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El modelo curricular tyleriano y los reconceptualistas. Entrevista con Ralph W. Tyler (1902-1994)

Tyler's Curriculum Rationale and the Reconceptualists. Interview with Ralph W. Tyler (1902-1994)

Graciela Cordero Arroyo (*)
gcordero@uabc.mx

José María García Garduño (*)
josemariagarduno@yahoo.com.mx

* Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo Educativo
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California

A.P. 453
C.P. 22830
Ensenada, Baja California, México

Resumen

Este trabajo presenta una entrevista que la primera autora realizó en 1990 a Ralph W. Tyler, uno de los educadores más importantes del siglo XX en Estados Unidos. Posteriormente se analiza la obra y el pensamiento de Tyler con la intención de clarificar algunos conceptos mal entendidos en su trabajo desde finales de los años setenta. Esta entrevista quizá sea la primera y única que este gran educador dio a un académico

iberoamericano y una de las pocas en las que externó su perspectiva sobre el movimiento curricular de los *reconceptualistas*, quienes fueron los más fuertes críticos del modelo tyleriano.

Palabras clave: Historia del currículum, teoría curricular, objetivos conductuales, evaluación.

Abstract

Ralph W. Tyler was considered one of the most influential of US educators during the last century. The purpose of this paper is to present an interview granted by Tyler to the first author of this paper in 1990. Tyler's interview is preceded by a brief analysis of his work, in the hope of shedding light on some misconceptions that Tyler's work has suffered since early 70s. The present interview may have been the only one given to an Ibero-American academician, and one of the very few in which Tyler was spoke openly about what he thought of the fierce criticism launched by reconceptualists against his curriculum rationale.

Key words: History of curriculum, curriculum theory, behavioral objectives, evaluation.

> So as long as there is education, there has got to be a curriculum.
> Ralph W. Tyler (1990)

Ralph Winfred Tyler was born in Chicago on April 22, 1902. In 1921 he obtained his A.B. in science and mathematics from Doane College, and in 1922 he became a high school teacher in the city of Pierre, South Dakota. In 1923 he received his A.M. from the University of Nebraska, where he began to specialize in the use of statistics in achievement tests. In 1927 he got his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology at the University of Chicago. At the invitation of Werret Chartes, his teacher during Tyler's doctoral studies, Tyler moved to the Office of Educational Research of Ohio State University to direct the Department of Educational Evaluation.

His presence and his work became well-known in the area of education, beginning with the Eight-Year Study, the greatest curriculum research project ever undertaken. Tyler founded several research centers. As a consultant to several Presidents of the United States, he worked on various national committees and councils. From 1939 to 1946 he was a member of the National Committee on Teacher Education, and belonged to the National Science Board from 1962 to 1968. For nearly 72 years he was constantly active as a teacher, researcher, consultant and official. Tyler's most important contributions were in the fields of curriculum and evaluation. He died of cancer in February of 1994.

I. The work of Ralph W. Tyler

Ralph W. Tyler is considered one of the greatest educators produced by the United States in the twentieth century. In the Ibero-American world, he is principally known for his *Basic principles of curriculum* (1949/1986),[1] a work which may have had more influence on world-wide curriculum design and practice than any other. However, his line of thought has often been distorted, and his contributions have sometimes gone unrecognized. For example, there are those who consider Tyler to be a behaviorist because of his emphasis on the use of behavioral objectives in curriculum construction and evaluation, in spite of the fact that Tyler never clung to behaviorism in his curriculum design. In that field, his thought was more closely linked with that of Dewey, although he was also influenced by his teacher Charles Judd, from whom he learned the importance of generalization in curriculum as well as the objectives. One of Tyler's teachers, a woman who taught at the University of Nebraska, was a disciple of Thorndike. It was through her that Tyler came into contact with Thorndike's *The psychology of arithmetic*, which contained 3,000 objectives—with the result that Tyler thereafter considered the behavioral objectives to be too specific (Schubert & Lopez Schubert, 1986).

During the 30s, Tyler spoke of *transcurriculum objectives*, which he conceived of as very broad objectives which should accompany the united effort of the school or the community (Cronbach, 1986). One example of these objectives was that of developing a philosophy of life in the students. This same idea was expressed by Tyler 40 years later at the full apogee of the use of behavioral objectives. Tyler himself described the limitations of these objectives and stated that: "surely you can't use just the objectives as the basis for comprehensive evaluation" (Ridings, 1981, p. 12). In the interview reported in this work Tyler emphasized the limitations of educational taxonomies: "A taxonomy is what someone else states as the meaning of educational objectives (but) you are the teacher working with students" (Ridings, 1981, p. 13), and insisted that it is the teacher who should decide what is important to learn in a particular situation.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the fact that Tyler was influenced by his day's adherents to curricular behaviorism: Franklin Bobbit and Werret W. Charters, both of whom were Tyler's teachers at the University of Chicago (García Garduño, 1995).

The Tylerian curriculum model had a clear influence on the thought of Charters, who was the creator of the job analysis method. The basic steps of the method Charters (1923/1971) proposed for curriculum design are:

1) Determine the most important objectives of education.
2) Analyze the objectives and to continue examining them up to the level of work units.
3) Hierachize the activities according to their importance.

4) Select the objectives and activities which can re reached and carried out during the school year.
5) Gather the best experiences derived from the selected activities.
6) Order the instructional material according to the psychological nature of the student.

Moreover, in the Ibero-American setting it is not well known that Tyler's masterpiece, *Basic principles of curriculum* (1949/1986), was not originally envisioned as a book. The text consisted of Tyler's notes for the courses Education 305 y 360,[2] which he taught at the University of Chicago. Because of this, the work has no references. The bibliography for the Spanish edition was added by the translator (Díaz Barriga, 1991). Tyler's meager 100 pages of notes were the touchstone for the development of the discipline and practice of curriculum as we know them today.

Basic principles of curriculum (1949/1986) was a product of the Eight-Year Study (1933-1941), a long-term research carried out during Great Depression. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of Dewey's progressive education on university students by means of a comparison with traditional education. The Association for Progressive Education had charge of the study, which included 30 high schools and 300 colleges and universities. Tyler was hired to evaluate the study. Among those connected with the study was the commissions on evaluation and curriculum. Some researchers who participated on these commissions informed Tyler that the Study had a model for evaluation, but none for curriculum. Tyler, who was dining with Hilda Taba, took a napkin and on it sketched what would become known as the Tylerian Model of Curriculum (Ridings, 1981).

Another little-known aspect in our area is that the work of Tyler was not limited to curriculum. Equally outstanding, or perhaps more, so than his work on curriculum is his work in the field of evaluation. Tyler was the creator of the term *evaluation*, and later introduced the concept of *assessment* to give greater precision to evaluative practice. To him we owe the creation of the discipline of evaluation, and of the test for measuring achievement, based on what we now know. On a level with *The basic principles of curriculum* (1949/1986), the other masterpiece of this notable educator is *Constructing achievement tests*, published in 1934.

Tyler stated that what he was trying to do in constructing tests based on the objectives of the course rather than on its contents, was to combat the memorization that prevailed in examinations. In that era, students were basically examined regarding their memorization capacity, and not for the goals which the course pursued (Ridings, 1981).

Although by 1932 Tyler had already developed the greater part of the thought that characterized his work (Cronbach, 1986), this did not remain static; rather, it evolved during his long and productive career. He remained energetically active to the end of his life. This extraordinary man, who started out as a behaviorist and a Deweyist, ended up embracing a measure of constructivist thought, as may be

seen in the present interview and in others. At the age of ninety, Tyler once said: "I never met a child who couldn't learn" ("Ralph Tyler, one of century's…", 2004).

Explaining his conception about learning, in this interview he expressed ideas such as the following:

> The children keep learning as they go along and build on it. You can't suddenly introduce something, and expect them to be adults if they have to have the previous preparation.
>
> So objectives ought to be large enough to understand. The ability of the human being is to generalize, so that when you have some specific thing, it does help you to generalize the principle behind it as something new. Otherwise it becomes like training a person to do a job, little things that they don't commonly understand. So don't get behavioral objectives that are so tiny that there is no generalization. That's not human. Human beings generalize from their experience.

II. Tyler as a person

Tyler was a tireless man. From 1921, when he was graduated as a teacher, until a few months before his death in 1994—a period of more than 70 years—he was constantly active. During his working life, more than twice the length of that of most people, he published more than 700 articles and 16 books. He was a consultant to six of the Presidents of his country, and presided over many committees related with education. In the seventies he founded and directed the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an office dedicated to the evaluation of education in the United States. In the same decade he was a force behind the formation of regional laboratories dedicated to research and the evaluation of learning.

His advanced age never made him lose his optimism, his excellent memory, or his articulateness. He was a man who, as one of his children stated in 1988, "refuses to idealize the past and denigrate the present, a temptation to which many of his peers succumb" ("Ralph Tyler, one of century's", 2004). Tyler was a humanist in every sense of the word.

> My view is that a good life for a human being is one in which he is continually seeking to be more fully human; which means, to be more able to learn; to be more helpful to others; to contribute; to try to produce a society in which others have a deep respect for the potential of every human being, and an unwillingness to simply be saved by other people; and to be greatly motivated to seek to be part of that society that would make it better for each successive generation (Tyler, Schubert & Lopez Schubert, 1986, p. 100)

Probably Tyler's unassuming nature was an inheritance from his family. He told his biographers (Meek, 1993) that his father, a doctor, was able to earn enough money by the end of the nineteenth century ($5,000 dollars a year, a very

respectable amount at that time) to enable him to abandon his medical profession and become a minister of the gospel.

Tyler had a quality seldom seen in the world of education: he was both an educator and a great researcher. Although he earned his bachelor's degree in science and mathematics, he intended to become a doctor like his father (Schubert & Lopez Schubert, 1986). He got into teaching by accident. Because of the scarcity of teachers in South Dakota, and at the suggestion of a friend of his father's, Tyler became a high school teacher in that state. Perhaps the true duality of his character (teacher and researcher) together with the manner in which he was brought up by his family made him a modest, simple man. His interviewers wanted to call him a guru and a sage, but Tyler always rejected those words. In demonstration of his humble spirit, we reproduce here an excerpt from a dialog between Ridings and Tyler.

> Ridings: During the photo session, we were talking about statesmen. I made the statement that you were, if not the premiere educational states man, one of our most important educational statesmen.
>
> Tyler: Well flattery doesn't get you everywhere. Let's go on with the questions. (Ridings, 1981, p. 35.)

Among the most outstanding of his students are Benjamin Bloom, and Lee J. Cronbach (1916-2001) whom Tyler called his "right arm". Bloom (1986), for example, says that he himself came from a working-class family, and that it was Tyler who believed in him and got him started on his career. Bloom (1986) saw Tyler as a guru. He declared that "when you listened to what he [Tyler] said, even when you didn't understand him, the problem was to find the deeper meaning" (p. 36). It is thus understandable why Bloom's book, *The taxonomy of the educational objectives* (1956/1971), was dedicated to his former teacher.

The virtues of this great man are all but unknown outside his own country, except among a few foreigners who knew him personally. John Goodlad (as cited in Schubert & Lopez Schubert, 1986, pp. 10-11) says:

> Perhaps (his) greatest contribution has been the counsel he has given to thousands on an individual, person-to-person basis. It is… that combination of traits that makes a half hour with him so rewarding: the ability to concentrate exclusively on the problem before him and the ability to raise precisely the right questions regarding it…Teacher, scholar, administrator, creator of institutions, policy maker, speaker, traveler, advisor to presidents, counselor, friend –Ralph Tyler is and has been all of these and, in all of these roles, always a student.

III. Interview with Tyler

Starting in the seventies there were published several interviews regarding Tyler's life and work. The magazine *Phi Delta Kappan* may have published the first

(Fishbien, 1973), the second (Ryan, Johnston, Johnston & Newman, 1977) and the last interview, six months before his decease (Hiatt, 1994).

The most comprehensive interviews were those of Chall (1987),[3] in 1985, 1986 and 1987, published in a 450-page book, the product of 15 taped cassettes; that of William Schubert and Ann Lynn Schubert (1986), which appeared in a special number of the *Journal of Thought* dedicated completely to Tyler; and that of Ridings (1981) published online and included in the work of Madaus y Stufflebeam (1989). One of the last interviews Tyler granted was published in *Educational Leadership* a year before his death (Meek, 1993). His last interview was given to Hiatt six months before Tyler's death (1994). These are the most important interviews of Tyler of which we have knowledge. Interestingly, the majority of those who interviewed him were women.

IV. The context and value of the present interview

This interview was carried out by Graciela Cordero Arroyo on March 23, 1990, in Ralph Tyler's office located in the School of Education of Stanford University. Tyler, then 87-years-old, was director emeritus of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and Visiting Scholar of Stanford's School of Education. He was also a teacher of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he gave classes four days a month, and in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he worked during the summer.

The interview was requested by means of a letter to Tyler, with the intention of becoming acquainted with his perspective on curriculum and learning, 40 years after the publication of the best-known book in the world of Mexican education. In addition, the interviewer wished to get Tyler's response to the 70s' reconceptualist movements in curriculum studies, since there seemed to be no text in which Tyler had given a clear statement of his position.

Tyler's answer to the request was quick and courteous. He agreed to meet with the interviewer at Stanford University, and set no time limit on the interview. This lasted approximately two hours, and Tyler allowed it to be recorded on audiocassette. His memory and articulateness were amazing, although he was having problems with his hearing. Tyler used public transportation to get to Stanford, since his driver's license had been canceled.

The value of this interview has three principal aspects. The first is that it was, insofar as we know, the first ever granted to an Ibero-American academician. The second is that in it, Tyler expresses frank criticisms of the centralized and socialistic systems which he visited during his life. The third aspect is the statement of his perspective regarding the reconceptualists or *reconstructivists*, as he called them, a curriculum movement dating from the beginning of the 70s, and headed by Michael Apple, William Pinar and Henry Giroux. This movement severely criticized the work of Tyler. It appears that in previous interviews Tyler

never responded publicly to these criticisms, nor to others which labeled his work as behaviorist. In the present interview, Tyler is more open in expressing an opinion about this movement.

On the other hand, this interview proved that the acclamations of his humbleness and unassuming nature heard from former students, colleagues, and others who knew him, were true. The first author, who interviewed Tyler, represented no magazine, nor any of the nationally or internationally-known media. She was simply an admirer of his work—a person who wanted to meet him and learn more about him. The generosity and respect with which Tyler treated this interviewer was noteworthy from the first moment in which the interview was accepted. In addition, the interview is further proof of the great articulacy and memory of a man nearly 88-years-old at the time.

Graciela Cordero (GC): What is your concept of education?

Ralph Tyler (RT): Education ought to help young people develop the values that keep the society together. But people have to understand, at least in a democratic society, that as conditions change they have to reexamine which values are still important. Values like honesty and integrity and respect for other people, and so on, continue. But some values may not be as necessary or important in the new kinds of society. It has to be studied—it's not easily answered. Part of the role of education is to help young people to appreciate the values of the society that holds them together—also to appreciate the direction in which their particular society has been moving.

I think our society in the United States has been moving bit by bit to being more and more democratic. We try to reach now every child. There used to be a time when you would say, "Well, most of these children are uneducable", so they didn't pay much attention. When I was in elementary school, in the United States the average child dropped out of school by the end of the fifth or sixth grade—when he was about eleven or twelve. Now, we have about 80% who finish high school. There has been a great expansion of the system trying to help every child go as far as possible.

There was a time when black people in this country were not respected, and they had little education. It was due to the Civil Rights movement that crossed this country, that was some years ago, as you may remember. There is an effort now to reach everybody, blacks and whites and every other immigrant group in the ranks, so that education is viewed as something that everybody should have.

And there was a time when they thought that elementary education was all that was needed. Increasingly, there is a concern for developing lifelong education. Keep learning—you may not learn it in school, but if you stop learning when you're 25, you're ill-prepared for the kind of society you'll reach when you're 40. You've

got to keep learning something every year. Not necessarily in school, but someplace where you do your learning. So all these are illustrations of trying to see what is desirable educationally. It changes as we get new insights. It will not be the same in 1990 as it was in 1920.

GC: How is the educational system organized in the United States?

RT: Fortunately the United States Constitution starts out by saying that we the people establish the thing. What is not authorized for the Federal Government moves back to the state. Education is not mentioned, so it is not the responsibility in the United States, for the Federal Government to control education. It goes back to the states. And most states, fortunately, have delegated that back to the local towns—the school boards in those towns. There is a great opportunity for any school that wants to build a better curriculum, is free to do so. It's not controlled by the state or the nation in that regard. In some countries that is not true.

GC: What happens in other countries?

RT: I've visited the totalitarian counties. I visited Germany, in 1935, when Hitler was there. Their curriculum was a brutal one. It advised people to destroy the Jews, and so on. Then in 1961, I spent some time at the Curriculum Center in Moscow, in Russia. And in 1977, I was in Peking, in China. The way they do it, for example, in China, you go into a school–a typical class is about 60 students in China, they have so few teachers–, you go into a class and the teacher will raise a question, and then call upon a person she knows will give the right answer. Then she'll say to all the other children "Now", and they all chorus it. They just keep memorizing what they're supposed to know. It produces indoctrination, because you never ask a question where they have to think.

I've been in the French Center for Curriculum, which is centralized, and doesn't work very well. They tell the story about the Ministry of Education that said what every French school is teaching: this at this time. They weren't, but they reported that they were. So the myth of centralization… Legally, France is a centralized educational system. Actually, people do what they want to do. But that's generally true. You can't improve education from the top down. You've got to help the people who do it, understand and try to do the best job they can.

GC: It is possible to say that you represent the history of curriculum development. How long have you been working in this field?

RT: I've been at it a long time, you know. I started in 1927, and this is now '90…that would be 63 years. And I've been teaching since 1921—that's 69 years. You get a lot of experience in that time! Just remember what H. G. Wells said about it: "People that don't know their history repeat the same errors as their forbears".

GC: It is common to talk about "Tyler's rationale". How can you define this rationale? Has it something to do with rationality?

RT: If you mean by rationality that it's *rational*, that's a good idea. I think some people think that it (*rationality*) excludes getting new ideas and creativity from time to time. But my own experience has been that if I find something in advance, then I am better prepared to see opportunities for modifying it as we move along, because I know what I'm looking for. I know that I have been criticized by people who say that it's too cut and dried, or something like that, too formal. But I don't mean it to be formal; I mean it to be a guide to your own thinking, not to make your thinking formal. Depends on how you interpret it.

The test of any proposal of this sort is to try it out and see how it works for you. My students working my outline, found it helpful. If they don't find it helpful, why it probably isn't so? But to sit back and criticize without suggesting a substitute… Children are being taught and adults are being taught, so the question is "What kind of guide do they find helpful?" This guide that I've developed, you might find it helpful. The end is the good education of the children and youth that are being educated. So the question is not "Does it look rational?" but, "How does it help you?"

GC: Would you define your work as pragmatic?

RT: America is noted for being what's called *pragmatic*—not getting involved in ideologies—spinning out things up there, but thrusting out and seeing what helps, because usually an ideology has not been carefully tested out. You saw what happened to Communism. The ideology of Communism, or parts of it, sound very promising. But the notion that everybody should receive the same reward, regardless of what he puts into it turns out not to work very well, because a lot of people get tired of working, and then seeing other people getting the same rewards when they're not doing anything. Pretty soon you have to go back to something that works a little better. That is what is called *pragmatism*.

GC: What are the main questions to rise in any curriculum project?

RT: The same questions always arise in a curriculum, namely, what is it they're trying to teach young people—and what should they learn, and that involves, as you recall, considering what their society needs if they're going to be a good citizen. The first purpose of education in any society is to develop responsible citizenship, and so that requires you to understand what are the characteristics of a responsible citizen. The citizens in a democratic country are not only the subjects, they are the rulers. They are responsible for electing the officials, and so on. They have to have understanding, and make decisions.

When I worked in Russia, the citizens there are supposed to go along. They are not supposed to think. They are supposed to do what the Central Committee and

the government party asks of them. I found the same thing in China. So good citizenship is quite different. Developing a curriculum for citizens in Russia is different from developing a curriculum for citizens in Mexico or the United States.

So you have to consider what the demands of the society are. You've got to consider the questions of the age of the child growing up to become a responsible person. You've got to consider the availability of content that can help them. It would be nice to have content that doesn't exist—when it doesn't exist, you've got to understand what's available in science and all the other fields in order to help young people learn.

Then you've got the question of what we know about the psychology of learning, which is, you've got to build step by step. So the object then is to figure out what comes first, what will young children learn? And a little beyond that, they keep learning as they go along and build on it. You can't suddenly introduce something, and expect them to be adults if they have to have the previous preparation. So all these questions: the organization of the curriculum with the learning experiences—how can they learn these things?—are all questions of the curriculum. Those remain the same.

But I don't know of any other place that mentions that as much as my little book *Basic principles of curriculum* (1949/1986). It was developed not as a book, it was developed as a guide for a class that I taught at the University of Chicago. And I discovered that the University of Chicago Press had picked it up as a book when I didn't even know it was made into a book. I started it out as a mimeograph and it became published.

It's now published, I think, in eight or nine languages. The last one to come in, that I saw, was in Arabic, which was for students in Egypt. I ran into a professor from Iraq who said that he had been using the book in Arabic. And since there is no treaty with Egypt as to copyright, they could do almost anything without informing anybody else about it. So I only discovered it because he was using the book in Arabic. And I just had a letter two weeks ago from the University of Shanghai, in China. They want to translate it into Chinese.

GC: What do you think about defining *behavioral objectives* in curriculum?

RT: Objectives ought to be large enough to understand. The ability of the human being is to generalize, so that when you have some specific thing, it does help you to generalize the principle behind it as something new. Otherwise it becomes like training a person to do a job, little things that they don't commonly understand. So don't get behavioral objectives that are so tiny that there is no generalization. That's not human. Human beings generalize from their experience.

For example, in teaching reading, one of the objectives is to comprehend. Another objective may be to develop interest in reading material. That's a general objective; you can see a number of possibilities. But don't get it down to the point

of saying "I'm trying get interest in this little thing, or this little thing", because the important thing is for the child to discover in reading that you find interesting things, and it becomes meaningful in its own way.

GC: Joseph Schwab said that the curriculum field was dead. Also did Philip Jackson. What do you think about this opinion?

RT: It depends on who defines death. Again, the pragmatic question is: What do you want to prove by showing whether a thing is dead or not? Are you proposing that we are now going to wake it up, or something?" People can talk about students—that they are no longer alive because they are not protesting a lot. Well, if protesting did them any good... maybe they're interested in something better. So I don't worry about what they want to call it. The issue is not whether it's dead or not. The question is: What can we do now to make the curriculum better?

What Joe Schwab did so admirably (he was one of my students, he died two years ago) was to get the group of teachers and curricular people together at a school and discuss. They worked out by conference and discussion a great deal, rather than just setting up an outline of what to do. He worked at showing them how to do it. He felt he contributed, and I think he did, the idea that a curriculum develops from group discussion, and not from some individual's laying down the curriculum.

Joe Schwab introduced this notion from his own experience. He was responsible for the development of a science program. At that time the United States got all upset when the Russians put somebody on the moon, and thought their science teaching wasn't good enough. He developed this program for that, which involved science and other teachers sitting down together to talk about what they could do and how they could do it, rather than to just prepare it for somebody else to follow a written syllabus.

GC: I have read also about an American movement in curriculum that is called *reconceptualization*. What do they want to reconceptualize? What are the differences between the traditional curriculum movement and reconceptualization?

RT: What do they think the difference is? I'm not myself a person who tries to classify things, because it tends to label them, and you don't understand the particulars—because whoever sets the label decides those are certain criteria. So they look for that, and they label everything in those trends. I'd rather have a more complete description. What is good about this curriculum?, and what is having difficulty with it? So rather than trying to classify it according to labels I work that way. But the reconstructionists[4] like to label the curriculum the way they want it. That is, they start out from their conception of what the good society is, and then they reconstruct history to fit their way of viewing it. That's why it is called *reconstructionist*. But I myself have not any concern to classify or label. When you label something it no longer fits. If you label a boy, you really disable him. It doesn't help him at all. One way that he's disabled is through language and all this effort to label puts people in categories and forgets about trying to understand

them more fully. If you read some of their works, you'll find that they're always labeling people and their ideas in terms of their categories.

GC: For example, what to do you thing about Michael Apple's work?

RT: He's a new reconstructionist. He's at the University of Wisconsin. He's a bright person, but he's completely devoted to the Reconstructionist view. He knows how society should have progressed, and he views everything in terms of that, things that should have happened, and criticizes society that way. Well, you can do it if you want to, but I'm interested in history describing what is happening rather than what should happen.

They criticize curriculum because it doesn't fit their pattern. Neither Michael Apple nor any of the other members of that group work that I know of ever worked with the schools trying to produce literature or something. It's easier to criticize by a category you can set up. On the other hand, if you're going to work with a school, what would you do? If you face your job as helping schools build better curriculums, then I don't find Michael Apple's writing very helpful. If you conceive of your job as looking at various ways that a curriculum might be built, then it might be useful.

GC: How do you see the separation between *thinkers* and *doers* in the curriculum field?

RT: Doers should be guided by thought, and the thinkers should be tested by doing. Michael Apple is one of the so-called *thinkers*, and I am one of the so-called *doers*. But the object is to help teachers think too. You won't find it very helpful just to tell them what to do—you help them think through the problem.

They think they can tell teachers what to do, but a good teacher will not teach what he or she doesn't believe in, doesn't understand, doesn't think the children can learn, so in the end, the teacher decides what's to be taught. So the final curriculum executer as well as planner, is the teacher.

GC: In my experience in teacher training programs, teachers demand some recipes that make work easier for them.

RT: Teachers have to understand that good teaching is not following recipes, but understanding children and helping them to learn. They can get recipes, but that doesn't help kids to learn. It's easier to teach a person who cares about children how to teach, than it is to teach somebody who doesn't care about children, and thinks that all they need to do is learn some methods of teaching. The important thing is that the child feels you care about him, and he cares about you—he wants to please you because you care about him. That interrelationship is more important than all the knowledge you have about teaching, that you respond to children effectively. Don't you think so?

GC: Yes, it's very clear. I think that's important at any educational level.

RT: And all those things, teachers have to learn. Many of them are surprised. Many of them think all they will do is go in and tell the children how to behave, and they'll behave. The last thing they do is to do what you tell them to do if they don't want to do it themselves.

GC: What is the role of a teacher?

RT: You can't force a child or anyone else to learn. They have to experience—carry it out themselves. The role of the teacher is to stimulate the child to respond— to guide and to reward response, so that they are continually moving in the right direction. But you can't force a child. So, if you're going to teach, for example, a child to be a responsible citizen, one needs to begin with the school itself as a responsible, where he's responsible in that little society there for doing things there, and seeing that the society is honest, and so on.

In fact, we have an experiment going on at the high school level under the leadership of Edward Fenton, in Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh, in which five high schools are operating as participatory democracies. The students and the teachers together decide on the rules of living and the development of the responsibilities connected with them. It certainly seems to be working. I visited one of those high schools in a suburb of Boston. They have taken responsibility and are really living up to the effort to try to make that school one where people act unselfishly and work together for the common good.

GC: What was the impact of the Eight-Year Study in the life of schools?

RT: The significance of the Eight-Year Study was that it was not guided by a minister of education, or even by a state. It developed within the schools themselves. The significance of the Eight-Year Study was that each one of these 30 schools were given permission to develop their own program with the guidance of our staff, so that they developed things they understood. They spent summers and workshops trying to develop more materials and other things. It was from the bottom up rather than from the top down.

GC: When you worked in the teachers' workshop in the Eight-Year Study, how did you conceive this work? How did you guide this work? How did you organize the workshop?

RT: It came from their problems. Well, for example, they would say, "We don't have materials for this…We think that we can make a better history course, because the children would be interested in the history of their own people coming from different backgrounds and so on, but we don't have materials. So, let's make them". So in the Summer we had these six-week workshops where teachers could come in with problems to work on. It was not indoctrination. We were not telling them what to do, but helping them with the problems they were recognizing as they

tried to make a better curriculum. In some cases they had the question of how to make mathematics more meaningful, and so a group of mathematics teachers from different schools would come together in the workshop and try out and…We usually had a group of children. There were high school students there so they tried out the demonstrations on them. They were having to spend their summers in the workshop, so they could be tried out on these young people.

GC: What happened to these teachers?

RT: Well, most of them, of course, stayed on as teachers. They had their families there, and they felt they were better—and I think they were better teachers. They enjoyed doing a better job. The rewards of teaching are not primarily money. You can't pay very much when you've got so many teachers. There are more teachers in the United States than any other profession. But you can get the rewards of seeing kids learn, and that's very satisfying. When I was teaching in Pierre, South Dakota, in high school, a third of my children were from the Indian reservation nearby. To see those kids understand science, begin to come into the laboratory and want to work on it, see how happy they were about it, pleased me a great deal more than any amount of money.

GC: What are your recent projects?

RT: I am now working with a coalition for school improvement in Massachusetts, which has 39 school districts and about a hundred schools in that area. What I think I have learned, is that the real improvement in the curriculum comes at the level of the school, where the teachers are, the children are, and the parents are. They try to understand what it is they're helping their children learn.

Because the different contributions of the people that are helping define the curriculum can see more clearly what they can do, and understand it. In my present work with this coalition for school improvement, we have curriculum committees that sit together and discuss what problems they've encountered, and what they think might succeed, and then try them out and modify them in the light of that.

So my work since I have retired has been working at the school level with teachers and parents rather than to work in Washington, or to work in some state capital, because what really goes on in schools depends on the understanding that teachers have, and the understanding of parents, and the reports of that kind of education. You will find that some of my more recent writing tends to say that the effort to reform from the top down, that is from the national level and the state level, doesn't work. Teachers don't do the things they don't understand. You've got to start with teachers and with parents understanding what it is they need to do, and developing the understanding and the skills to carry it out. So my message is: open at what we call the *bottom up* to get at the lowest level of the individual school building. That's where you get improvement, not starting at the top down, where the schools will "say" they're doing it—but they don't understand it, so

they're not really carrying it out. Reform that isn't understood isn't helpful. We ought to begin with the teachers and parents who want their children to get a better education, and help them see what is possible.

GC: What do you think about the future in curriculum development?

RT: Education is more important every generation, as society gets more complex. The child born into today couldn't possibly live very long without an education. They have to learn many things. So as long as there is education, there has got to be a curriculum. You have to teach them something. The future of the curriculum is –if we're going to have a curriculum, people ought to study it and learn about it. I think the answer is how to accomplish it.

Curriculums make a difference. You see, before that, it was thought that people learned whatever the subjects were, and that was all there was to curriculum. But as society became more complex, they had first the question of new subjects. It took arguments of many years, until finally in 1892 they agreed to admit science, for example, to the curriculum of the American schools. And as other things have changed over time, you can expect all these arguments about what's to be taught. There's so much that could be learned. That will be with us even more as time goes on. I think the answer is that problems of the curriculum are going to be with us for the rest of the foreseeable future. That's the first study, because it's one of the most important questions. What kids are learning is the important question about what the schools are doing. Totalitarian leaders try to make them centers of indoctrination. The first thing that Hitler did when I was there in 1935 was to take over the schools and try to indoctrinate the children. The effort to control the curriculum and teach what you want to teach is an effort of every strong leader, whether he is a communist or a fascist. Strong leaders like to make the curriculum one of indoctrination rather than one of understanding. Strong leader quite often do not like to have children learn to be independent thinkers.

The problem of a democracy is to get wise leadership and thoughtful consideration of the curriculum, rather than simply taking whatever is there and not thinking about it.

I can't think of a more important field in education other than the field also of learning. Curriculum and learning are the two most important aspects of education. Although the administrators think that it is especially important to administer a school, but a school isn't worth having if it isn't teaching the right things, if the children aren't learning.

The role of the school is to help children learn what is important for them to learn, so that the two things important for them are the curriculum, and how they learn and can be helped to learn. The theory of learning ability is one of the most important things for education. As John Dewey said, "you don't learn much from experience; you learn by reflecting upon your experience". What does it mean?

Why did it happen? What could we have done about it? It's that reflection that helps to learn, and not just having the experience.

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Translator: Lessie Evona York Weatherman
School of Languages
Autonomous University of Baja California at Mexicali

[1] This work was published in Spanish in 1973, under the title *Principios básicos del currículo.*

[2] Judging from the course number, it was probably given to college sophomores or juniors majoring in education.

[3] The authors did not have access to the complete publication, only to a summary.

[4] Tyler used the term *reconstruccionist* as synonym of *reconceptualist*.