Curriculum Development: Global Perspectives

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Introduction

At the heart of the quest for quality education is the curriculum, over which different conceptions and expectations of higher education had always been fought. Curricula contestations reflect the growing challenges of reconciling the traditions of an instructor's autonomy in curriculum design and institutional goals for quality control, the imperatives of curriculum-as-process and curriculum-as-product, and the domains of knowing (knowledge), acting (acquisition of skills), and being (development of self). The composition of the curriculum both defines and reflects the changing structure of higher education in local, regional, and international contexts.

In this presentation, I'll discuss curriculum development from two vantage points. First, I'll examine some of the key developments in curriculum development globally since 1945. They include eroding institutional boundaries, curricula expansion, shifting focus on student learning, internationalization and standardization of degree cycles, demographic shifts and massification, expansion of post-graduate education, growth of student influences on curriculum through activism, and demands of the market and pressures for accountability.

Second, I'll share the experiences of my institution, USIU-Africa, in terms of the principles that drive it, the internal and external processes that guide it. The external processes include the accreditation standards and requirements from our two accreditation agencies, Commission for University Education (CUE) in Kenya and the Westin Association of Schools and Colleges Senior Colleges and Universities Commission (WSCUC).

Global Trends in Curriculum Development Since World War II[1]

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, broad distinctions were often made between universities that offered theoretical aspects of knowledge and institutions that provided practical, technical or vocational knowledges. The spectacular growth and restructuring of disciplines and fields of knowledge since then entailed curricula expansion, while the explosion of privatization of higher education broadened definitions of higher education beyond traditional models of elite university institutions.

In the decades after 1945, the old boundaries within higher education increasingly became blurred as universities diversified their curriculum and incorporated technical subjects and professional fields, and specialized vocational institutions fought for recognition as universities or as an integral and crucial part of the higher education system. This gave rise to a multiplicity of structures through which the curriculum was designed and delivered. Traditional universities essentially became multivarsities that were grouped into faculties, colleges or schools, which were further subdivided into disciplinary or subject departments or institutes. The organization of these units, and their respective specialties, disciplines and areas of instruction became so varied among and within countries and institutions that "by the 1990s there no longer existed an absolutely single type of university curricular structure."

Curricular expansion was accompanied by the development of diverse teaching formats, practices, and ideals. The lecture method remained dominant in

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[1] This section is drawn from Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education, 1945-2015* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Chapter 5.

many countries. Massification reinforced it as well as passive learning. Teaching ratios rose in most countries. For example, in European universities from the 1950s teacher-student ratios on average oscillated between 1:20 and 1:27 depending on the field. In Britain, the hallowed tutorial system became unsustainable; for the redbrick universities it was eroded by growing student numbers, for the elite institutions by increasing emphasis on research. Also, increasingly unmanageable was the external examining system. Increased curricular choices were not uniformly beneficial for students some of whom were overwhelmed and ended up suffering from the intellectual malnutrition of selecting easy courses, which prolonged college education and induced anxieties about their post-graduation futures.

Simultaneously, more value was placed on active student learning, which took various forms including problem-based learning (PBL). PBL originated at a Canadian university in 1965 as a way of improving medical education. As it developed, PBL found anchoring in theories of situated learning, cognitive and social constructivism, information processing, metacognition, self-directed learning, and cooperative learning. Teachers turned into facilitators and co-learners under PBL. It became popular in professional education in the medical and health sciences, business studies, social work, legal studies, and was applied in some social science disciplines such as political science, sociology, and economics, although some criticized it on the grounds of its efficiency and effectiveness. In more elite institutions team teaching, interactive teaching technologies, and undergraduate student research also assumed greater prominence.

These developments were influenced by the huge advances that were made in research on the complexity of teaching and learning processes in higher education. Rigid systems of terminal examinations gave way to more mixed forms of continuous assessment especially as the U.S. style credit-unit and modular system of courses, semesterization, and informality of teaching were adopted in various countries. Modules were initially unpopular in many European countries "because they encouraged the proliferation of unrelated courses, inhibited specialization, at least early specialization, and did not guarantee quality, since each module was autonomous. Furthermore, modules weakened the general quality of an institution's degree-granting capacity because the transfer student may have taken as much as half of his or her coursework in another institution."

The internationalization of higher education contributed to greater standardization of degree cycles. It also promoted student transfer and mobility where this was not common before. International student mobility simultaneously reinforced and challenged beliefs about the learning and study habits of foreign students. In Europe, the Bologna Process played a crucial role in the process of standardization. The quality assurance movement in other regions did the same with varying degrees of intensity and success. But the inertia of national traditions, resistance, range of practices, and differences in quality and standards often frustrated internationalization.

Student life changed as well. Demographic shifts played an important role especially as the proportion of women and other under-represented populations increased, which introduced new forms of division and even conflict. It also brought into sharp relief the significance of social integration and academic integration in raising the performance levels of under-represented students. Diversity challenged faculty to improve their teaching strategies and skills to enhance the learning process of students of different learning styles, needs, and backgrounds in terms of race, class, gender, and ability. Privatization raised students' sense of entitlement and

expectations, while massification strained the capacity of many non-elite institutions to provide high quality amenities and education. With massification the much-mythologized student campus life of elite postwar institutions applied to a smaller and smaller proportion of students in most countries. The growth of part-time and older students reinforced the fragmentation of the student body and collective experience.

While massification reflected growing demand for higher education, it was not always matched by outcomes. The difficulties of maintaining the equation between access and quality were reflected in dropout rates as levels of student preparedness fell in many countries. In the 1980s, "dropout rates in France were dismaying. About 40 percent of science entrants, 45 percent in law and economics, left in the first year of the first cycle." In the U.S., the proverbial four-year undergraduate degree stretched to six years. Among the students who enrolled for an undergraduate degree in fall 2007, only 59% graduated by 2013. In South Africa, it was reported in 2015 that "around 50 to 60 percent of students at higher learning institutions dropout during their first year." All this raised the importance of remedial education.

From the 1980s, massification at the undergraduate level was accompanied by the expansion of postgraduate education. According to one source, "In Canada the number of doctoral candidates rose by 106% during the decade 1991 to 2001. In Finland, there was a 50% increase in enrollments in the 1980s and a 120% increase in the 1990s. In China, the number of doctoral candidates increased from 18 in 1983 to 188,000 in 2003." The graduate student population also became more diverse in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. By the late 2000s, the proportion of men remained "well above that of women in some countries (e.g. France, Germany, Japan, South)," while women equaled men in "many countries (including Australia, Canada, Poland, UK, USA," and "in a few countries such as Brazil women constitute more than half of the doctoral student population." As for age, most graduate students started under 30 years old, and completed at the average ages of 32 in the UK, 33 years in Germany, 36 years in Canada, 36 in Australia, and 37-38 in the Nordic countries. Ethnic and racial minorities continued to be underrepresented in the United States, Australia, and much of Europe.

Graduate student experiences varied quite noticeably within countries, institutions, and programs. They were largely determined by the quality of the student-supervisor relationship, and conditions of graduate life, work, and prospects. In the face of the challenges of graduate education some began to wonder, "Will the PhD continue to be primarily a site of knowledge discovery or will the PHD of the twenty-first century be a site for preparation of knowledge workers rather than knowledge creators? While this tension is not necessarily new to doctoral educators or students in industrial economies, such as Australia, Europe, USA and the UK, its resolution will become a topic of more urgent debate for all economies."

On the whole, students' influence on the curriculum grew steadily after 1945. This was effected in two major ways. First, through student activism and protests against prevailing institutional practices including teaching and learning as reflected in the curriculum. For example, the development of academic fields such as women's and gender studies, area and ethnic studies, environmental studies, and cultural studies was influenced by student protests. Second, students exerted influence through their course choices that increased with the expansion of the curriculum and number of institutions. Privatization was partly driven by student demand for marketable skills. Many of the private higher education institutions that emerged from the 1980s and 1990s offered limited occupation-specific programs in such fields as business, information technology, and communications.

The poorer countries and weaker institutions were more susceptible to the demands and pressures of the market unlike the richer and elite institutions that through their positioning and products influenced the constitution of market needs, signals, and operations. By and large, the liberal educational ideal of the pre-World War II and immediate post-war university endured mostly in elite institutions. These institutions continued to produce liberally educated professionals and professionally prepared liberal arts students, to cultivate graduates with the international, interdisciplinary and intercultural skills and sensibilities to navigate an ever more complex, connected, and competitive world. The rest produced vulnerable vocational functionaries of the rapidly changing and unstable economic order of the 21st century.

Key Forces in Curriculum Development

1. The state
   a. Political and ideological proclivities of the state, e.g., colonial and postcolonial, communist/socialist and post-communist/socialist regimes, conservative and liberal regimes in the Western countries: curriculum is the site of ideological and political battles within and among societies.
   b. Control and funding.
   c. Nature and modes of operation of accreditation and quality assurance systems.
2. The academic profession
   a. Nature and type of institution: public, private; research intensive, teaching intensive, vocational, or technical; comprehensive, disciplinary, or specialized institutions.
   b. Levels of institutional autonomy and academic freedom—role of external agencies, internal processes, faculty in curriculum development.
   c. Shifting dynamics of knowledge production, dissemination, consumption, and organization of knowledge.
   d. Changing understanding of teaching and learning, modes of delivery of teaching and learning, and assessment of teaching and learning.
3. The employment market
   a. Changing structure of the economy—agrarian, industrial, service, digital economies
   b. The changing aspirations, expectations, interests, and opportunities for students and graduates, e.g., baby boomers, generation x, millennials— latter interested in self-employment more than the baby boomers; longer 'wait-hood' into independent adulthood for the latter than the former.
   c. Alignment and mismatches between academia and economy in terms of skills produced by the latter and required by the former.

Curriculum Development at USIU-Africa

Institutional Vision, Mission and Values
1. Vision: To be a premier institution with a global perspective
2. Mission: Promote the discovery and application of knowledge, the acquisition of skills and the development of intellect and character in a manner which

prepares students to contribute effectively and ethically as citizens of a changing and increasingly technological world.

    a. Higher order thinking
    b. Literacy
    c. Global understanding and multicultural perspective
    d. Preparedness for career
    e. Leadership and ethics
    f. Community service and development

3. Core Values:
    a. Life-long learning
    b. Integrity
    c. Innovativeness
    d. Social responsibility
    e. Academic freedom

History and Programs

1. Established in 1969 as one of branch campus of USIU (others London, Mexico City, and Tokyo); became independent in 2005.
2. Currently 4 schools: Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), Business, Science & Technology, Pharmacy & Health Sciences.
3. Two new schools to be established this coming academic year: Communications, Cinematic & Cinematic Arts (SCCC); Graduate Studies, Research & Extension.
4. Facilities: state of the art buildings, technology, classrooms, laboratories, library—often regarded as the best in Kenya; constructing new buildings for SHSS, CCC, student accommodation (for all first year, international students)

Dual Accreditation

1. By Commission for Kenya's Higher Education in the 1980s and by its successor Commission for University Education (CUE).
2. Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) (responsible for accreditation in Western USA, e.g., California).

Institutional Profile

1. Students from 73 countries in Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Africa including Malawi
2. Industry partnerships, e.g. with key IT companies for training, internships, and certification—IBM, Microsoft, Linus, Safaricom, TechnoBrain, Intel (setting up a High Performance Computing facility for the continent), Continuity East Africa (set up the first business continuity facility to serve the East Africa region).
3. Relatively low student-faculty ratios.
4. Extensive co-curricular activities—clubs, sports (often ranked on top or among top 2 or three in rugby, basketball, and inter0varsity athletics); developing an assessment system for co-curricular activities using Taskstream software system.

5. Governance: Board of Trustees and University Council—one-third Kenyan, one-third other Africans, one-third international; include leading business executives, educational leaders, philanthropists, accreditation experts, and professionals.

Curriculum Development

1. Process: Department—School—Quality Assurance Office (Director, Accreditation Liaison Officer for WASC, several staff)—DVC-Academic Affairs—VC—University Senate—Accrediting agencies (CUE and WASC)—inform University Council--implementation.
2. Internal processes
    1. Institutional needs based on Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Plan (latest 2015/16-2019/20)
    2. Intellectual and educational trends in the field
    3. Benchmarking against peer and aspirational institutions nationally, regionally, and internationally
    4. Market research of needs of the national, regional, and international economies
3. External processes
    1. Requirements of the Commission for University Education
    2. Requirements of WSCUC

CUE Standards

1. *Launching of Academic Program*: No university shall launch an academic program without prior consent from the Commission.
    a. Properly designed curriculum, in line with the Commission's guidelines accompanied by:
        i. needs assessment report on the proposed program;
        ii. approval by the Senate
        iii. Comprehensive reports on:
            1. Academic facilities and infrastructure available for the support of the program, including infrastructure;
            2. Equipment and learning materials available for the support the program;
            3. Core-texts and journals for the support of the program;
            4. Academic and support staff, indicating academic qualifications and areas of expertise, where obtained from, experience in teaching, research and publication.
        iv. In case of a professional program, an attachment of a letter of consent from the relevant professional body.
        v. The institution has a functional and approved Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) structure; and
        vi. A regular peer review of academic programs has been institutionalized and a 5-year peer review plan submitted to the Commission.

2. *Quality Assurance Systems for Academic Programs*: Each university shall have its own quality assurance systems and mechanisms in line with the Commission's prescribed guidelines.

3. *Collaboration on Academic Programs*: Any institution seeking collaboration with another to offer academic programs shall ensure that the mother institution is accredited in its country of origin and that the program has been accredited/validated by the relevant accrediting body or the state.

4. *New Academic Programs*:
   1. An academic program shall facilitate a balanced learning process, ensuring that the students are able to acquire such cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills as are consistent with educational goals and aspirations of Kenyans;
   2. The design of an academic program shall take into account:
      a. Contextualization and relevance;
      b. Contribution to the overall national human resource development and requirements;
      c. Broad-base, diversification and integration aspects;
      d. Practical-orientation; and
      e. The Commission's standards in curriculum development.
      f. Each level of academic program shall be differentiated by specific attributes. Higher levels of academic programs shall require higher and more complex attributes;
         i. An institution shall be expected to have successfully graduated several cohorts of the lower level academic program before proposing a higher level academic program; and
         ii. Each level of academic program shall be differentiated by specific attributes. Higher levels of academic programs shall require higher and more complex attributes.

5. *Professional Programs*
   a. Professional programs shall only be considered for approval only if the basic programs on which they are dependant are on offer in the said institution; and
   b. Professional programs shall be granted approval by the respective professional body prior to being recognized as approved programs by the Commission.

6. *The Academic Program Structure*: An academic program structure shall be aligned to a standard frame as provided by the Commission and shall include background information of the institution, information on the various program facets and details on the academic resources for the support of the program.
   a. The institution's background information, which includes the vision, mission and philosophy of the institution; the institution's minimum admission requirements; the academic resources in the institution including facilities; the programs offered by the institution including duration of each program, academic organization of the programs and definitions of terms including course units, credit hours, lecture hours and contact hours;
   b. Information on the various facets of the program including its Title, Philosophy; Rationale including market survey implications; Goal; Expected

Learning Outcomes of both the program and the specialization areas (if any); Mode of Delivery;

    c. Academic Regulations comprising of admission requirements, regulations on credit transfer, program requirements, student assessment policy/criteria, grading system, examination regulations including moderation of examinations, graduation requirements, classification of degrees and regulations for thesis/dissertation/projects (where applicable); Program Evaluation; Management and Administration;

    d. iii. Appendices of the academic resources for the support of the program comprising of the facilities; equipment and teaching materials; core-texts and journals; academic staff; and the University Policy on Curriculum Development.

7. *Admission Qualifications*: Minimum admission requirements shall be provided for every academic program in line with prescribed admission requirements—undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral.

8. *Academic Staff*: Each academic program shall be headed by an appropriate and qualified senior academic staff with at least five (5) years experience in university teaching, preferably a Professor, Associate Professor or Senior Lecturer, with a doctorate degree in a relevant field of study, evidence of research inclinations and having at least three (3) peer reviewed publications;

9. *Reference Materials Standards*: Each program shall be supported by relevant reference materials.

10. *Facilities and Equipment*: Each program shall be supported by appropriate and adequate number of facilities and equipment.

<u>WASC Standards</u>

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes
1.1 Formally approved, appropriate statements of purpose that define values and character.
1.2 Clear educational objectives; indicators of student achievement at institution, program a course levels; retention/graduation data and evidence of student learning made public.

Integrity and Transparency
1.3 Academic freedom: policies and practices
1.4 Diversity: policies, programs, and practice
1.5 Education as primary purpose; autonomy from external entities
1.6 Truthful representation to students/public; fair and equitable policies; timely completion
1.7 Operational integrity; sound business practices; timely and fair responses to complaints; evaluation of institutional performance
1.8 Honest, open communication with WSCUC including notification of material matters; implementation of WSCUC policies

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Teaching and Learning
2.1 Programs appropriate in content, standards, degree level; sufficient qualified faculty
2.2 Clearly defined degrees re: admission processes to ensure meaning, quality and integrity of degree requirements and levels of achievement for graduation;
2.2a – Undergraduate degree requirements, including general education and core competencies
2.2b – Graduate degree requirements clearly stated and appropriate
2.3 Student learning outcomes (SLOs) and expectations for student learning at all levels; reflected in curricula, programs, policies, advising.
2.4 Faculty's collective responsibility for setting SLOs and standards, assessing student learning, demonstrating achievement of standards
2.5 Students actively involved in learning and challenged; feedback on learning provide
2.6 Graduates achieve stated levels of attainment; SLOs embedded in faculty standards for assessing student work
2.7 Program review includes SLOs, retention/graduation data, external evidence and evaluator

Scholarship and Creative Activity
2.8 Scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation for both students and faculty valued and supported faculty valued and supported
2.9 Faculty evaluation links scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service

Student Learning and Success
2.10 Institution identifies and supports needs of students; tracks aggregated and disaggregate student achievement, satisfaction and campus climate; demonstrates students' timely progress
2.11 Co-curricular programs aligned with academic goals and regularly assessed
2.12 Institution provides useful and complete program information and advising
2.13 Appropriate student support services planned, implemented, and evaluate
2.14 Appropriate information to, and treatment of, transfer students (if applicable)

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

Faculty and Staff
3.1 Sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations
3.2 Faculty and staff policies, practices and evaluation well developed and applied
3.3 Faculty and staff development planned, implemented, and evaluated

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resource
3.4 Financial stability, clean audits, sufficient resources; realistic plans for any deficits; integrate budgeting; enrollment management; diversified revenue sources
3.5 Facilities, services, information and technology resources sufficient and aligned with objectives

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

3.6 Leadership operates with integrity, high performance, responsibility, and accountability

3.7 Clear, consistent decision-making structures and processes; priority to sustain institutional capacity and educational effectiveness

3.8 Full-time CEO and full-time CFO; sufficient qualified administrators

3.9 Independent governing board with appropriate oversight, including hiring and evaluating CEO

3.10 Effective academic leadership by faculty

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

4.1 Quality-assurance processes in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data; track results over time; use comparative data; and make improvement

4.2 Sufficient institutional research (IR) capacity; data disseminated and incorporated in planning and decision-making; IR effectiveness assessed

Institutional Learning and Improvement

4.3 Commitment to improvement based on data and evidence; systematic assessment of teaching learning, campus environment; utilization of result

4.4 Ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning to improve curricula, pedagogy, and assessmentthe

4.5 Appropriate stakeholders involved in regular assessment of institutional effectiveness

4.6 Reflection and planning with multiple constituents; strategic plans align with purposes; address key priorities and future directions; plans are monitored and revised as required

4.7 Anticipating and responding to a changing higher educational environment

Conclusion

Offering quality education is non-negotiable for higher education institutions, for them to serve their societies most robustly and effectively. It is an educational imperative, an economic imperative, and an ethical imperative. An educational imperative because higher education institutions exist to educate students of from varied social backgrounds, of different intellectual capabilities, with all manner of talents. Complaints about the preparedness and learning abilities of students, regardless of how correct they may be, is akin to doctors who complain about being expected to treat sick people. Higher education institutions are there to educate, to develop the minds and cultivate the imagination and sensibilities of students.

Quality education is also an economic imperative. A well educated and skilled workforce is indispensable for innovative and sustainable economic development. Malawi will not achieve its Vision 2020 without it, neither will the continent achieve the African Union's Agenda 2063 without it, nor will the world at large realize the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals without it. Who wants unqualified engineers building roads and bridges that are sure to collapse, untrained pilots to fly pilots that are likely to crash, or incompetent doctors to operate on patients?

Quality education is an ethical imperative as well. It offers young people from poor and low income backgrounds the only opportunity they will ever have to acquire the education, skills, social capital necessary not only to improve their personal and professional lives, but also the fortunes of their current and future families, communities, country, and continent. Shoddy education deprives them of such opportunities. I came from a working class background, and it is quality higher education that made the most significant difference in my personal and professional life. That's true for many of you. My children, in contrast, were assured of good education because their parents could afford it, together with the social capital they acquired from being children of successful professionals. The vast majority of students who come to our institutions do not have such advantages.

Thus, providing mediocre or substandard education is tantamount to committing educational, economic, ethical crimes against young people and our societies. We cannot afford to do so if we want to prepare today's youth for more productive and fulfilling lives, if we want better futures for our economies, societies, and polities, if we want a more developed, democratic, peaceful Africa. Thank you!