Artifact #2

Philosophy of Curriculum: Final Paper

C&T 709: Foundations of Curriculum & Instruction

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Part I: Summary of Response Paper #1 and Evolving Understanding of Theorists

Response Paper #1 compared Ralph Tyler's and Herbert Kliebard's contrasting approaches to curriculum design. Tyler, in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), advocates for a structured, objective-driven model where students progress through a clear sequence of skills, such as mastering arithmetic before advancing to algebra. In contrast, Kliebard, drawing on John Dewey's progressive philosophy, critiques rigid, objective-based models and supports a student-centered approach in which learners actively shape their education (Kliebard, 2004). A Kliebard-inspired curriculum encourages students to explore subjects through personal interests, like applying geometry to architecture or using statistics in sports, with teachers facilitating flexible, adaptive instruction. Despite their differences, both theorists emphasize intentional curriculum design: Tyler through structured objectives and Kliebard through adaptability. Both also recognize the teacher's pivotal role—Tyler as the implementer of pre-determined educational goals and Kliebard as the facilitator of student-driven learning.

Since completing Response Paper #1, my understanding of these theories has evolved. Initially, I viewed Tyler's model as rigid compared to Kliebard's dynamic approach. I now see that while Tyler's framework emphasizes predetermined objectives, it also allows for teacher adaptation to effectively address diverse student needs, showing that structure and flexibility can coexist. This highlights the need to tailor curriculum to specific classroom contexts. Kliebard's focus on adaptability, once idealistic to me, presents practical challenges in standardized settings and requires significant shifts in curriculum design. Reflecting on this, I now see the value in blending Kliebard's "adaptability within constraints" (Tyler, 1949) to meet educational standards and foster meaningful learning.

Part II: Reflection on Curriculum Issue (Summary and Response)

Response Paper #2 explored the impact of standardized testing on curriculum design, highlighting how an overemphasis on test preparation narrows educational content and limits deeper learning. Freire (1970) argues, “education is suffering from narration sickness,” which resonates with my concerns about rote learning in standardized testing. The paper argues that Standardized testing stifles critical thinking and creativity, considers multiple perspectives when facing real-world problems, and reduces focus on non-tested subjects like the arts and social studies (Walker, 2014). Scholars like Apple (2004) and Giroux (1983, 1988) argue that testing commodifies education by focusing solely on exam performance, thereby reinforcing social inequalities. The paper advocates for a well-rounded, hybrid curriculum that reduces the disproportionate weight on standardized test scores while promoting diverse assessment types that foster interpersonal skills, critical thinking, creativity, and real-world engagement.

Since writing the initial essay, my stance on standardized testing remains critical but more nuanced. Initially, I advocated shifting away from standardized tests toward authentic assessments and experiential learning, drawing on Paulo Freire’s (1970) "problem-posing education" and John Dewey’s experiential approach to encourage critical engagement. However, I now appreciate the role of standardized tests in ensuring accountability, particularly in core subjects like math and literacy. I support a balanced approach, integrating standardized testing and authentic assessments to meet the need for measurable outcomes while promoting a flexible, inclusive, and holistic educational experience that better prepares students for life beyond the classroom (Adler, 2013). Additionally, working in a culturally diverse environment like Singapore has further deepened my understanding of culturally responsive assessments, leading me to embrace a hybrid model that values both accountability and inclusivity in education.

Part III: My Curriculum Philosophy

My curriculum philosophy is grounded in inclusivity, adaptability, and a commitment to empowering students by connecting their learning to meaningful, real-world contexts. Drawing inspiration from William Doll's (1993) 4 Rs, John Dewey's pragmatism (2013), Maxine Greene's (2013) experiential learning, Christy Moroye's (2013) adaptability, and Nel Noddings' (2013) Ethics of Care, I envision a curriculum that promotes intellectual depth, reflection, collaboration, mutual trust and care, and authentic relational learning opportunities. I seek to engage students in learning experiences that prepare them for academic success while fostering their roles as active, thoughtful participants empowered to take risks, express themselves and grow in an interconnected and unpredictable world.

Inclusivity and cultural responsiveness are at the heart of my curriculum philosophy. I believe that every student must see their culture, experiences, and identity reflected in their learning. Collaboration with families, students, and educators builds trust and respect among stakeholders, laying the groundwork for a student-centered curriculum rooted in the real-world experiences of learners, values diverse perspectives, and fosters equitable opportunities for success.

Inspired by Dewey's experiential learning, I prioritize real-world, student-centered projects that connect classroom learning to society and engage students in collaborative and purposeful learning. For example, I led a first-grade project where students designed community gardens. This allowed them to apply math and science concepts while fostering collaboration and social responsibility. Similarly, following Greene's emphasis on cultural connection, I incorporated cultural stories into reading activities, helping students engage more deeply by linking the material to their personal and cultural experiences (Greene, 2013).

Adaptability is central to addressing diverse learner needs, and my approach integrates Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction to create a dynamic, inclusive environment. UDL establishes a proactive framework by minimizing barriers through multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. Differentiation builds on this by personalizing learning to each student's strengths, challenges, and preferences. Together, these approaches ensure a flexible, tailored curriculum that fosters equity and accessibility, continuously refined through ongoing assessment and reflection.

Aligning an inclusive, student-centered curriculum with standardized testing is challenging. While I once viewed standardized tests as clear measures of achievement, I now see their limitations. High-stakes testing often neglects cultural diversity, restricts teachers to technical roles, and narrows learning to rote memorization over critical thinking and creativity (Au, 2007; Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Inspired by Giroux's (1983) critique that such testing perpetuates "social stratification and economic inequality," I strive to balance accountability with adaptability. By integrating authentic, inclusive assessments, such as the community garden project—where students applied academic knowledge and reflected on its community impact—I foster equitable, holistic measures of growth aligned with Tyler's structured objectives and Kliebard's learner-centered approach (Phelps, 2005; National Center for Fair & Open Testing, 2020).

At the heart of my curriculum philosophy is the belief that education is not merely about acquiring knowledge but using it to drive change. As Dewey aptly stated, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" (Dewey, 2013). By connecting learning to real-world contexts, I empower students to grow personally and transform society, equipping them to become engaged, self-reliant citizens and future leaders.