriate inputs in developing educational aims.
- ii) *Parents*: As parents are interested in the overall development of their children, parental inputs are necessary.
- iii) *Educators*: Teachers, administrators and public leaders must assume responsibility in developing educational aims/priorities.
- iv) *Researchers*: The role of the researcher or social scientist is important for providing objective data concerning issues and trends.
- v) *Community members*: Their support in the formulation of priorities should be considered significant as they decide matters pertaining to school/college and fiscal matters, directly and indirectly.
- vi) *Business community*: Because of its economical/political influence and interest in the outcomes of educational enterprise in terms of human resource development technology and industrial output, it needs to be represented.
- vii) *Political officials*: They should be enlisted because, educational policy and politics, by and large, go together.
- viii) *Pressure groups*: People show considerable impact by organising themselves into groups that promote special interests. The operation of such groups is clearly valid within the democratic process.

In this section we tried to show that social forces have always had a major impact on curriculum development. In order to prepare students for the world of tomorrow, the curriculum, while mirroring a society should also keep evaluating the ever changing social trends.

#### **Check Your Progress 4**

List at least five social factors that influence the need for a shift in our curriculum.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.

e) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit


Let us now talk about yet another foundation area which helps formulate an effective curriculum.

---

## **2.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

---

By providing a basis for understanding the teaching/learning process, educational psychology deals with how people learn. By implication, it emphasizes the need to recognise diversity among learners. However, it is also true that people share certain common characteristics. Among these are basic psychological needs which are necessary for individuals to lead a full and happy life. In this section, we shall be talking about the major learning theories and their contribution to curriculum development. Besides, we shall touch upon the basic psychological needs of individuals and reflect on their translation into curriculum.

We shall at this juncture remind ourselves that our main thrust will be on the contributions made by the theories of learning for curriculum development. Let us therefore make it clear that we are not, right now, interested in studying the theories of learning in detail, which has already been done to some extent in earlier courses on distance education.

### **2.4.1 Learning theories and curriculum**

For the sake of convenience we have classified the major theories of learning into the following groups:

- i) **behaviorist theories** which deal with various aspects of stimulus-response and reinforcement scheme;

- ii) **cognitivist theories** which view the learner in relationship with the total environment; and
- iii) **phenomenology** which emphasizes the affective domain of learning.

Let us take up each of them in the given order and examine its contribution to curriculum development.

#### **i) Behaviourism and curriculum**

The behaviourist school, which represents traditional psychology, is rooted in a corresponding philosophical speculation about the nature of learning. It has particularly dominated psychology in the first half of the twentieth century. After a few decades of being in the wilderness it has recently gained currency once again with the advent of individualized education.

Without going into the details we shall touch upon the main, characteristic features of the behaviourist school of thought.

Essentially, learning is considered a habit-formation and teaching is regarded as arranging learning experiences in such a way as to promote desirable behaviour. Further, behaviourism maintains that what is learnt in one situation can be transferred to other situations as well.

Broadly, behaviourists advocate that:

- behaviour is likely to be influenced by the conditions under which learning takes place;
- attitudes to and abilities of learning can change or improve over time through the application of proper stimuli;
- learning experiences can be designed and controlled to create desired learning;
- selective reinforcement is essential; and
- rote learning and memorization of knowledge are unnecessary.

Having thus touched upon the crux of behaviourism, we shall now turn our attention to its contribution to curriculum development. It provides the following significant guidelines.

A curriculum, according to behaviourists, should be based on the following concerns:

- i) remedial measures, acquisition of skills, considerations of basic or advanced learning;
- ii) well-defined, short-term and long-term objectives;
- iii) appropriate instructional materials and media to suit the learner's abilities;
- iv) shaping behaviour through prescribed tasks, phase by phase activities, close supervision of activities and positive reinforcement; and

- v) diagnosing, assessing and reassessing the learners' needs, objectives, activities, tasks and instruction with a view to improving the curriculum.

We can observe manifestations of these guidelines in the theories, principles or trends related to:

- individualized education (and to some extent, open system of education);
- instructional design and systems;
- teacher-training techniques such as simulation teaching, microteaching, competency-performance based teacher education;
- educational technology including programmed instruction (which provides, with modifications, a base for self-instructional materials in use in the distance mode of teaching/learning).

## **ii) Cognitivism and curriculum**

Today most psychologists explain the phenomenon of human growth and development in cognitive, social, psychological and physical terms. They also note that learning is primarily cognitive in nature. Growth and development refer to changes in the structure and function of human characteristics. Most cognitivists believe that growth and development occur in progressive stages. One example is Piaget's (Piaget, 1950) description of cognitive development in terms of stages from birth to maturity.

Most curriculum specialists tend to show greater adherence to cognitivism than to behaviourism. This might be because

- the cognitive approach leads to logical methods for organising and interpreting learning; and
- the cognitive approach is rooted in the tradition of teaching based on subject matter.

Even contemporary behaviourists incorporate cognitive processes in their theories of learning. Because learning in schools/colleges emphasises the cognitive domain, it follows that most educationists feel that learning is synonymous with cognitive development. As a corollary, a problem solving approach in teaching/learning gains currency.

But, if we take an actual teaching/learning situation into consideration we tend to realise that this learning model is incomplete and that something is lost in its processes of actual transfer in the classroom. In reality, the teaching/learning process boils down to the teacher talking predominantly and students mostly responding to what is said by the teacher.

What should be of concern to the curriculum specialists?



They should be aware of the fact that a school/college should be a place where students are not afraid of asking questions, making mistakes, taking cognitive risks and playing with ideas. Further colleges/schools should be more humane places where students can explore and fulfil their human potentials. Obviously, curriculum has to play a vital role to actually realise this objective.

### iii) Phenomenology and curriculum

Phenomenologists point out that the way we look at ourselves is crucial for understanding our behaviour and that we respond to an organisation or pattern of stimuli and not to an isolated stimulus.

It emphasises that learning must be explained in terms of the “wholeness” of the problem. Here you can draw a parallel with cognitivism. But what differentiates phenomenology from cognitivism is that the former stresses the affective and the latter the cognitive aspects of learning.

Because each individual has specific needs and interests related to his or her self-fulfillment and self-realisation, there can't be a generally prescribed humanistic curriculum. Humanistic learning may enhance the mental health of the learners, harmonise personal feelings among students and teachers, and improve various aspects of human awareness among students, teachers, and curriculum specialists, yet its processes rely mainly on personal experiences and subjective interpretations that leave them open to criticism. Therefore, there is a great need to examine and understand what is relevant in humanistic curricula.

Please note that most textbook writers tend to be cognition-oriented. However, one should propose that behaviourist components are needed for planning and developing a sound curriculum. Further, humanistic components of teaching and learning must also be incorporated into the curriculum. Let us say, therefore, that each theory of learning has something significant to contribute towards explaining various aspects of human behaviour and learning.

#### Check Your Progress 5

We talked about three classes of theories of learning. Highlight what is emphasized in each of the three.

- Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.  
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## **2.4.2 Basic human needs and curriculum**

Physical well-being and health are generally recognised and frequently dealt with through various programmes such as those on fitness, nutrition and health problems. Mental health needs such as those pertaining to acceptance, belonging, security and status have been widely studied but little emphasized in the area of curriculum.

In this sub-section, we shall touch upon just two points which concern the topic under consideration:

- i) self-actualization; and
- ii) developmental tasks.

Here, we shall discuss these and draw inferences as to how each one contributes to the enrichment of a curriculum.

### **i) Self-actualization**

The notion of self-actualization characterises individuals' need for self-fulfillment in life by actualizing/achieving their own potential. A curriculum, should therefore provide learning activities that allow students to identify themselves with those things they can do well. It should also assist them to succeed in other activities that are difficult for them. Learners are thus helped to find personal meaning in the learning experience.

Those responsible for curriculum development must pay attention to the concept of self-actualization. We all recognise the importance of school/college and community based goals for learners. Self-actualization on the other hand includes satisfying the desire to know and understand in relation to personal needs and interest. Moreover it has been noticed that when personal purposes are ignored, learners seem to be less successful in meeting the set goals. If curricular plans reflect a balance between institutional and personal needs, the impact on both may be substantially enhanced.

### **ii) Developmental tasks**

We can define a developmental task as a task which arises in relation to a certain period in the life of an individual, success in which leads to his/her happiness and to success in later tasks, while failure in it leads to unhappiness in the individual and difficulties in subsequent tasks. This fact is regarded as one of the most specific considerations in organizing tasks. The needs of individuals are governed by the stage of development

and age they have reached, and also grow out of their need to respond to societal expectations. The implication is that educators/curriculum planners should understand behaviours manifested by a learner indicating her/his readiness and need to deal with a particular developmental task.

As we facilitate the learners' success in these needs/tasks, their overall success can be ensured.

Further, in developing a curriculum, the development of an environment in which learners feel genuinely secure should be ensured. When a curriculum develops such an environment, learning takes place smoothly because the needs of students and what has been provided by the curriculum are complementary to each other.

In our discussion of the psychological foundations, we dealt with the contribution made by learning theories towards curriculum and also tried to see how much more effective a curriculum may be framed if we consider the nature of basic human need while forming it.

---

## **2.5 TRENDS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

---

To understand contemporary curricular problems and proposals, it is ideal that we acquaint ourselves with the history of curricular thought and practice that stretches back to antiquity. However, let us start this section with the assumption that we rarely find histories that focus exclusively on curriculum and, therefore, turn to an overview of general histories of education in an effort to get a few glimpses of the history of curriculum.

The curriculum field may be viewed as a formal area of academic inquiry, but as a basic human interest, its concerns are perennial. Parents and other members of society throughout history have wondered how best to help their young ones grow and mature. Their response to this problem constitutes an unwritten history of informal curricular thought and action. As societies became more formal and as institutions developed within them to meet specialised needs, schools/colleges evolved to help students grow more efficiently, to introduce them to the ways of their society and to help them acquire an understanding of their cultural heritage.

If we recall the earlier sections, curriculum has always been and continues to be influenced by educational philosophers, besides societal needs. In the ancient times, though a formal curriculum (of the shape it has obtained today) did not exist, young people were oriented towards meeting cultural and social demands. Depending on the influence of educational philosophies, however, curriculum-content for such orientations varied from one period to the other. Tracing the historical antecedents of curriculum may give us a framework of its gradual growth. However, for our immediate purposes we shall restrict ourselves to an overview of the twentieth century curriculum and a speculation of the possible future trends in curriculum development.

### **2.5.1 Twentieth century curriculum**

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century curriculum affirmed the shift in emphasis from sectarian education to liberal education. Traditionally, curriculum was confined to religion-related orientations and classics. Gradually, more

and more subjects were added to the curriculum. As the focus was on mental discipline, social needs, student interest or capabilities were given little emphasis. Further, during this period, compartmentalisation and not interdisciplinary subject matter was considered the norm. There was an unwillingness to recognise the values of arts, music, physical and vocational education. This was based on the theory that these subjects had little mental or disciplinary value. If we pause for a moment here and think, we shall realise that even though we offer vocational, industrial and/or technical programmes now, there is a tendency to consider traditional academic programmes superior to them.

Gradually, demands were made for curricular changes. Industrial development led a growing number of educators to question changes, as well as the authenticity of the traditional curriculum and its emphasis on mental discipline. This shift was also influenced by the scientific movement in child psychology (which focussed on the whole child and learning theories in the 1900's).

The argument that classics had no greater disciplinary or mental value than other subjects eventually appeared and meant that mental discipline (which emphasized drill and memorization) was no longer considered conducive for the overall growth and development of children. In essence, societal changes and the emerging demands therefrom; the stress on psychology and science; and the concern for social and educational reform made evident the need for a new curriculum. Thus, the aims of education went hand in hand with the particular type of society involved: conversely, the society that evolved influenced the aims of education.

Thus, the early twentieth century was a period of educational reform characterized by the following:

- i) Idea of mental discipline was replaced by utilitarian modes of thought and scientific inquiry.
- ii) Curriculum tended not to be compartmentalized but to be interdisciplinary.
- iii) Curriculum tended not to be static but dynamic—changing with the changes in society.
- iv) Needs and interest of students came to be considered of primary importance.

And now curriculum is viewed as a science with principles and methodology not just as content or subject matter.

## **2.5.2 Possible future trends**

Keeping in view the prevalent political, economic and academic climate, it is not difficult for us to visualize (of course, only to a certain extent) future trends and the influence they may have on education, particularly on curriculum development. (However, we should also confess here that such a speculation is fraught with risks that normally go with it.)

Although in this Unit we have been underlining the fact that social changes will have a vital role in determining a curriculum. If the present day growth of information is any indication the information flow will increase rapidly in the future. Clearly, the increasing flow of information negates the traditional notion of content-mastery. Students, therefore, will need to acquire critical thinking, and problem solving abilities rather than static and/or absolute knowledge and skills of factual recall.

Further, in the 21st century, the need for change will accelerate. For example, it took us more than one century to shift from an agricultural society to an industrial one. But it took hardly two decades to shift from an industrial to an information society.

What are the implications of these observations?

Job patterns will constantly change dramatically and so workers will be moving frequently from one job to another. Accordingly, to keep them abreast with each task/job that they take up, we will need to give them periodic training. The speed of change we have been referring to suggests not only that fields will be dynamic, but also that new ones will emerge. By implication, education and orientation will, of necessity be a lifelong process. In essence, unlike the past, we cannot consider our education complete just because we have attended schools/colleges or graduated from an educational institution. Nor will we be able to enter a job or profession and expect to remain in it for life without regular training.

Traditionally, organizations have followed hierarchical structuring with power and communication flowing in a pattern from top to bottom. Increasingly, however, centralized institutions are being replaced by smaller decentralized units. Much of the impetus for this change has come from the inability of hierarchical structures to effectively solve problems. Rigid and efficient organizations are no longer as efficacious as fluid and flexible ones in which experimentations and autonomy can thrive. Applied to education, this kind of decentralization gives recognition to an individual's need for self-determination and ownership in the decision making processes.

What are the implications of the above discussion?

In the main, there will be radical changes in the socio-academic ecology of school/college environment. Barring a few, if any, schools/colleges have so far been functioning as bastions of autocracy with little importance given to students' needs and teachers' competence. Because of the changing societal needs and greater awareness of the need for purpose-oriented education, the needs of every individual in the school/college will have to be recognised. In other words, there will be a change in the treatment of students as a homogeneous entity. Rapid growth in information will result in the emergence, every now and then, of varied curricula for purposes of reeducation and retaining. The number of consumers will obviously be more than the programmes available. In such a situation, the mode of the teaching/learning process

cannot be the one which is prevalent now, i.e., face-to-face. Obviously, a viable alternative mode is distance education.

The International Centre for Distance Learning (ICDE), Milton Keynes, UK, has been collecting information about courses offered through distance education all over the world. In January 1997, there were 1028 institutions and 106 countries. Some 38,974 courses distributed among 11 fields of studies as given in Table 1.

It seems the trend of distance education courses is towards the development of life skills involving critical thinking and problem solving.

**Table 1** Distance education courses (ICDL data base, 1997)

Sl. No.	Field of Study	No. of Courses (Jan, 97)
1.	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	8929
2.	Business, Services, Management, Economics	8438
3.	Education and Training	4450
4.	Applied Sciences, Technology, Computers, Environment	4432
5.	Medicine, Health, Social Welfare	3629
6.	Pure Science and Mathematics	3431
7.	Law, Law Enforcement, Regulations & Standards	1445
8.	Agriculture, Fisheries	1424
9.	Architecture, Building, Surveying, Planning	1168
10.	Broad, Multi-subject Studies, Study skills	1117
11.	Personal, Home and Family Affairs	511
TOTAL		38974

### Check Your Progress 6

We have discussed the status of 20<sup>th</sup> century curriculum and possible future trends. Please give your opinion on them.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.  
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## **2.6 LET US SUM UP**

In this Unit, we have explored the foundations of the curriculum and touched upon future curricular trends. We emphasised that each one of the foundations is important, since it contributes ideas that are crucial in framing a curriculum.

In the discussion about philosophy, it was suggested that philosophy has a valuable place in the practical realities of school/college since one's educational philosophy largely determines one's view on curriculum. While dealing with the social foundations, we said that in developing a curriculum both the contemporary and the future society should be considered and kept in view. We also said that in developing curricula, attention be paid to such issues as growth of technology, family structure, life styles and other aspects of society. At the same time, thought must be given to how the curriculum, developed in an industrial age, may respond to the growing diversity of the emerging post-industrial society.

The discussion of the psychological foundations has indicated that curricula can become more effective if they are based on considerations such as basic human needs and the ways for meeting them. Finally, trends in curriculum development were discussed to show that over the year curriculum has been undergoing changes under the influence of philosophical ideas and societal changes, and that open distance education is obviously the system for the future as it promises to accommodate the growing changes in individual needs, communication technology and curricular efforts to fuse them all together.

## **2.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : THE KEY**

1. Pragmatism emphasises the need to consider social changes in curriculum development. To discard social changes, and to take into account only those values which are changeless is unwise and unrealistic. Thus, pragmatism accepts knowledge as a process in which reality is constantly changing.
2. Existentialism as a philosophy has a limited possibility of application for schools/colleges. Education in our society, and also in most other modern societies, involves institutionalised learning and socialisation which require group instruction, restrictions on individuals' behaviour and bureaucratic organisation:
3.
  - i) Changing roles of the family
  - ii) Diversity in life styles
  - iii) Growth of technology.
4.
  - i) Growth in information and technology
  - ii) Changing sex roles
  - iii) Changing family structures and social roles
  - iv) Diversity in life styles
  - v) Cultural pluralism.

5. The three types of theories which we talked about are
  - i) Behaviourism;
  - ii) Cognitivism; and
  - iii) Phenomenology.
  - i) **Behaviourism:** It stresses conditioning of behaviour and altering the environment to elicit selected responses from the learner.
  - ii) **Cognitivism:** It emphasises that learning is affected by the environment and what is learnt in one situation can be transferred to another.
  - iii) **Phenomenology:** It emphasises that human needs should be considered of prime significance while planning a curriculum.
6. Looking at the 20<sup>th</sup> century curricula it is found that, due to radical changes in socio-academic ecology of institutions i.e., school/college environment, it is impossible to cater to the needs of the growing population individually as per their choice of courses through the conventional education system. Obviously, it may be possible due to rapid growth in information and technology and the institutions existing to run the courses through distance mode of learning where different kinds of courses are available for the student population. As per the ICDE information, it is seen that there is a consistent growth of distance education programmes in all parts of the world. The trend is also seen in the life-long courses i.e. in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Business, Services, Management and Economics, Education and Training, Applied Sciences, Technology, Computer, Environment, Health and Medicine, etc.