

The Concept of the Learner: Influence on Curriculum and Instruction

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As plain as *team-teaching* may sound, it is still often misconstrued to mean what roles two or more teachers play *during* a lesson. Furthermore, the role of the native English speaking teacher (NT a.k.a. ALT) is commonly restricted to oral communication classes, and in some cases, limited only to the role of listen-and-repeat or textbook model reading.

Team-teaching should be much more. *Team-teaching* should begin with curriculum development and end with curriculum evaluation. Far too much focus is put on individual activities, and far too less focus is put on what kind of language learners a curriculum hopes to create. Over a series of four articles I will refer to Figure 1, which stands as a model, ideal as though it may be, of curriculum development. From this perspective, I will discuss the following in coming articles: instruction plans and evaluation of (1) writing; (2) reading; and (3) grammar. Each discussion will focus on how an NT can play a greater role in each of these areas. In this introduction, allow me to focus on curriculum design.

Curriculum Design

At Figure 1 shows, a curriculum designer must be able to answer the question, "What is your concept of a learner?" Using writing as an example, "What kind of writer do you expect your students to be able to become?" Discuss these and similar questions with colleagues. Answers to these questions will lead to a curriculum design, which in turn will aid in writing instructional plans. Then team-teachers will be able to implement the instructional plans, creating or doing necessary activities along the path of the curriculum.

Answering the question of "What kind of writer do you expect your students to be able to become?" is not necessarily easy. Perhaps coming up with general goals is not too difficult, yet it is all the more difficult to answer the outcomes of teaching as a whole as depicted in Figure 1. "What kind of learner?" and "What kind of learning?" can the teacher aim to achieve.

In relation to writing, how will the students approach writing? What will they think of it? Once they begin, will they follow through by

editing and re-writing? Will they take pride in what they write? What kind of writer (learner) will they be?

In relation to writing, what will the students learn? Will they understand the grammar of English? Will they understand how to put sentences together to form a clear, overall meaning? Will they be able to express their thoughts, opinions and beliefs in an effective way? What kind of learning (about writing) will they have attained?

The challenge is to be able to answer these questions. The answers to these questions will shape the curriculum and should, of course, be the guide for the specific students for which the curriculum is designed. Once the curriculum is designed instructional plans can be made. Yet before the curriculum can be designed, what is your concept of your learners?

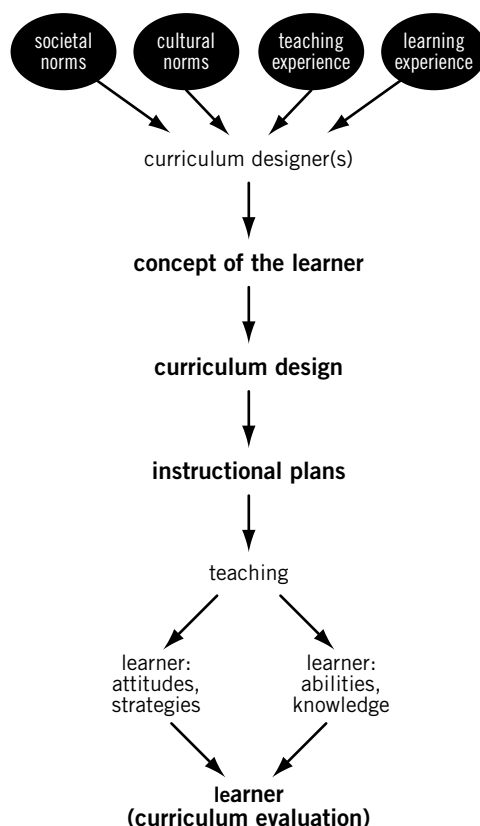


Figure 1. Curriculum design model starting with the concept of the learner and focusing only on teachers as curriculum designers.