

# Two New Emphases in Curriculum Development

Ralph W. Tyler

*A man whose writings have been a stimulus to educators for more than a generation emphasizes two vital aspects of curriculum development. He urges greater recognition of the active role of the student in the learning process and a more comprehensive examination of the non-school areas of student learning.*

*Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1950, is now in the process of being revised. Your editor, Robert R. Leeper, knowing of this revision, has invited me to tell the readers of *Educational Leadership* what changes I anticipate making in my original text—changes whose need has become apparent to me because of my experiences during the 25 years since the book was first published.

In preparation for this revision, it has been both necessary and interesting for me to reexamine the questions raised and the statements made more than 25 years ago in *Basic Principles*—to look at them in the light of the vast changes that have taken place in society since World War II, and also in the light of the great sums that have been invested in large-scale curriculum development projects in the past two decades.

This article will not attempt to deal with all of the changes that are anticipated in the revision of my earlier publication. It will, instead, focus on two particular aspects of curriculum development which I now feel need greater emphasis than I gave them in 1950.

Before discussing these changes in emphasis, I would like to point out that *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* was prepared as a syllabus for a course I offered at the University of Chicago. It was intended to be a guide for the thinking and planning of students, most of whom were mature professionals working on problems of curriculum and instruction in their own institutions or organizations.

The book does not present a *philosophy* of curriculum; each institution must develop and clarify its own philosophy. It does, however, raise basic questions that must be answered, either

<sup>1</sup> Ralph W. Tyler. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1950.

explicitly or implicitly, in developing a curriculum; it also suggests the kinds of data that are helpful in working out answers to these questions.

As I now review *Basic Principles*, a work more than 25 years old, I find no reason to change the fundamental questions it raises:

- What should be the educational objectives of the curriculum?
- What learning experiences should be developed to enable students to achieve the objectives?
- How should the learning experiences be organized to increase their cumulative effect?
- How should the effectiveness of the curriculum be evaluated?

These questions are still basic, and, in my view, their importance has been reaffirmed by the experiences of the past quarter of a century. I believe, however, that some changes in emphasis are necessary and I shall comment on two of them. First, I would now give much greater emphasis to the *active role of the student in the learning process* and to the implications

student involvement has for curriculum development. Second, I would also give much greater emphasis to the need for a comprehensive examination of the *non-school areas of student learning* as they relate to curriculum development.

### Active Role of the Learner

In the massive curriculum projects undertaken in the United States during the 1960's, objectives were usually selected by subject-matter specialists, with little attention given to the needs and interests of the learners. Mention was often made of the "educational delivery system," as if education could be delivered to students rather than acquired by them through their own active learning.

Educational technology was commonly treated as though it were a "robot teacher" rather than a source of certain tools that teachers could employ (for example, using an overhead projector to present material as part of a learning experience). In addition, some of the projects actually sought to develop "teacher-proof materials."



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The terms, "educational delivery system" and "teacher-proof materials," and the attitudes these terms represent, indicate that some leading curriculum builders overlooked the fact that learning is a process in which the learner plays an active role—not a passive one. The developers of curriculum should not lose sight of the fact that the only behavior that is truly learned is the behavior the learner carries on with consistency so that it becomes part of his or her *repertoire* of behavior.

A human being cannot be forced to learn intellectual and emotional behavior patterns. Only under coercion, or when offered tempting rewards, will an individual even attempt a learning task that seems to him or her meaningless or distasteful. Even then, if the experience with the task is not rewarding to the individual, he or she will not continue the behavior and it will not become learned. As emphasized earlier, any behavior becomes a permanent part of a person's repertoire only if he or she continues to carry it on. This means that the learner must: (a) see the way in which what is learned can be used, and (b) have the opportunity to continue employing the learned behavior in the various situations he or she encounters. The recognition that these conditions of learning are vitally important has implications for selecting curriculum objectives, designing learning experiences, and achieving transfer-of-training.

*Implications for Selecting Objectives:* Emphasizing the active role of the learner has important implications for the selection of educational objectives. The curriculum objectives selected should: (a) stress those things that are important for students to learn in order to participate constructively in contemporary society; (b) be sound in terms of the subject matter involved; and (c) be in accord with the educational philosophy of the institution. Objectives should also be of interest or be meaningful to the prospective learners, or they should be capable of being made so in the process of instruction. This criterion of interest and perceived meaningfulness, which I mentioned and developed briefly in the 1950 publication, is currently being overlooked—even by some whose *stated* rationale for curriculum develop-

ment seems to be similar to the rationale presented in *Basic Principles*.

This does not imply that the interest of learners at any given time coupled with their understanding of the meaningfulness of educational objectives will not change. Quite the contrary. In a particular unit of study, for example, the initial objectives should be those that the student sees, at that time, as interesting and/or meaningful things to learn. As students go through a learning experience, however, they will broaden and deepen their interests. As they gain greater understanding of the relevance of what they are learning, they will also see the meaning of and develop interest in other objectives, and thus be stimulated to further study.

Take reading for example. A child who has not had parents or others read to her and who has not seen people reading—and enjoying it—is not likely to participate actively in decoding exercises in a primary reading program, nor is she likely to see that these exercises have any meaning for her. For such a child, the appropriate initial objectives in reading may be those that help her learn to enjoy hearing material that is read to her. When she finds that the printed page has something that interests her, she will want to find out how to read for herself. The objectives can then reflect these new interests that the student has acquired.

*Implications for Designing and Sequencing Learning Experiences:* The need for the learner to have an active role in education must be kept in mind also in the design of learning experiences. If students are to enter wholeheartedly into learning, they should perceive just what the behavior is that they are expected to learn and should feel confident that they can carry the learning tasks through successfully. If students are uncertain about what they are expected to learn and if they lack confidence in their abilities to carry on certain learning tasks, they will balk, stumble, or openly avoid trying. Students do not want to make fools of themselves, nor do they want to fail in their efforts. Well designed learning experiences will, therefore, show the learners clearly what they are expected to learn, and will employ learning tasks that are within their present abilities to carry through.



Photo of Ralph W. Tyler: E. F. Frauman, I/D/E/A.

*"The total educational system required today involves much more than the school."*

As students succeed in initial activities and gain satisfaction from their efforts, the learning tasks should become increasingly demanding in difficulty or in the levels of attainment expected. This means that the sequential organization of learning experiences should be developed in terms of the progress the learners can make in undertaking successively more varied and more difficult learning tasks. Sequences that are designed solely in terms of the logic of the discipline are not likely to be effective in meeting essential conditions for learning.

*Implications for Achieving Transfer-of-Training:* The failure of students to transfer what is learned in school to situations outside the school is a problem related to the active role of the learner and one that has long been central to educational psychology. Schools are established to help students acquire behavior that is important for constructive out-of-school activities. If something that is learned in school is not utilized by the student in relevant situations outside the school, most of the value of the learning is lost.

A lack of relevant application appears to be common to some current educational programs. For example, during 1972-73, the National Assessment of Educational Progress conducted an assessment of the mathematical knowledge and skills of 17-year-olds throughout the nation. The 17-year-olds who were involved in the assessment completed certain computations involving the use of integers, fractions, decimals, and percents. Over 90 percent of the students correctly answered the

addition, subtraction, and division problems involving whole numbers. The percentage was slightly lower (88 percent) for multiplication.

Most 17-year-olds, it was found, can compute correctly. However, their percentages of correct answers were much lower on exercises involving the simple use of mathematics in practical problem solving. For example, only 34 percent of the 17-year-olds who were assessed correctly answered the following question:

A housewife will pay the lower price per ounce for rice if she buys it at the store which offers: (a) 12 ounces for 40 cents; (b) 14 ounces for 45 cents; (c) 1 pound, 12 ounces for 85 cents; (d) 2 pounds for 99 cents.

On similar tasks involving the application of mathematical functions to everyday problems, about 45 percent of those tested responded correctly. Given the fact that 90 percent of the same students responded correctly on computation exercises, it seems probable that many students were following a curriculum that emphasized drill in computation at the expense of practice in applying mathematics to situations common to contemporary life. It is quite possible to design learning experiences that simulate actual situations existing outside the school—and this should be done. Furthermore, students should be asked and encouraged to apply what they are learning *in* school to relevant problems they encounter *outside* the classroom.

The results reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress are not the only indications that the objectives and learning experiences of some educational programs fail to interest and actively engage many students in learning and do not carry over to areas beyond the school environment. Interviews with both high school graduates and dropouts indicate that a majority of them cannot recall having taken many courses in which they learned things that were helpful to them in later life. The fre-

*"Many existing programs now help to integrate the student's school and non-school learning experiences. . . ."*

Photo: NAEP.

quently heard advice to schools, "Get back to basics," is being so narrowly interpreted that the importance of transfer-of-training is forgotten.

Clearly, the curriculum rationale should strongly emphasize that, in curriculum planning, serious attention should be given to the interests, activities, problems, and concerns of the students. Where possible and appropriate, the students themselves should participate in planning and evaluating the curriculum.

### Non-School Areas of Student Learning

Another change in emphasis anticipated in the revision of *Basic Principles* involves the non-school areas of student learning. Greater emphasis will be placed on the need to recognize that the school curriculum guides only a *portion* of the student's total learning process. The school provides only some of the educational experiences needed by children and youth if they are to acquire the interests, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and habits that can enable them to: (a) participate constructively in society, and (b) use their talents fully in contributions to both society and their own personal fulfillment. The total educational system required today involves much more than the school. What a young person experiences in the home, in school, in social activities, in the community, in the chores and jobs he or she carries on, in the religious institutions where he or she participates, in reading, in listening to radio and viewing TV—all are included in the total educational system through which the individual acquires his or her knowledge, ideas, skills, habits, attitudes, interests, and basic values.

The school is, of course, an important part of this educational system. It furnishes students with the opportunity to learn to read, to write, and to compute; it also gives them the opportunity to discover and use sources of facts, principles, and ideas that are more accurate, balanced, and comprehensive than those pro-



vided in most homes, places of work, or other social institutions. Moreover, the school supplements and complements the opportunities for learning furnished by the other institutions and is usually an environment that more nearly represents the American social ideals than does the larger society. In most schools, each student is respected as a human being, without discrimination; the transactions in the classroom are guided by an attempt to be fair and to dispense justice; and the class morale is a reflection of the fact that the members care about the welfare of others.

In the past, experiences in the home, the work situation, and the school made somewhat different contributions to the development of American youth. Most young people acquired their basic habits of orderliness, punctuality, and attention to work primarily through experiences in the home and work settings, with the helpful supplementation of the school's regimen. They came to recognize the meaning and importance of productive work through participating in family chores and through holding part-time jobs that often involved the close supervision and critical appraisal of their efforts. Young people, for example, were active participants in such activities as mowing lawns, shoveling snow, preparing meals, doing laundry, carrying newspapers, and working in stores and shops.

Developing an interest in and a desire for personal productivity is important in the education of youth for constructive work roles, but such interest and desire have not been acquired chiefly through school experiences. Productivity

in working on school assignments does not usually impress young people as having the same social importance as productivity in doing household chores and other jobs.

Learning to take responsibility for a task and accepting the consequences of success and failure in performing it are still other important aspects of education for adult work roles that are not primarily learned in school. Being responsible for doing one's school assignments does not have the same meaning for a young person as being responsible for work directly affecting others, with consequences that will be judged by others. Adolescents commonly vacillate between the desire to take on large responsibilities and the fear of failing if they do so. Learning to take responsibility and to bear consequences requires much experience. A gradual increase in the degree of responsibility and in the seriousness of the consequences of failure should parallel an increase in the competence and confidence of any young person.

The school alone can contribute only a minor range of the necessary learning experiences that can be perceived by young people as clearly real and adult-like. This means that the opportunities for meaningful work experiences must be furnished by business, industry, agriculture, health agencies, civil service, social agencies, and the like—the institutions in the community where adults accept responsibility and where real consequences flow from actions taken. The school can help to find these opportunities, to organize them for effective and sequential learning, and to supervise them to assure that educational values are being attained by students. But the school, by itself, has very limited capabilities for educating youth in this important area.

In the total educational system of the past, the several parts had certain interdependent features. The student's interest in learning what the school sought to teach was usually stimulated in other parts of the system—in the home, in the place of work, and in the social life of the community. The school, therefore, did not need to develop in the majority of students a particular motivation for learning. Furthermore, as skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic were developed in the school, the student found many opportunities for their use

in his or her activities outside the school—particularly in work and in recreation.

Skills quickly become inoperative when their use is infrequent. If the only reading required of youth is that which is assigned in school, reading skills do not reach a mature level. If writing is limited to an occasional note or letter, writing skills remain very primitive. If arithmetic is not used in outside work or in such home activities as consumer buying, furniture construction, and budgeting, then arithmetic skills and problem-solving techniques are likely to be inadequate. The total educational system, therefore, needs to be viewed as one in which practice, as well as initial learning, is provided.

### Improving the Total Educational System

Significant implications for curriculum development can be found in the following two facts:

1. While the time available to the school has remained relatively constant, the time given to education by parents, community agencies, and work settings has been greatly reduced;
2. An adequate educational system in a modern society must include experiences that take place *outside* the school, which is where young people spend most of their time.

In these two facts there are implications for: (a) making maximum use of the school's resources, (b) strengthening the out-of-school curriculum, and (c) helping students deal with the non-school environment.

*Maximizing the School's Resources:* The school curriculum should focus more strongly on the value of what the student can learn by making use of all the specialized resources the school provides: teachers with training in the fields of scholarship; books and libraries; laboratories and shops; a humane tradition that encourages openness, trust, and a concern for others; and an environment where order and composure are possible. The contributions that can be made to young people by helping them learn to use these resources are by no means minor. A world beyond their direct experience can thus be opened to them and they can develop aspirations, styles of life, and skills of accom-

plishment more varied and more individualized than the typical, limited patterns their own community affords.

### *Strengthening the Out-of-School Curric-*

*ulum*: School leaders, particularly curriculum specialists, should work with community leaders to reestablish an effective educational system at the community level. The public can be helped to recognize that ensuring an adequate educa-

## **Highlighting the Contributions of a Leading Educator: The Ralph W. Tyler Project**

In the accompanying article, Ralph W. Tyler discusses changes he anticipates making in his classic 1950 text, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. The revision of this book, now under way, is part of a major educational effort known as the Ralph W. Tyler Project.

The basic purpose of the Project is to help make the substantial contributions of Ralph Tyler of continuing usefulness to educators. Late in 1973 the Project was initiated with the support of funds from the Ford Foundation. In 1975 a grant from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation supplemented the continuing support of the Ford Foundation. Funds are administered by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE), a non-profit organization created by the National Education Association in 1969. NFIE also provides office space and furnishes some of the services and resources needed to support the Project.

In addition to the current revision of *Basic Principles*, the Project has undertaken the following tasks:

1. The published and unpublished writings of Ralph W. Tyler have been identified and are on file at the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. Keeping this file up-to-date is an ongoing activity of the Project.

2. A chronological bibliography of Tyler's writings from 1929 through 1974 has been compiled. This bibliography was included in Tyler's *Perspectives on American Education* (Science Research Associates, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, 1976), the first publication that has resulted from the

Project. The bibliography will be brought up-to-date through 1976 and issued as a separate 40-page publication by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. The tentative publication date is August 1977. (*Perspectives on American Education* also includes the Patten Lectures delivered by Tyler at Indiana University in 1974, and a 1941 Tyler article of contemporary significance. See a review by Robert W. Anderson, *Educational Leadership*, May 1976.)

3. Materials in the field of testing, measurement, evaluation, and assessment have been assembled with the expectation of drawing on these writings for one or more volumes in this area. The intention is to supplement such a volume or volumes with current commentary from Ralph Tyler.

4. Possibilities for other volumes incorporating selected articles from the Tyler bibliography are being explored. However, priority now is being given to the revision of *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* and to the preparation of the Tyler bibliography as a separate publication.

Many educators, including a number of Tyler's former students, are taking an active part in the Project by serving as consultants, reacting to various proposals for publications, and making suggestions for ways in which the Tyler Project may serve educators and education today and in the future.

DOROTHY NEUBAUER, *Director*  
*Ralph W. Tyler Project*

tion for their children and youth requires an effective educational system that involves the school, but also depends on experiences provided outside the school.

The community should be responsibly organized to provide comprehensive educational opportunities for young people. This means that some form of community council or board is necessary to: (a) assess educational needs, (b) identify actual and potential resources (including those in the schools), and (c) develop an outline of educational programs to meet the needs identified.

In developing new educational resources, the community councils or boards should carefully direct attention to those that require little or no additional expenditures, since it seems unlikely that a free society can levy the taxes needed to furnish paid professionals to fill the many gaps created by the erosion of our earlier educational system.<sup>2</sup>

*Dealing with the Out-of-School Environment:* The school should help its students deal constructively with the out-of-school environment. The school can help young people develop skill in evaluating mass media—particularly TV and the press—and in finding and choosing programs and publications that are helpful and satisfying. Since, for many young people, the viewing of television represents the major use of their waking hours, the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests, and habits that will increase the value of this activity is very important. The school can also furnish opportunities, both formal and informal, for students to: (a) reflect on the significant out-of-school experiences they are having, (b) seek, through discussion, to clarify the consequences of their actions, and (c) formulate meaningful standards to guide them in these transactions.

It is also possible, even where no community educational council exists, for the school to work with other community agencies in providing the student with meaningful work opportunities through programs similar to what the National Association of Secondary School Principals calls "Action-Learning."<sup>3</sup>

Many existing programs now help to integrate the student's school and non-school learning experiences by enabling young people to



*A preschool child takes a turn at the bassoon. Such out-of-school experiences, notes Ralph W. Tyler, are a major part of any child's total learning environment. Photo: Charles Del Vecchio, The Washington Post.*

participate in productive adult activities and to assume real responsibility for what they do.<sup>4</sup> The establishment and reported success of these

<sup>2</sup> The Soviet Union has been able to support the Young Pioneers and the Communsol, both of which are supplementary educational institutions. But doubling the tax rate for education in free societies is unlikely to achieve such public support.

<sup>3</sup> Students participating in action-learning programs may be paid for their work or serve as non-paid volunteers to private, public, or community service agencies. For more information about action-learning, see: National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Twenty-Five Action-Learning Schools*. Reston, Virginia: the Association, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> For extensive and concrete examples of existing programs, see: National Commission on Resources for Youth. *New Roles for Youth in School and Community*. New York: Citation Press, 1974.

programs furnish evidence that some schools, at least, can develop a curriculum that vitalizes and strengthens the educational experiences that occur outside their walls.

## Summary

Many curriculum projects of the past two decades have overlooked the active role of the student in learning and have assumed that he or she can be made to learn. They therefore gave little or no attention to the interests, concerns, and perceptions of students while developing the curriculum. If learning is to be both effective and lasting, it is necessary for the school to give special emphasis to the implications of the learner's active role when it selects objectives, designs and sequences learning experiences, and strives to achieve transfer-of-training.

It is also clear that a great erosion has taken place in the total educational system in the United States. The home, the working place, the religious institutions, and the educational milieu of the community are furnishing fewer opportunities for constructive learning experiences for young people today than in the past. As a result, it is now particularly necessary in the area of curriculum development to give careful consideration to the non-school areas of student learning. To this end, the school can *always* seek to maximize the effectiveness of its curriculum in relation to the student's opportunities for learning experiences outside the school. In this way and in others, the school can help to establish a more constructive total educational system. [E]

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## Letters

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larger concern being clumsily expressed in several of my writings. The context of my concern is that: "The fast moving events of the past 25 years have allowed too little time for careful thought leading to new insights," about supervision competencies. I try to make a case for:

1. Clearly defining competencies for instructional improvement,
2. Building collaborative relationships without subservience to either administrators or teachers, and
3. Facing the need for participation in honest, constructive evaluation of both teaching and program.

Against this context, I am deeply concerned, and find the practitioners/supervisors I work with also concerned about the growing numbers of supervisory practices which are promising fragments of professional practice. They are windows without a view, doors without a walk, walls without a roof. Creative minds and scholarly pursuits have provided supervisors with concepts, skills, strategies, and instruments for making supervision a truly professional specialization. The need is for synthesis, not fragmentation; for inclusion, not exclusion nor neglect; for defining programmatic relationships between diverse practices, rather than delimiting and narrowing.

When clinical supervision is defined as relating only to in-classroom supervision, the questions that must be asked include:

- What other forms can in-classroom supervision take?
- When can both in-classroom and out-of-classroom events be combined to produce a more effective strategy?
- When is a clinical approach most appropriate?
- When is it inappropriate?
- Given the high cost factor, what problems should get priority?
- What are the contra-indications for clinical supervision?
- What are the negative side effects?
- How can clinical supervision models be changed to make them more appropriate to in-service personnel?

Many of these questions do merit much more careful consideration than they have yet received.

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