

# **THE CURRICULUM AS A LIVING DOCUMENT FOR ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

For a program at a higher educational institution to adequately respond to meeting the challenges of education for sustainable development, a virile, dynamic and living curriculum is essential. Because the needs of society are always changing due to continuously changing technology, market forces, and the growing awareness of society to environmental issues, the relevance of higher education to the society is synonymous to the readiness of the programs to adapt to these changing needs. In other words, the objectives of the training each academic program aims at achieving must be synchronized with societal needs.

The outcomes of a program are what a typical graduate of the program should be able to do, and what skills (s)he should have, at graduation. They are in essence the results of the execution of an appropriate curriculum. If these outcomes are to meet the requirements for the needs-sensitive objectives of the program, then the curriculum must be fashioned to be fluid enough to become adaptive to the changing demands of technology and needs of society. Thus, the mark of the relevance of an academic program to the society in which the institution resides is the readiness of faculty to undertake periodic review of the curriculum in consonance with societal needs. The flipside of this, however, is that a curriculum that remains stagnant for many years is often a reflection of the isolation of program faculty from topical research issues which in turn dictate the direction of technological growth, or it may be a pointer to how oblivious to the needs of society the teaching faculty of the program are. Although this observation is applicable to any academic discipline, it is by far more pronounced in those areas of pure and applied sciences, as well as the life sciences, in which technology has continued to change fastest. In these areas, stagnant curricula very quickly become obsolete and irrelevant, and the teachers become progressively ineffective.

This paper advocates the adoption of outcomes-based curricula in African higher education to achieve the right kind of education for sustainable development. It proposes a teaching paradigm that is centered on student learning, with built-in measurable milestones that can be used to confirm achievement of the intended outcomes. Examples are used to illustrate the need to always have exit outcomes as focus. This requires that an effective outcomes-based curriculum should be designed backward, by first determining the intended outcomes, and then linking planning decisions to these outcomes.

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