8.3.1 Need for Curriculum Evaluation

Now the question arises "Why do we need curriculum evaluation?" The professional response to this question stresses improvement of student learning, and hence improvement in the quality of education. The following are the main purposes of curriculum evaluation.

i) **To develop a new curriculum**

If you wish to develop a new curriculum for a vocational course at the secondary stage, it would be worthwhile to evaluate a current curriculum from a different system before adopting it to our emerging requirements. The usual practice would be to prune an existing curriculum to suit our new requirements because at times the decisions in the planning process can be quite arbitrary. Such a process leads to the risk of overloading the curriculum. To make objective decisions on the development of the new curriculum, evaluation of the existing curriculum is necessary.

ii) **To review a curriculum under implementation**

It may be required by policy planners and decision makers to get an immediate feedback on the implementation of a curriculum in order to make amendments if required for effective realisation of all the objectives related to it. A curriculum evaluation exercise would be necessary for this purpose.

iii) **To remove 'dead wood' and update an existing curriculum**

It is essential to remove obsolete ideas and practices from a curriculum and include current developments in the curriculum. In order to make objective decisions about inclusion or deletion of content or practices a curriculum evaluation exercise would again be necessary.

iv) **To find out the effectiveness of a curriculum**

To make an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of a curriculum in terms of the achievement of its immediate as well as long-term objectives, a curriculum evaluation exercise would be essential. This evaluation is different from the evaluation of the students of a course for the purpose of certification. The difference is that curriculum evaluation is more comprehensive and includes student evaluation plus the feelings generated among the students regarding appropriateness of the various components of the curriculum.

8.4 SOURCES OF CURRICULUM EVALUATION

There are several sources from where meaningful information can be collected regarding a given school curriculum. Major sources are discussed below.

i) Learners

The learners of a particular course are the primary and most important source of information regarding how relevant the intended curriculum is and how well it is being implemented. The list of the output specifications can be given to the learners who are undergoing a particular course and detailed information can be gathered in two ways:

- by finding out whether the learners have really achieved the intended output specifications.

- by finding out the perceptions of learners regarding the extent to which they feel they have achieved the objectives of the course. This information is more qualitative in nature as these are the perceptions of students and they are of immense value from the point of view of revising the curriculum. Such valuable data can be collected even from students who have passed out and who have already learnt through the implementation of the curriculum.

ii) Teachers and other Subject Experts

In the process of curriculum renewal, teachers must be involved as they transact the curriculum in the class. They can help in curriculum mapping, which is the process of content alignment in accordance with curriculum goals. The subject experts also helps in curriculum mapping from the discipline point of view.

iii) Curriculum Experts

Curriculum experts can provide information on the modem techniques used for developing a curriculum so that it becomes more meaningful from the student's point of view. The age old practice of assembling content points, in a telegraphic language into a syllabus, has become outdated. In the meaningful curriculum the output specifications, are made clear, i.e. the curriculum specifies as to what the students will be able to do at the end of the course, the conditions under which they will be observed and the level of acceptance of errors. Curriculum experts have come a long way since then and their assistance in curriculum evaluation is inevitable. Therefore, curriculum experts are a good source of information for curriculum evaluation.

iv) Policy Makers

Policy makers occupying responsible positions in apex bodies like Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT), National Open School (NOS) and State Boards of Secondary Education are also excellent sources of information for curriculum evaluation. By virtue of their position they are better informed about the current and the envisaged changes in government policies regarding economy, industry, agriculture and education. All these areas have direct or indirect implications for school curriculum. There have been quite a few instances in the recent past where even the change of governments in a state was responsible for making specific changes in textbooks of

History and Science! Therefore, policy makers can be an important source for the curriculum evaluation.

v) **Community:** The local community where the products (educated/trained persons) of a particular course are to be absorbed can be yet another important source of information for curriculum evaluation. The requirements of the local community can make the curriculum relevant and need-based or otherwise. A curriculum revised on the basis of needs and requirements of the community will be able to serve the cause of the community better in producing better socialised and more responsible citizens.

vii) **Dropouts Sample:** Those students who have dropped out of a particular course can be yet another valuable source of information for curriculum evaluation. These students can pin-point the curricular factors that might have been responsible for their withdrawal from the course. A diagnostic test administered on these dropouts can provide valuable information regarding the misconceptions generated by the present curriculum. This feedback will help in modifying or improving the curriculum.

vii) **Employers and Entrepreneurs:** The opinion of the employers, who have to absorb the products needed by them, will reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. Those who are self-employed, even in the unorganised service sector can provide valuable information on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular curriculum. Such information can help in making the curriculum socially relevant and useful.