

Curriculum and Organisation Framework: P-12

Victoria. Ministry of Education (Schools Division), 1988

Overview of the document

96 page document which is one of a series of 10 titles that form the School Curriculum and Organisation Framework. This document provides an overview while the others focus on particular curriculum areas. Companion Documents include: The Arts Framework; The Commerce Framework; The English Language Framework; The LOTE Framework; The Mathematics Framework; The Personal Development Framework; The Science Framework; The Social Education Framework; and The Technology Studies Framework.

Keywords

Participation; assessment; reporting; curriculum improvement; inclusive; broad, general education; whole-school approach; school-based curriculum development; effective partnerships between students, parents and teachers; appropriate learning experiences; social justice; redressing educational disadvantage; skills; whole person; increasingly complex social and economic environment; personal autonomy; self-esteem; culture.

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Summary of Contents

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND ORGANISATION

- Defines curriculum as covering all the arrangements the school makes for students' learning and development.
- Notes that state policy requires schools to provide comprehensive and inclusive curriculum and for the education system to provide the highest quality education for all students, regardless of location, ability, background, ethnic origin or gender.
- Cites the 'purposes of schooling' from Ministerial Paper No. 1.
- Develops the idea of 'partnerships' in curriculum whereby the whole school community are involved through collaboration, sharing, consultation and negotiation.
- Argues that curriculum must be comprehensive and advocates a "broad, general education, based on a range of studies and activities". (p. 10)
- Notes that a comprehensive curriculum includes: breadth and depth; access to a range of significant knowledge and experience; connections between learnings; relations practice and theory and links to social context; encouraging students to work cooperatively; providing for continuity in and development of, knowledge, skills values and aesthetic appreciation; helping students grow in confidence, self-worth and responsibility for their own learning; taking account of varied learning styles; and high expectations of students. (p. 10)
- Outlines guidelines for schools in planning and evaluating programs.
- Argues that student groupings should be mixed-ability.
- Notes that schools have the responsibility to promote social justice and redress educational disadvantage.
- Argues that schools can improve the quality of learning for students when: they understand the background of students; well-planned programs are developed; learning activities are both challenging and enjoyable; relationships within the school are of a high quality; students develop a respect for learning; teachers engage in self-reflective pedagogical practices; and the "physical and social environment supports students in their learning". (p. 10)
- Argues that assessment should focus on individual student learning and not comparison between students. Notes that improved reporting to parents on this basis will assist further learning.
- Argues that schools must be accountable and demonstrate implementation of policy.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM

- States that “The development of a comprehensive curriculum is not a matter of merely expanding the range of studies. To provide a comprehensive curriculum, a school needs to commit itself to:
 - Providing a wide range of experiences for each student;
 - Providing a balanced curriculum;
 - Making connections between studies;
 - Providing an “inclusive” curriculum; and
 - Proving for the personal growth of each student.” (p. 16)
- Argues that “a commitment to these should enable a school to provide a curriculum which has the qualities of breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and inclusiveness”. (p. 16)
- Elaborates on each of the areas listed above and notes that:
 - A wide range of experiences for each student is covered by the 9 framework areas.
 - “Balance” in the curriculum is not only the amount of time dedicated to each of the framework areas (this is determined by schools) as it is also affected by the approach to teaching and learning, the organisation of classes, and assessment and reporting.
 - Connections between studies mean that relationships between learning areas must be established so that there is coherence and continuity in the curriculum.
 - The progressive development of knowledge, skills and values is also important.
 - Planning and organising the curriculum needs to take into account that it “caters for both sexes, all socio-economic and cultural groups represented in the school, students with disabilities and those with special abilities”. (p. 17)
 - The personal growth of each student is important as “students learn best when they have confidence in their abilities and a sense of personal worth”. (p. 17)
- Outlines principles for writing school policies, preparing the school’s curriculum plan, developing learning and teaching programs and provides an overview of the nine curriculum framework areas of study.

CHAPTER 3: IMPROVING LEARNING AND TEACHING

- Recommends the following approaches to learning and teaching:
 - Actively involve students in their learning;
 - Build upon students’ experiences and interests;
 - Link theory to practice;
 - Foster communication and cooperation in learning;
 - Encourage risk-taking and learning from errors. (p. 39)
- Outlines how each of these principles should inform classroom activities and activities throughout the school using a range of examples.

CHAPTER 4: ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

- Notes that assessment is understood as a part of the learning process and defines it as “a process which must be clearly directed at helping students to improve their learning”. (p. 62)
- Notes that students should be involved in setting learning goals and that assessment should be based on those goals.

- Provides sample assessment and reporting policies for schools to use in the development of their own policies.
- Notes that a range of information should be used in assessments of student learning. Notes that tests can be used but should not form the basis of comparison with others and that student profiles can be used to record student achievement and endorses the value of self-assessment.
- Notes that reporting should illustrate how assessment is related to learning and offers number of examples of student reports.

CHAPTER 5: CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING

- Stresses the importance of collaborative decision making “by all partners in the curriculum.” Notes that this “assumes that the quality of education will be improved where there is a sharing of information and decision-making responsibilities”. (p. 78)
- Outlines formal responsibilities and makes suggestions for how to improve collaboration.
- Argues that to improve participation in decision making, schools should:
 - Consider “the nature of the participation” and recognise that contributions can be made in different ways;
 - Maximise effective communication and recognise that agreed goals can most effectively be established within a climate of trust and respect;
 - Ensure that meetings are flexible;
 - Understand the time involved and ensure that participants feel that their time has been well spent.
- Stresses the importance of functions and structures and outlines the role and responsibilities of the school council, and others involved in curriculum development including the curriculum coordinator, members of the wider school community, students, regional people, parents, teachers, school principals, curriculum committees, program teams and specific purpose groups.
- Provides some example organisational charts of curriculum decision-making structures.

CHAPTER 6: CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT

- States that “Chapter 6 emphasises that curriculum improvement is a continuous process in which all members of the school community should have the opportunity to be involved.” (p. 86)
- Outlines how curriculum improvement can be achieved through:
 - Improving classroom teaching practice
 - Improving programs
 - Reviewing goals and policies.
- Notes the importance of professional development and evaluation of goals and policies.

CHAPTER 7: FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

- Provides a page of references which includes resources from the Education Department, major reports, and some secondary literature.