



What Went Wrong in Curriculum Development

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One of the fundamental changes that occurred in education planning in the 1960's and 1970's is that departments of education and faculties of education started to put forward the notion that they, being the experts, should be determining what knowledge and skills students would acquire in their 12 years in public education.

Politicians, focused on other things, trusted their departments and slowly the determination of what students would learn shifted to the lap of the education establishment. This is the point at which society in general started to lose control of the education system.

Trustees were told as early as the 1990's that their role was not to interfere in "what" students were learning, but they were there rather to ensure good financial and management practices were in place.

This process of stripping away any input from parents and the end users in relation to what the newly "educated" students should have mastered is now complete. The imposition of a curriculum that does not meet the economic needs of the society, and is geared to socially engineer a student, based upon shifting ideologies and what is currently deemed politically correct, is almost unopposed.

PCE suggests that a body of experts, apart from the Department of Education and the Faculties of Education, should determine what knowledge and skills a graduating student would need to enter university, technical schools or directly enter into the workforce. This body of experts should be chosen from industry and post-secondary departments, as well as representatives of concerned parent organizations such as Parents for Choice in Education.

The body of education outcomes would then be handed off to the Minister of Education and would become his marching orders to deliver. The education department would then take those outcomes and backward design curriculum using their staff. The outcomes would be such that they would be easily subject to large scale annual assessment at grade 12 and at selected grade levels in elementary and junior high. Large scale empirical assessment of learning is the only way to ensure consistency of educational quality across the system.

It is time to return to common sense, outcome based, curriculum development. We owe it to Alberta students to ensure the skills they are taught in their K-12 education sets them up for success in their adult lives. Only by designing curriculum well can we provide Alberta students with an education that will allow them to succeed both here in Alberta and on the world stage.