CURRICULUM AUGMENTATION: AN APPLICATION 
AND EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS 
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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to test the feasibility and appropriateness of curriculum augmentation, the process of further developing and strengthening available curricular materials along specified dimensions. The curriculum selected for augmentation in this study was an elementary school social studies unit entitled A House of Ancient Greece, developed in the MATCH Project of the Boston Children's Museum. Following a preliminary analysis, it was decided to augment A House of Ancient Greece by producing a modified Teacher's Guide (containing affective and cognitive learning objectives stated in terms of pupil performance expectations and suggested pupil assessment procedures), an audio tape to supplement the kit materials, and a teacher education component.

In addition to briefly outlining how the augmentation of this curriculum was accomplished, the paper describes a field study which was conducted in order to assess the effectiveness of the augmentation. The data of the field study, conducted in schools in New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, support the following conclusions: (1) contrasting versions of the Guide appeared to produce no significant differences in classroom behavior, (2) the classroom performance of workshop-trained teachers appears to have been superior to those not so trained, (3) a high proportion of teachers preferred the augmented Guide over the commercial version, (4) A House of Ancient Greece showed itself to be an exceptionally fine curriculum, apparently eliciting classroom performance well above the norm, as well as great enthusiasm on the part of teachers, pupils, and parents.

Introduction

The curriculum reform movement of the 1960s produced an enormous number of new learning programs and materials, but, in the absence of any widely accepted design criteria, these materials varied greatly with respect to

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their format, composition, and structure. In many ways this diversity is laudable, for it extends to potential users many alternative approaches. On the other hand, educators face the problem of what to do in the case of those curricula which, although generally excellent, nonetheless lack some design characteristic or characteristics which the user deems important. In such cases, the process of curriculum augmentation — that is, further developing and strengthening of the curriculum along specified dimensions — can be employed as a means of resolving the dilemma. This study was designed to test the feasibility and appropriateness of that process.

In at least some ways, curriculum augmentation, the process which is the focus of the research described in this paper, is strikingly similar to the process called “value engineering” (first applied by Miles in 1947 as “value analysis”). A helpful definition of value engineering is found in the Department of Defense Armed Services Procurement Regulations: “Value engineering is an organized effort directed at analyzing the function of an item with the purpose of achieving the required function at the lowest overall cost”. (quoted in Clawson, 1970). It is important to note value engineering’s primary concern with function, for it is this emphasis which sets value engineering apart from other methodologies. Curriculum augmentation places a similar emphasis on function, and it is in their shared concern for achieving function effectively that value engineering and curriculum augmentation are most congruent. Neither process is willing to accept the designed product and its components at face value; each stresses defining the function of the product and redesigns accordingly in order to perform the function effectively and efficiently. Although value engineering appears to place a higher premium on cost reduction, curriculum augmentation procedures must also seek to achieve high quality at the lowest possible cost — especially in these days of shrinking dollar resources for education.

During its relatively brief existence, the Eastern Regional Institute for Education (ERIE), an educational laboratory established under Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, was committed to implementing process-oriented curricula in elementary schools. In order to determine which of the existing curricula might be suitable for early implementation, the Institute engaged in a systematic search process (Kosmac and Cole, 1970) which identified some twenty generally appropriate process-promoting curricula. However, “appropriateness” does not necessarily equate with “readiness for installation.” Despite their apparent excellence as process-promoting curricula, some of the materials were seen to be far from ready to install in the schools, when judged by the criteria appearing in Table I.

In anticipation of this problem, plans specifying curriculum augmentation procedures had already been formulated (Bickel and Cole, 1969). The first curricular component scheduled for augmentation was one of the