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# Curriculum review in higher education and its implications for teaching quality: Challenges for university education

## Revisión curricular en la Educación Superior y sus implicaciones en la calidad docente: Desafíos para la enseñanza universitaria



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## Abstract

Curriculum review is a dynamic, ongoing process grounded in human rights and contextual relevance, aimed at enhancing educational quality. This qualitative, descriptive study—based on documentary analysis—identified three key pillars: (1) transparency and coherence (from design to pedagogical/social impact), (2) self-directed learning (learner-defined goals), and (3) democratic values (justice, equity, and diversity). Findings reveal that curriculum review transcends academic discourse: it fosters meaningful learning, addresses contemporary educational needs, and promotes socio-political integration, advancing societal democratization. However, further research is needed to compare outcomes and generate new scientific contributions.

**Keywords:** Curriculum review in higher education: quality assurance and contemporary challenges.

## Resumen

La revisión curricular es un proceso dinámico y continuo que, fundamentado en los derechos humanos y el contexto social, busca mejorar la calidad educativa. Este estudio descriptivo y cualitativo—basado en análisis documental—identificó tres ejes clave: (1) transparencia y coherencia (desde su diseño hasta su impacto pedagógico y social), (2) autogestión del aprendizaje (metas definidas por los actores educativos), y (3) democraticidad (valores como justicia y respeto a la diversidad). Los resultados demuestran que la revisión curricular trasciende lo académico: promueve aprendizajes significativos, atiende necesidades educativas actuales y fomenta la integración política-social, contribuyendo a la democratización. Sin embargo, se requiere profundizar la investigación para comparar resultados y generar nuevas aportaciones científicas..

**Palabras-clave:** Revisión curricular en educación superior, calidad educativa y desafíos contemporáneos.

## Introduction

In recent decades, higher education has been marked by significant changes that have had a particular impact on the relationship between the University and society. That is, higher education institutions have moved from being alienated from social dynamics to increasingly participating in the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which they are embedded (Martins et al., 2016).

Fernanda (2020, p. 49) references the factors that contributed to the changes that occurred, focusing on: The change in student profiles, research on teaching and learning, the expansion of spaces for reflection regarding teaching contexts and practices, and the organization of higher education institutions, which has become increasingly complex and with an increasingly diversified educational offering. However, the idea of university education has become pluralized and is diversifying, differentiating, and segmenting.



The real curriculum is what actually happens in the classroom, resulting from a pedagogical project and teaching plans. It is a theory based on sociological and psychological assumptions, grouping contents, objectives, and strategies that are put into practice through a curricular plan. It revolves around curriculum development, a continuous and dynamic process developed in different phases and levels, with the subject in their context and the completeness of their rights as its pillars. However, curriculum development consists of three stages: conception, implementation or operationalization, and evaluation (Leite & Fernandes, 2019).

According to Perez (2018, p. 41), in his reflection on higher education and the need for a quality pedagogical culture, he emphasizes eight principles that revolve around transformative and emancipatory University Pedagogy, namely:

Transparency, coherence, relevance, reflexivity of pedagogical action, semocratization, with an emphasis on values of democratic citizenship, sense of justice, respect for differences, freedom of thought and expression, communication and debate of ideas, negotiation of decisions, collaboration, and mutual aid, self-detection, personal creativity, and innovation, a pluri-interdisciplinary vision of knowledge and reality.

Este estudo pretendeu demonstrar a importância da concepção e implementação de um currículo que incentive a aquisição de conhecimentos no Ensino Superior, habilidades, desenvolvimento nas habilidades em sala de aulas, além de valores e crenças positivas, uma vez que o currículo constitui o melhor meio para que seja possível atribuir forma ao desenvolvimento global dos valores, torna-se uma ferramenta indispensável para o docente deste subsistema de ensino, desafiando-o na construção de um ensino desafiador e inovador.

This study aimed to demonstrate the importance of designing and implementing a curriculum that encourages: The acquisition of knowledge in higher education, the development of classroom skills, and positive values and beliefs. The curriculum constitutes the best means to shape the global development of values, becoming an indispensable tool for educators in this subsystem of education, challenging them to build innovative and transformative teaching.

## Methodology

This is a descriptive, bibliographic, and documentary research with a qualitative approach, which sought to analyze the implications of curriculum review on the quality of higher education. This study derived from a documentary review whose objective is to highlight the importance of curriculum review in higher education, emphasizing the principles that underpin University Pedagogy.

According to Severino (2017, p. 124), bibliographic research is that which is carried out based on available records, products of previous research, in printed documents such as books, articles, theses, among others.

The works that constituted the technical-scientific foundation of this study were read in their



entirety, subsequently selecting those whose themes demonstrated greater relevance to the research purposes. All works—"scientific articles, periodicals, journals, reports, and reviews that addressed the topic in question"—were included in the analysis.

Excluded were all works that, after a thorough and comprehensive reading, lacked contextualization, were outdated, or whose approach presented no relevance to the study's objectives. A qualitative analysis and interpretation of the results was conducted, which were discussed through the comparison of perspectives from various authors and descriptors that examined this phenomenon from multiple approaches.

Regarding ethical considerations, this study complied with scientific and didactic requirements at all stages of development, from its initial conception, problem identification, methodological selection, to data collection.

## Results and discussion

The concept of curriculum in education has undergone transformations over time, with various pedagogical approaches addressing its dynamics and functions. The curriculum represents more than just a list of contents and guidelines for classroom instruction across different stages of students' academic lives - it constitutes a historical and cultural construct that evolves in its definitions over time.

Through comprehensive analysis of selected works, we established that curriculum review as a crucial tool for improving teaching quality is fundamentally supported by the paradigms underlying curriculum development. As [Campani et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasize, curricular innovation should challenge higher education institutions while serving as an instrument for didactic-pedagogical and social transformation.

According to [Slomski et al. \(2020\)](#), the development of the curriculum review process must be based on the analysis of curriculum theories, serving as guiding frameworks for curricular reform construction, such as: the traditional or technical theories promoted in the first half of the 20th century by John Franklin, which associated curriculum disciplines to a permanent mechanical matter, where the educational system would be conceptually linked to the industrial system, grounded in the paradigms of Taylorist scientific management; the critical curriculum theory based on Marxist conceptions and also on the ideas connected to authors of the Frankfurt School, notably Theodor Adorno, and of the New Sociology of Education like Pierre Bourdieu.

According to [Pérez \(2018, p. 41\)](#) in his reflection on higher education and the need for quality pedagogical culture, he emphasizes eight principles that revolve around transformative and emancipatory University Pedagogy: Coherence, based on the guiding training, as well as the nature of disciplinary contents and evaluation methods; Relevance, with emphasis on knowledge mobilization and promotion, safeguarding socio-professional reality, and viewing the curriculum in an articulated manner; Reflexivity, which states that pedagogical action promotes divergent thinking.



Pérez's perspective on higher education and the need for pedagogical culture was corroborated by Vallejo (2016), taking as reference the democratization of higher education by affirming that pedagogical action is grounded in values of democratic citizenship, sense of justice, respect for differences, freedom of thought and expression, communication and debate of ideas, decision-making negotiation, collaboration and mutual aid..

According to Sabia et al. (2023), citing Pérez, self-direction as well as creativity and innovation create foundations not only for implementing pedagogical actions linked to attitudes and capacities for self-regulated learning, but also develop spaces for socio-professional intervention based on: knowledge of reality, problem identification and relevance analysis.

This creates conditions for developing social intervention projects based on the pillars that sustain university life.

This study aimed to demonstrate the importance of designing and implementing a curriculum that encourages the acquisition of knowledge, skills, classroom proficiency, as well as positive values and beliefs, since the curriculum constitutes the best means to shape the comprehensive development of values, becoming an indispensable tool.

The results of this research allow us to propose new perspectives in addressing the subject matter related to the phenomenon under analysis, due to its relevance in promoting quality higher education that integrates: the explicit formulation of its guiding educational principles and objectives, the nature of its methodological approach, its teaching-learning processes and pathways, its adopted evaluation parameters.

### Final considerations

The curriculum is the inspirational basis for planning the daily practices of higher education institutions and teachers, as well as the commitment to students, since they need and must be heard - only then can learning be considered democratic.

This article aimed to deepen discussions and highlight the debate around curricular changes and their implications for higher education quality, in order to identify curricular models and practices capable of guiding educational work toward enabling meaningful learning while addressing contemporary educational needs.

After conducting the study, it was observed that several considerations can be made, such as: Developing a professional training curriculum to further enhance student thinking and classroom learning. It is necessary to design the teacher training curriculum to enable analysis of its effectiveness. In this study, it became evident that throughout the various reflections made by authors, there is a clear concern to establish concepts about the role of the curriculum as an extremely important tool in addressing the phenomenon of education and teaching.



It was also expressed here that teachers must not only be knowledgeable about curriculum topics within their areas of expertise, but also understand the explicit purpose behind their curricular orientation. In the context of higher education, addressing the issue of curriculum review is a process that cannot be limited to mere academic discussion, but must be directed toward political and social integration within the context of the role it plays in the process of citizenship and democratization of society.

The study also emphasized that faculty must not only understand curriculum content within their disciplines but also grasp the explicit purpose behind curricular orientations. In higher education, addressing curricular revision transcends mere academic discourse—it requires political and social integration within the context of its role in citizenship development and societal democratization.

Any curricular review process that can positively contribute to higher education quality must be endowed with: intentionality that is grounded in the assumptions and purposes related to formal education from scientific, cultural, technical-professional, personal and social perspectives. Transparency based on the explicit formulation of training purposes and assumptions, guidance, methodological nature of learning processes, and adopted evaluation parameters; coherence based on the training possibilities to be guided, the nature of disciplinary contents, and evaluation methods.

Relevance grounded in the integration of differentiated expectations, needs, rhythms and interests, mobilizing and promoting relevant knowledge and experiences. Democratic values based on principles of democratic citizenship, sense of justice, respect for differences, freedom of thought and expression, debate of ideas, decision-making negotiation, collaboration and mutual support. It can be concluded that the need for curricular review in higher education is not only an academic imperative, but extends to the socio-professional sphere, so that the University can fulfill its social role in the domains of teaching, learning, scientific research and university extension.

### Suggestions

Given the importance that the subject matter inherent to curriculum review holds in the process of pedagogical innovation, as well as its impact on school inclusion, democratization of education, socio-professional integration, and societal development, it is suggested that further studies be conducted in this area. These studies should utilize different theories, samples, and research techniques, with the aim of establishing future comparisons as well as evaluating trends in the phenomenon under analysis.

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