

The Problem of Aims and Objectives in Education *

by

Josefina Y. Porter

What is the status of curriculum scholarship in a selected dimension of the field-curriculum objectives?

The problem of what to expect of the young generation to learn and to know in the process of education has been an issue for debate among educators ever since. Education specialists and laymen have been working on this problem for years without coming to a clear and precise definition of what is it they wanted the future generations to know in schools.

Decision-making for curriculum objectives and aims is generally thought of as a responsibility of every citizen in any society. Perhaps it is this concept of general

responsibility that increases the extent of the problem. In a democracy, every person seems to feel that he has something to say and since not every person has the same things to say, curriculum-making has become an unpleasant job that education specialists sometimes would want to avoid from doing.

Education specialists are agreed that aims and objectives of education will embody the values, ideals, and beliefs of one's culture. This value system in educational objectives is the source of the trouble that hinder the work of specialists, so that they take positions one kind or another when faced with the problem of defining objectives. The educational consumers in turn fol-

*Miss Porter is Coordinator of the Guidance Services Center, Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo City.

low suit and take sides with any of their favorite author, educator, or specialist for their own objectives. This is a sort of merry-go-round that has been in education for years.

We ask this question, what are some of the problems that confront education specialists in stating goals or educational objectives? Margaret Ammons (1969) cited five reasons: First, the terms "educational objectives" and "outcomes" have no universally accepted definitions, so that any discussion on these terms are made upon several levels of generality. Second, a statement of objective or a recommended method for determining objectives are almost always expressed in value terms which make empirical research difficult. Third, the history of what objective is to be taught has a long history that dates back to Plato. Fourth, expressions of objectives are explicitly analyzed and justified opinions. Fifth, empirical studies in relation to objectives are few compared to the number of statements of objectives based upon individual or group opinions.

Broudy (1970) on using philosophy as foundations of educational objectives sounded in just about the same tone in his article on this topic. Broudy admits that philosophy contributes to educational aims and objectives in what he terms the "substantive" and the "critical" sources. "Substantive"

means the source of ideas about man, society, and nature, that figure in the prescriptions of the good life. "Critical" by virtue of its concern with the nature of knowledge and criteria of truth.

In the later discussion of this article, Broudy pointed out the fact that life is a big field from where to derive the substantive source of aims, so that in attempting to define educational aims as goals in life educators are sometimes misled to state educational objectives that are not school objectives.

A historical development of educational aims as made by Ammons (1969) will reveal the enormous attempts by scholars at this task. The following is taken from Ammons' article:

"Among the earliest statements of educational objectives from educators are the Yale report (Committee of the Corporation and the Academic Faculty, 1930), the report of the Committee of Ten (NEA, 1894) and the report of the Committee of Fifteen on Elementary Education (NEA, 1895). Later such statements came from the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRASE) NEA, 1918) and the Educational Policies Commission (NEA, 1961).

Charters and Miller (1915) and later Bobbitt (1918) began to approach the question of objectives on what they saw as a different

manner. They formulated a methodology for determining educational objectives hoping to make such determination scientific rather than a matter of whims or opinions."

The rest of these scholars who kept on working with the same problem were Tyler (1950), French (1957), Kearney (1953), Goodlad and others (1966), and Ammons (1964).

Revisions were suggested later even from those who were not in the education field. Rickover (1963) for example wrote an interesting challenge to educators. Then there are Bestor (1953), Goodman (1964), and Bruner (1960).

Most recently, a working group in the National Institute for Educational Research carried through this problem of Goals, Aims, and Objectives and presented some definitions; "goals" as comprehensive and broad term that give the overall purposes of education; "aims" are those that enunciate stagewise purposes, and "objectives" are those that are, subjectwise, specific purposes. (Tokyo, 1974).

So far we have made a run through the list of names of those who attempted to set themselves to the task of formulating objectives. The next step is to look through the problem of expression of educational objectives. The question, how shall educational objectives be expressed?

Ammons (1969) stated that the social conditions of the time are reflected in the statements of educational objectives. So with the prevailing concept of the nature of man. This is observed in the history of education. Krug (1964) showed this when he found that the idea of "mental training" and or "disciplining through properly selected studies" can be traced as far back as Plato. The Yale report showed the same idea, and the religious spirit expressed in the aims of elementary education of the New England colonies were reflections of that social condition. Bobbitt's aim of "social efficiency" was a reflection of what went on the social events of the early nineteenth century in history. Dewey's definition of education as synonymous to growth also reflect the attempt to look at the schools as the reflections of the community.

Bruner (1960) started to state educational objectives that emphasize the intellectual development of man. His aim was to train "better students," and to help them achieve the optimum level of their intellectual development." Broudy's work on planning for excellence carried the same tone.

Broudy in the article cited (1961), stated that students shall use the methods of the disciplines for mastery and learning of the field. The more recent educators tend to emphasize the quality of knowledge

among the students as well as the processes involved in the mastery of certain field of knowledge.

What if education ceases to be the passive reflections of prevailing societal goals or as a means of perpetuating them? What if education is seen as the energizing agent in the transformation of society? These are the present conditions existing in our society. Education has a new relationship with society. Education sees itself with many problems to be solved not by abstract generalizations but by directed goals and systems.

Surely educational goals, aims or objectives will take a new direction, too. (Tokyo, 1974).

The next question, who will determine educational objectives? Several means are suggested. Bobbitt stated detailed steps that will involve the examination of the social, religious, health, civic, and many other activities given any educational aim. Bobbitt's method screens certain activities from being those taken to be the objectives if there are certain aspects of social activities that are more implied than stated.

Tyler (1950) stated the "needs of the learners" as one determiner and the "needs of society" as another. Tyler makes use of philosophy and psychology at the same time.

Goodlad (1966) saw another method by including value positions. Goodlad views objectives to be drawn from a value position and an analysis of that position is basic to an appropriate statement of aims. Goodlad suggested methods of validation of aims after a thorough analysis.

Jensen (1950) also emphasized a validation of aims. In his analysis he used the value framework, human needs, and human development to determine aims. Several other educators suggested field studies utilizing the methods of research and analysis through survey and evaluation.

The enthusiasm over behavioral objectives brought to our attention two aspects in the statement of objectives: one involves the teaching act and the other involves the learning act in the classroom. Kibler and others (1970) define behavioral objectives as statements which describe what students will be able to do after completing a prescribed unit of instruction. Behavioral objectives, as he further wrote serve two functions: one, they are used by instructors to design and evaluate their instructions. The other function is to communicate the goals of the instructional units to the interested persons as the students who plan to complete the unit, the instructor who teaches the following units, and the persons

responsible for planning and evaluating the curricula.

Mager for example stresses that behavioral objectives are to be taken from the standpoint of what the pupil will do and not the teacher. Mager presented criteria for the statement of behavioral objectives in an explicit manner that his qualifications are easy to evaluate. Mager's qualifications are that behavioral objectives must state precisely the observable behavior and that this behavior must be terminal. Ammons (1969) thought that there are behaviors that are not observable so that she considers behavior that is inferred according to a definition agreed upon by those involved. Ammons sees objectives as direction rather than as descriptions of terminal behavior. There are other educators who think that formulation of objectives prior to teaching not necessary. Eisher and Macdonald belong to this camp that doubts the use of objectives prior to teaching.

Kliebard is not as enthusiastic over behavioral objectives as Tyler or Mager are. In an article he says, "about all that we have done on the question of the role of objectives in curriculum development since Bobbitt's day is, through some verbal flim-flam, convert Bobbitt's "ability to" into what are called behavioral or operational terms and to enshrine the whole process into

what is known as the "Tyler rationale."

Tyler met many critics but so far no one has stated some ground rules in terms of curriculum development as he has done. The rest of the problem in educational objectives has taken a new picture with the emphasis on behavioral for teaching.

Three important questions often asked by the critics of the behavioral objectives are answered by Popham in his paper delivered before the Educational Research conference. Popham presented eleven reasons why he supported the validity of behavioral objectives. These questions are: (1) Can all important outcomes of education be defined and measured behaviorally? (2) Can pre-specification of objectives prevent teachers from achieving objectives which might arise unexpectedly during a course of instruction? (3) Will more trivial behaviors which are the easiest to operationalize, receive greater emphasis than more important educational outcomes? Popham affirms the use of behavioral objectives in his paper.

It seems to appear that whatever way education specialists will define educational objectives as goals, aims, purposes, or outcomes, the teacher is still entrusted with the task of teaching the pupil everyday in his classroom. It is his responsibility

to teach the pupil to acquire the education that is desired. What is the nature of this desirable education may be helpful to the teacher but the most pressing problem that confronts that teacher will not be seeking for the definition but to teach. The scholars will have to work to agree on the definition.

The teacher will find the suggestions of Sanders helpful for his classroom use. Sanders supports the view that the teachers can lead the students into all kinds of thinking through careful use of questions, problems, and projects. Sanders made Bloom's (1956) taxonomy the basis of his categories of questions.

Bloom categorizes "memory" with knowledge. All categories except memory are given name of mental processes and present this in a hierarchy. Bloom's hierarchy is: memory, translation, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation. Sanders then asks teachers to construct questions that will use these different mental processes in order to make the response. For example, the question, "recite the Gettysburg address without the aid of your notes or books," will be of the memory level. But if the question will be, "state in your own words the first two lines of Gettysburg address" will be of the translation level.

Sanders asserts that once the teachers master the taxonomy of questions they can improve the intellectual climate of their classroom considerably. The teachers then are encouraged to use question that require more than the memory level for their answers so that the students will derive the experience to analyze, evaluate, or apply principles.

Finally, it seems worthwhile to include in this work an excerpt from Ralph S. Kaplan's work on objectives. He calls it "Little Objectives for Little People."

This is a picture of a banana. When you go to the store and you want bananas, you ask for bananas. If you ask for coconuts, that isn't RELEVANT to your OBJECTIVE. If you sent your child to the store for three bananas, you would have set up a MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE. Suppose the child came home with three coconuts? Part of the OBJECTIVE has been fulfilled. There are three. But they are not bananas. Your child has made a monkey out of you. If you send your child to college to get an engineering degree, and he comes back with a degree in animal husbandry, you goofed. You didn't check what he was studying. Check your training program. What is it teaching? What should it be teaching? How will you measure it?

So here's the test:

1. Do you know your terminal objectives shall be?
2. Do your interim objectives result in terminal objectives?
3. Are all objectives relevant to the desired behavior?
4. Are all of your objectives measurable?
5. Have you set up a clear criterion for every objective?

TRAINING programs start with TRAINING OBJECTIVES.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES show how well you know what you are doing.

Are your TRAINING OBJECTIVES showing?

Or showing you up?

Never mind the mule going blind

Load the wagon.

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