

## Curriculum-Making: Finding the Balance

This week's assigned readings were very helpful for someone who begins this doctoral program without a degree in education. Pagano's article *The curriculum field: Emergence of a discipline* (1981) provided an interesting overview of the development of the curriculum field in terms of the social and institutional developments, eventually leading to three main intellectual orientations. At the same time the article provided necessary context for Franklin Bobbitt's essay *Scientific Method in Curriculum-making* (1918). I found myself most engaged with the arguments discussed in Kliebard's text, *The Rise of Scientific Curriculum-Making and Its Aftermath* (1975), particularly the opposing thought processes of Bobbit and Bode.

Although the author structures the article in appropriate headings and sub-headings related to significant themes connected to its title, he manages to capture the back and forth nature of the intellectual debate between Franklin Bobbit and his critic Boyd Bode. Kliebard describes Bode's *Modern Educational Theories* (1927) as a major attack towards Bobbit's and Charters' development of scientific curriculum-making and proceeds to dialectically present both sides of the arguments. Of the particular topics of this debate that I was drawn to the discussion surrounding preparation for adulthood and the defining of objectives, both of which point to significant questions about curriculum-making that still exist today.

Within developing a scientific approach to curriculum-making Bobbit stated preparation for adulthood as one of the main goals in educating children. Bode strongly criticizes this idea stating it will create a social status quo rather than social improvement, aligning himself with Dewey's definition of education as "a process of living and not a preparation for future living." (p.39) I find problems with both sides of this argument, similar to the rest of the article, because curriculum-making should be about achieving a balance based on the needs of students in different disciplines. Of course we need to prepare students for adulthood, but focusing only on the future does not make sense either. In response to Bode's criticisms of Bobbit, Kliebard draws attention to the fact that Bobbit contradicts himself amongst different writings by also saying that education is not primarily to prepare for life in the future - that life can't be prepared for, it can only be lived. Predictions about what a student will need in the future should be a part of curriculum planning, yet should be balanced and judged accordingly based on specific disciplines.

In the process of preparing for adulthood, Bobbit saw great importance in defining specific learning objectives within curriculum-making. After reading Taylor's article *Principles of Scientific Management*, (1911) I do understand the effectiveness of "scientific" management and organization, however, I can also understand Bode's desire for broader conceptions of objectives. When writing curriculum for specific courses I have taught, I have found the *process* of developing learning outcomes and objectives to be almost more valuable than the list itself. The objectives allow for focus and direction in the planning, but the teaching and learning experience is often more enriching when the list is pushed aside. Once again, I feel a balance of both analytical and associative modes of thought is necessary when working with creating objectives in curriculum-making. However, within Kliebard's discussion of objectives, what I aligned myself with the most was the larger question of whether objectives should be prespecified at all, for reasons described from my personal teaching experience mentioned above. As the author draws upon the question posed by Herbert Spencer – "What knowledge is of most worth? – I began to question my stance of balancing the desires of both Bobbit and Bode.

How specific should curriculum objectives be? And who needs to be aware of the objectives – the students or just the teacher? These are questions I continue to think about as an educator. I will often think back to teachers I had in university and realize that my own pedagogical approach is a changing hybrid of their individual idiosyncrasies, a mixture of both the analytic and associative.