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Analysis of the Role of Teachers as Articulated in Kliebard, Tyler, and Apple Texts

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## Introduction

Some would state that curriculum is the most important part of education. Some others would state that teachers are the most important part of education. Although no one can deny the immense role curriculum plays in any educational system, it is the way the different teachers implement it that affects students' lives the most. As Dewey said, "It is the teacher 'who alone can make that course of study a living reality'" (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 74). The following analysis of the role of teachers is based on Kliebard's (2004), Tyler's (1949), and Apple's (2004) books which focus on curriculum; hence, the role of teachers according to them will be, in most instances, inferred.

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**Analysis (Short version)**

### **The Role of Teachers in Kliebard's Text**

Since Kliebard's (2004) book, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, is a historical account of the changes that occurred in American education, the role of teachers in his book will be based on the different historical roles that he relates. By the 1890s, the role of teachers consisted of "monotonous drill, harsh discipline, and mindless verbatim recitation," along with strengthening the powers of the mind and filling the mind with content (p. 5). In 1892, Charles W. Eliot recommended that teachers focus on the development of reasoning power in their pupils, on the development of "the power to express thought clearly, concisely, and cogently" (as

cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 9), and on the development of “sensitivity to beauty and high moral character” (p. 10).

Four major forces determined the role of teachers in the twentieth century: (1) The Humanists (Eliot & Harris): teach a select few “the power of reason and the finest elements of Western cultural heritage” (p. 23), “train children to gain control over their natural impulses,” promote “knowledge of truth, a love of the beautiful, a habit of doing the good” in addition to the command of language in reading and writing (Harris as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 32). (2) The Developmentalists (Hall & Dewey): teach according to the natural order of development in the child, taking into consideration “the child’s real interests, needs, and learning patterns” (p. 24). (3) The Social Efficiency Educators (Rice, Ross, Bobbitt): focus on creating a “coolly efficient, smoothly running society,” and on “a far greater differentiation in the curriculum” based on the “adult life-roles” students would occupy (p. 24). (4) The Social Meliorists (Ward): promote social change and social justice, by focusing directly on the abuses in society (p. 24).

Dewey believed that teachers should have a “definite and authoritative position in shaping the course of study” (p. 74). Both Dewey and Ross believed that teachers should also play the role of an ideal parent (p. 79). By the 1930s, the role of teachers was to give importance to child and adolescent interests, their sense of purpose, and to activity (vs. passivity). Teachers devoted less time to drill and more time to “creative self-expression” (p. 143). They encouraged independent thinking and an active concern for social justice (p. 168). They started helping students to see the connections among school subjects (p. 233). Moreover, they started participating in curriculum planning (p. 256). In 1939, Hanna reported that teachers should teach about “functional needs and significant life problems” at the expense of the traditional subjects.

He also mentioned a “strong emphasis on pupil-teacher planning of the curriculum” (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 182).

### **The Role of Teachers in Tyler’s Text**

According to Tyler (1949), teachers should base their teaching on educational objectives (p. 3). Each objective should have both behavioral and content aspects (p. 48). In selecting objectives, it is important that learnings be consistent with each other, integrated, coherent, and reinforce each other (p. 41).

Teachers can derive objectives from the child’s interests, problems, purposes, needs --the progressives (pp. 4 & 6); the cultural heritage of the past --the essentialists (p. 4); an analysis of contemporary society (knowledges, skills, attitudes that will help people to deal effectively with the critical problems of contemporary life) --sociologists (p. 5); or from values derived by comprehensive philosophic study --educational philosophers (p. 5). Teachers should use activities that have meaning and motivate students who should be actively involved in their learning (p. 11) and interested in what they are doing.

So that the objectives set by the teachers can be reached, teachers should select learning experiences which give students an opportunity to practice the kind of behavior and deal with the kind of content implied by the objective (p. 65), which give students the opportunity to obtain satisfaction from carrying on the behavior (p. 66), and which are appropriate to the student’s present attainments (p. 67).

For effective instruction, teachers should follow three criteria in organizing learning experiences: continuity (practice); sequence (for progressive development of understanding/skill/attitude); and integration (students do need to see the horizontal relationship between the different facts/skills they are learning) (pp. 84-85). As for evaluating the

effectiveness of learning experiences, Tyler recommends that teachers conduct three sets of appraisals: at an early point, at a later point to identify changes and, finally, after the instruction has been completed (pp. 106-107).

### **The Role of Teachers in Apple's Text**

According to Apple (2004), teachers should be “critically oriented” (p. 158); they should question everything they take for granted (p. 12). They should question where they stand, what they can do to challenge the prevailing practices of education and, more importantly, to be committed to “a social order that has at its very foundation ... the maximization of economic, social, and educational quality” (p. 10).

Teachers should question their commonsense assumptions. Teachers should ponder the hidden curriculum, the educational knowledge they teach and make it problematic; consider where it comes from, whose social group it serves (p. 13). Teachers should think critically about “education’s relationship to economic, political, and cultural power” (p. vii). They should think about how their day-to-day practices are influenced by the “institutional arrangements and forms of consciousness that dominate advanced industrial economies” (p.1). Teachers should be aware of the conscious manipulation of schooling by those in power (p. 3).

Teachers need to be aware of the acts of hegemony that serve to control our consciousness, our commonsense, our interpretations of the world we live in, all our practices and expectations, and our values (p. 4). Teachers need to think about the overt and covert knowledge they teach, how it “must not be accepted as given, but must be made problematic” and be scrutinized (p. 43). Teachers need to be aware of the fact that ideology affects “the modes of interaction in classrooms, the types of control, the generation and labeling of pupil identities,”

their “conceptions of competence, of what is ‘good student performance,’ of important v. unimportant knowledge, and of ‘proper behavior’ (p. 133).

So, the role of teachers is to support students’ rights (p. 154); teach social inquiry and “enable students to inquire as to why a particular form of social collectivity exists, how it is maintained and who benefits from it” (p. 6); teach students to deal with conflict (p. 74) and prepare them to be responsible for their own learning (p. 6); help students to achieve a sense of community (p. 8); and, finally, engage students “in the articulation and development of paradigms of activity within their everyday lives at school. Such involvement could enable students to come to grips with and amplify crucial insights into their own conditionedness and freedom” (p. 94).

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[Analysis \(Short version\)](#)

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**Analysis (Long version)**

### **The Role of Teachers in Kliebard’s Text**

Since Kliebard’s (2004) book, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, is a historical account of the changes that occurred in American education, the role of teachers in his book will be based on the different historical roles that he relates. By the 1890s, based on the mental disciplinarians’ view of the mind as a muscle, the role of teachers consisted of “monotonous drill, harsh discipline, and mindless verbatim recitation,” along with strengthening the powers of the mind (thinking) and filling the mind with content (knowledge and skills) (Kliebard, 2004, p. 5). Children were then treated as “passive receptacles” (p. 38). In 1892, Charles W. Eliot

recommended that teachers focus on the development of reasoning power in their pupils (by helping them to observe accurately, make correct records of the observations, classify and categorize, and make correct inferences), on the development of “the power to express thought clearly, concisely, and cogently” (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 9), and on the development of “sensitivity to beauty and high moral character” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 10).

Four major forces determined the new American curriculum and, hence, the role of teachers in the twentieth century:

- The Humanists (Eliot & Harris) according to whom the role of teachers is to teach a select few “the power of reason and the finest elements of Western cultural heritage” (p. 23). In 1895, the role of teachers in William Torrey Harris’s opinion was to “train children to gain control over their natural impulses, not to submit to them,” to promote “knowledge of truth, a love of the beautiful, a habit of doing the good” in addition to the command of language in reading and writing (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 32).
- The Developmentalists (Hall & Dewey) according to whom the role of teachers is to teach according to the natural order of development in the child, taking into consideration “the child’s real interests, needs, and learning patterns” (p. 24). Hall advised against teaching all pupils the same way, to the same extent: pupils should be sorted by their probable destinations (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, pp. 12 and 105), according to their own interests (p. 101).
- The Social Efficiency Educators (Rice, Ross, Bobbitt) according to whom the role of teachers is to focus on creating a “coolly efficient, smoothly running society,” and on “a far greater differentiation in the curriculum” based on the “adult life-roles” students would occupy (p. 24). According to Rice, teachers had to base their teaching on clear, definite goals and appropriate techniques of measurement (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 20).

- The Social Meliorists (Ward) according to whom the role of teachers is to promote social change and social justice, by focusing directly on the abuses in society (corruption and vice; inequalities of race and gender; abuse of privilege and power) so that the new generation can deal effectively with them (p. 24).

Dewey believed that teachers- who are the only real educators in the school system- should have a “definite and authoritative position in shaping the course of study” (p. 74). Both Dewey and Ross believed that teachers should also play the role of an ideal parent (p. 79). John Franklin Bobbit recommended that teachers teach students what they need and will use (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 84); that they “prepare children and youth for a distinct adult role” (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 154) through differentiated instruction.

By the 1930s, the role of teachers was to give importance to child and adolescent interests, their sense of purpose... and to activity (vs. passivity). Teachers devoted less time to drill and more time to “creative self-expression” (p. 143). They encouraged independent thinking and an active concern for social justice (p 168). They started helping students “pull together the ‘pieces in a great picture’” and helping them see the connections among school subjects (p. 233). Moreover, teachers started participating in curriculum planning (p. 256).

In 1939, Hanna reported that teachers should teach about “functional needs and significant life problems” and focus on daily problems at the expense of the traditional subjects. Hanna also mentioned a “strong emphasis on pupil-teacher planning of the curriculum” (as cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 182).

### **The Role of Teachers in Tyler’s Text**

According to Tyler (1949), teachers should base their teaching on educational objectives which, in turn, determine the materials to be selected, the content to be outlined, the instructional

procedures to be developed, and the tests and exams to be devised for evaluation (p. 3). Each objective should have both behavioral and content aspects (p. 48). In selecting objectives, it is important that learnings be consistent with each other, integrated and coherent, and reinforce each other (p. 41).

Teachers can derive objectives from the child's interests, problems, purposes, needs --the progressives (pp. 4 & 6); the cultural heritage of the past --the essentialists (p. 4); an analysis of contemporary society (knowledges, skills, attitudes that will help people to deal effectively with the critical problems of contemporary life) --sociologists (p. 5); or from values derived by comprehensive philosophic study --educational philosophers (p. 5).

Teachers should use activities that have meaning and motivate students who should be actively involved in their learning (p. 11) and interested in what they are doing. In studying the learners, teachers can use the following methods (p. 12): teacher observations, student interviews (p. 13), questionnaires, tests, and/or records.

So that the objectives set by the teachers can be reached, teachers should select learning experiences which give students an opportunity to practice the kind of behavior and deal with the kind of content implied by the objective (p. 65), which give students the opportunity to obtain satisfaction from carrying on the behavior (p. 66), and which are appropriate to the student's present attainments, predispositions (p. 67) --within their zone of proximal development.

For effective instruction, teachers should follow three criteria in organizing learning experiences: continuity (practice); sequence (for progressive development of understanding/skill/attitude); and integration (students do need to see the horizontal relationship between the different facts/skills they are learning) (pp. 84-85).

As for evaluating the effectiveness of learning experiences, Tyler recommends that teachers conduct three sets of appraisals: at an early point, at a later point to identify changes and, finally, after the instruction has been completed (pp. 106-107).

### **The Role of Teachers in Apple's Text**

According to Apple (2004) whose objective is to promote “conscious emancipatory activity” (p. 126), teachers, who play a gigantic role in students’ lives — which we can infer from the fact that he said that “schools help create people” (p. 6), should be “critically oriented” (p. 158) and should question everything around them: what they take for granted (p. 12). They should question themselves about where they stand, what they can do to challenge the prevailing practices of education and, more importantly, to be committed to “a social order that has at its very foundation not the accumulation of goods, profits, and credentials, but the maximization of economic, social, and educational quality” (p. 10).

Teachers should question the unquestionable; question the relationship between ideologies and educational thought and practice, their commonsense (sometimes unarticulated) assumptions; question “the political, social, ethical, and economic interests and commitments that are uncritically accepted as ‘the way life really is.’” They “need to examine critically not just ‘how a student acquires more knowledge,’ but ‘why and how particular aspects of the collective culture are presented in school as objective, factual knowledge’” (p. 12).

Teachers should ponder the hidden curriculum (the implicit teaching of norms, values, and dispositions), the educational knowledge they teach (and make it problematic; question where it comes from, whose social group it serves), and they should be “aware of the ideological and epistemological commitments they tacitly accept and promote” (p. 13). They should reflect

on their commonsense interpretive framework and on what set of ideological presuppositions it responds (p. 55).

Teachers are not neutral; they are involved consciously or unconsciously in a political and economic act (p. 1). They should think critically about “education’s relationship to economic, political, and cultural power” (p. vii). Political and personal commitments guide teachers’ work. Teachers’ day-to-day practices (material selection and organization, ideological values, classroom relations, structures of social power, criteria and modes of evaluation used to measure learning and teaching success) are influenced by the “institutional arrangements and forms of consciousness that dominate advanced industrial economies” (p. 1).

Teachers should seek to understand how “the kinds of cultural resources and symbols schools select and organize are dialectically related to the kinds of normative and conceptual consciousness ‘required’ by a stratified society” (p. 2). They should be aware of the conscious manipulation of schooling by those in power (p. 3). They should examine deeply what they “take as given” (p. 2) and question it: how were the forms of consciousness created and recreated in schools?

Teachers need to be aware of the acts of hegemony that serve to control our consciousness, our commonsense, our interpretations of the world we live in, all our practices and expectations, and our values (p. 4). Is our way of thinking “wholly determined by one class which consciously imposes it” (p. 5) on us? According to Williams, schools “act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony” (as cited in Apple, 2004, p. 5). “Hegemony is created and recreated by the formal corpus of school knowledge, as well as by the covert teaching that has and does go on” (p. 77). The overt and covert knowledge (and its selection, organization, and evaluation) “must not be accepted as given, but must be made problematic” and must be

scrutinized (p. 43). Teachers should not accept to “teach a hidden curriculum that seems uniquely suited to maintain the ideological hegemony of the most powerful classes in this society” (p. 41).

“The modes of interaction in classrooms, the types of control, the generation and labeling of pupil identities” are all affected by ideology and material and economic environment. “Teachers’ conceptions of competence, of what is ‘good student performance,’ of important v. unimportant knowledge, of ‘proper behavior’ are not free-floating ideas” (p. 133). Labeling helps teachers to confront stereotypes rather than individuals (p. 137).

Teachers need to:

- Support students’ rights (p. 154).
- “Know their subject matter” and they should be able to “do creative and socially and educationally critical things with students in schools” (p. 194).
- Teach social inquiry (which is better than the rote models of teaching); this “can depoliticize the study of social life.” However, when teaching social inquiry they should “enable students to inquire as to why a particular form of social collectivity exists, how it is maintained and who benefits from it” (p. 6).
- Teach students to deal with conflict --class conflict, scientific conflict—(p. 6) instead of just teaching them to inquire “into a consensus ideology” that has little resemblance with the complexities of social life (p. 74). Teachers should prepare students to be responsible for their own learning and they should make sure their students end up being so (p. 6).
- Help students to achieve a sense of community in whatever they do, instead of only focusing on their individual needs and rights (p. 8).

- “Consider engaging students in the articulation and development of paradigms of activity within their everyday lives at school. Such involvement could enable students to come to grips with and amplify crucial insights into their own conditionedness and freedom” (p. 94).

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[Synthesis](#)

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### Synthesis

Although Kliebard (2004), Tyler (1949), and Apple (2004) describe each the role of teachers rather differently, they all seem to agree on one major point: they all recommend that teachers play an active role in the development of the curriculum, of what they are to teach.

Kliebard recommended (via Dewey, p. 74) that teachers have an “authoritative position in shaping the course of study;” He even suggested that students also participate in curriculum planning (via Hanna, p. 182) which would, in fact, be an excellent idea. If motivation is a key, and student interest and needs are another key, then who better than the students to determine what motivates them, what interests them, and what they need? Once they have a say in what they will be studying, they will feel a moral obligation to take it seriously and do their best to learn, and this would automatically eliminate or at least significantly reduce the need for discipline and motivation whose absence, let us face it, would be detrimental. Of course, though, the teachers would have the bigger input in the course of study which would then be tailored to the students’ needs and interests.

Tyler focused on the role of teachers in setting educational objectives which should be at the source of any teaching. Once those objectives have been devised (but here of course it would

take a long process for the teacher to reach objectives that are consistent, integrated, based on the students' interests, problems, purposes, and needs), teachers should select activities that have meaning, that motivate, that are within the students' zone of proximal development, that give way to practice and derive satisfaction. So the teachers, according to Tyler, would have a lot of leeway. What seemed to be missing here is any mention of relating new information to past experience; schema theory; active learning and long-term memory. >> Needs to be elaborated (to be done soon...)

As for Apple, he definitely went a step (or even several steps) further and recommended that, not only teachers devise curricula, but also question everything they go by in their profession; everything they stand for! This is truly a wake-up call; a strong push to think outside the box. It may, though, represent serious immediate risks, but at the same time, if it is implemented properly, future rewards, and a hope for a drastic improvement of society. This is how things start! Apple invites teachers to think about the covert knowledge they teach; about the way they personally view student achievement, student success, student performance, student behavior. He "shook" their whole belief system!

Another common denominator among the three texts is critical thinking: reasoning power, inquiry, gaining insights, and problem solving, which all involve active learning. Apple did point out something, though, that did not occur in any of the other two texts: helping students to achieve a sense of community! This is so crucial for society to function properly. I would also add here team building: the role of teachers should definitely include it.

Having high expectations for students; creating a safe learning environment; building up emotional intelligence (which includes, in addition to impulse control that was mentioned by Harris in Kliebard's text, self-awareness, mood management, empathy, and people skills) and

self-esteem; taking learning styles into consideration (Kliebard did mention learning patterns); respecting multiple intelligences; and finally fostering autonomy. All those are very important to be included in the role of teachers, and they were not mentioned (or emphasized) in any of the texts. Moreover, a phrase that did not occur in any of the three texts is, “the student’s best interest” which should be at the core of anything that is devised for students. Moreover, the importance of proper assessment and evaluation of students’ work was only mentioned by Tyler and Rice in Kliebard’s text. With no proper assessment of learning, no objectives can be reached (at least as much as they should be reached). So, one of the most important roles of teachers is setting up a good assessment system; the use of detailed rubrics would be a big plus since they show the students exactly what they are expected to learn.

Finally, the main role of teachers, besides teaching values and morality (without which no classroom can function properly), is to be eclectic and select the information, activities, techniques, and procedures that serve their students best.

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