
Reviews

Syllabus Design

David Nunan, Oxford University Press, 1988. pp. 157

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This book is one in a series of books dealing with the field of language teaching, published by the Oxford University Press under the title of *Language Teaching: A Scheme for Teacher Education*. The purpose of the series as stated in the Introduction is "to engage language teachers in a process of continual professional development." This particular book is designed "not to provide a set of directives but to guide teachers in the process of critical enquiry and informed practice." Therefore, throughout the book, presentation of the information is in the form of explanatory texts followed by a sequence of tasks. The author aims for readers to read the explanatory texts as a guideline and then do the tasks by applying the information in the text to their own knowledge, experience and classroom practice. The tasks are not just a simple question-and-answer type but are designed to help teachers consider the information in the text in a critical way. Often there is no one correct answer, and thus the tasks generate a wide range of discussion on the part of the readers, which can enrich their knowledge of the topic in question. At the same time, however, the readers can find the answers to some of the more objective questions in the texts that follow.

This book on syllabus design introduces basic concepts and principles in language syllabus design, and provides readers with tools and techniques for analysing and critiquing language syllabuses. The book also explores a range of syllabus types and examines ways in which concepts and principles have been applied in practice. Central issues relating to the selection and grading of input in language syllabus are also put forward for discussion. These issues include needs analysis, goal and objective setting, and content selection and grading.

Syllabus Design is comprised of three sections.

Section One begins with an examination of the concepts of 'syllabus' and 'curriculum' over which there is still some confusion. The author does not give his own definition of the terms; he refers to Candlin (1984) who suggests that "curricula are concerned with making general statements about language learning, learning purpose and experience, evaluation, and the role relationships of teachers and learners." According to Candlin, they will also "contain banks of learning items and suggestions about how these might be used in class. Syllabuses, on the other hand, are more localized and are based on accounts and records of what actually happens at the classroom level as teachers and learners apply a given curriculum to their own situation." The rest of the section centers around issues relating to language syllabus design. Among them are learning goals, different types of language syllabuses, syllabus design and methodology, and selection and grading of content and tasks. Also discussed in detail are different types of objectives involved in syllabus design, including performance, process, and product objectives.