

学位論文要旨

Hidden Dimensions of Franklin Bobbitt's
Theory of Curriculum

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Summary

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This dissertation will focus upon some hidden dimensions of American educationist John Franklin Bobbitt's curriculum theory. Since he occupies an important position in the beginning of American curriculum development, this study will help us to clarify some misunderstandings about the history of American education, which have existed for a long time. This study will also try to offer some new perspectives on the development of curriculum studies.

In the *Japanese Dictionary of Curriculum Studies*, Bobbitt is described as "the one who built the foundation of modern curriculum theory" (JSCS, 2001, p.509). While, since those materials about his life are not easily available and Japanese literature about him is particularly rare, this dissertation would use some space to give a brief sketch of his whole life.

Born on February 16th, 1876, John Franklin Bobbitt was the first child of Martha Smith and James Bobbitt. Two sisters and one brother were born after him, but their mother died in 1884. In order to make a living, James had to work in other towns and for one year the children were sent to their grandparents. Franklin's grandfather was a country doctor and he rode a horse as he made his calls in the 80's to the scattered cabins on the country's hillsides. Young Franklin learned first-hand "what it meant to enter upon a profession" (DeWulf, 1962, p.9). In 1889, Franklin's father was elected Auditor of Crawford County and the family moved there. In the following years, Franklin graduated from high school, Ohio Valley Normal College and Indiana University.

From 1902 to 1907, strongly feeling a missionary duty, Bobbitt worked as a teacher at the Philippian Normal School. At that time, all the textbooks were brought from America and dealt with things unfamiliar to the Philippine children. Realizing this, Bobbitt edited his own textbooks, based upon the local needs. This could be seen as the germination of his curriculum theory.

After coming back to America, Bobbitt got his Ph. D from Clark University under the supervision of Stanley Hall and then was hired as a lecturer of the Department of Education at the University of Chicago. All the rest of his "long and illustrious career" (Pinar et al., 2004, p.96) was spent there until his retirement in 1941. Writing several school survey reports and academic books, cultivating many young researchers, Bobbitt contributed a lot to the American education.

In the beginning ten years, Bobbitt focused upon the educational administration and tried to

find the ways which could make schools more effective. From about 1916, his interest turned to curriculum studies and he began to write papers on this topic. In 1918, the first academic book focused upon curriculum problems in the world, *The Curriculum*, was published under his name and this has been recognized as the starting point of the field itself. In this book, “Bobbitt proposed a new approach, which formulates the objectives of curriculum with reference to an ideal adult world and those practical objectives and activities in our social lives would become the guidance for curriculum making”(SATO, 1990, p.77).

The publication of *The Curriculum* made him the curriculum expert in America at that time. In 1924, he published a more practical book, *How to Make a Curriculum*. In this book, he showed in detail how the activity analysis could help teachers to develop a curriculum consisting of specific objectives. This book was so practical to teachers that it became the best seller of that time.

From the 1930s, as the younger generation of curriculum researchers like Hollis L. Caswell appeared on the scene, Bobbitt’s influence faded away. Partly because of the Second World War, his book published rightly before his retirement, *The Curriculum of Modern Education*, occupied few attention. On March 7th, 1956, Bobbitt passed away in Indiana State.

Previous studies upon Bobbitt includes one dissertation, many journal papers and chapters in different books. The 1962 dissertation of DeWulf, which tells us many details of Bobbitt’s whole life, is of great value. However, he did not intend to analyze or judge Bobbitt’s curriculum theory in his dissertation. *The American Curriculum: A Documentary History* (1993), which was edited by Willis et al., is very important for researchers in this field for many first-hand documents have been collected in this one volume. In this volume, Bobbitt is described as “markedly influenced by the social efficiency movement and his procedures emphasized efficiency, standardization, and specialization”, while his approach only imposed some so-called social-recognized abilities to the youth without enough reflection, going against “the intellectual mainstream of progressive education”, founded by his counterparts Dewey, Rugg, Counts, and Bode” (Willis et al., 1993, p.163-164). This volume also describes that “Bobbitt seemed to undergo a change of heart in the latter half of the 1920s, and in still later work (especially Bobbitt 1941) he turned very much in a Deweyan direction, almost renouncing his earlier and most influential work, attempting to define ‘science’ in a much different way than he had in espousing it as the basis for activity analysis, and advocating individualized curricula determined by students themselves” (Willis et al., 1993, p.164). This kind of recognition model is really influential that in *Understanding Curriculum*, a popular textbook edited several years later, William Pinar almost repeated the same narrative. Particularly in his view, “the 1920s saw the appearance of two rival reform movements, the

social efficiency movement identified with Bobbitt, Charters, and Snedden, and the Progressive movement identified with Dewey, Kilpatrick, Childs and others” (Pinar et al., 2004, pp.116-117). The former one won the first round, while Bobbitt turned in a very Deweyan direction after that, which predicted the fall of it (Pinar et al., 2004, p.122). In Japanese books, it is also very easy to find this recognition model (SATO, 2011, pp.20-22; JSCS, 2001). Though Bobbitt was recognized as the founder of the theory of curriculum making with activity analysis, critics like Boyd Bode hold a view that his theory was partial to society rather than children (KURASAWA, 1985, pp.409-451). Japanese scholars also point out that his theory was basically based upon Frederick Taylor’s the Principle of Scientific Management and this kind of analogy is very clear (SATO, 1990, p.79).

However, this recognition model still face some problems that are difficult to clarify. For example, Bobbitt actually emphasized the concept of *experience curriculum*, an idea which is generally recognized as a Deweyan one, from the very beginning of his writings. If we put Bobbitt and Dewey in “rival” positions, then how can we explain this phenomenon? There is still no close explaining about Bobbitt’s so-called turn. It is more like a stereotype, for no one has made efforts to explain why would this happen. This study will try to propose a different understanding on this problem.

Chapter 2: Did There Exist Two Stages of Franklin Bobbitt’s Curriculum Theory?

Since most researchers put Bobbitt’s paper in the 1926 yearbook of National Society for the Study of Education as a watershed of his curriculum theory, this study will focus upon this paper firstly.

Bobbitt made it clear at the beginning that “education is for the social purpose of elevating the character of human conduct above what it would otherwise be”. In part it is “child conduct; in part it is the conduct of youth; and in part it is that of mature men and women. Life is to be so lived at all ages or levels that it is diversified and wholesome, abundant and fruitful” (NSSE, 1926, p. 41). It is clear that Bobbitt defined the curriculum in a very broad sense, probably equal to education itself. This curriculum will also not be biased towards neither children nor adults.

Therefore, “the curriculum-maker will find the entire range of fruitful activities which ought to make up human existence on each of the age-levels. The task is first to find those individuals of a particular age-level who have been most successful in performing the activities desirable for that age-level, and possible for each ability-level as well” (NSSE, 1926, p. 44). These consist of “the activities of intellectual vision, valuation, judgment, planning, decision, and the other things out of which one’s objective activities spring” and also “one’s

aesthetic emotional reactions, meditations religious contemplations, one's longings and aspirations and other mental activities" (NSSE, 1926, pp.44-45). Bobbitt definitely went against the traditional indoctrination which filled students' minds with facts, while curriculum should be something that students could experience.

It is very clear that Bobbitt had held such an idea of experience curriculum at least from his 1918 book and he consisted this idea until his final works. It was never any new idea just appeared in 1926 for Bobbitt. This consistence existed clearly through his whole life and the so-called turn is out of misunderstanding about him.

From this problem, we should focus then upon another one which is how should we understand Dewey's curriculum theory. Dewey has always been imaged as a child-centered educationist, while actually he did criticized those who just let children do whatever they want. To be more exact, Dewey viewed the curriculum as a bridge which links children and the society they are going to live in, which consists of experience which would foster those abilities that these children need to build democratic society in the future. The so-called child-centered, should be understood as a way "viewing the education of the child in the light of the principles of mental activity and processes of growth made known by modern psychology" (Dewey, 1990, pp.96-97).

Based upon the analysis upon, it is fair to say that Bobbitt and Dewey shared many same ideas like experience curriculum, the link between children and society. It should be admitted that Bobbitt kept consistent in his curriculum theory, rather than turning dramatically in the 1920s.

Chapter 3: The Origin of the Misunderstanding

Since the fact that Bobbitt and Dewey did not differ so much as always supposed has been proved in previous chapter, this chapter will deal with a problem about interpretation, which is why and how these misunderstandings came.

There is one direct reason. Snedden, one who is always viewed as of the social-efficient movement, had a fierce debate with Dewey on vocational education in 1914 and 1915. Dewey was opposed to using public schools for any kind of job training program. Making the school experience meaningful to students was at the heart of progressive education as Dewey saw it, but using schools, and public money, to slot students into specific trades was the height of anti-progressivism in his mind. While, Snedden was the Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts and nationally recognized advocate of vocational education. Since Snedden is always put as one of the representatives of the social-efficient school and his name, in most instances, comes with Bobbitt and Charters, most people would be impressed that Bobbitt

also stood with Snedden, though he was never involved directly. However, this kind of impression might be somehow misleading for Bobbitt himself clearly treated vocational education as the enlightenment of people and the improvement to society. He also believed that vocational education is to help students find their values in a society, rather than just occupation training. In this sense, Bobbitt stood close to Dewey.

Another reason is the academic environment of the 1970s in America. From about 1952, Friedrich Hayek's *The Counter-Revolution of Science* appeared as a pioneering work of the criticisms towards the scientism. From about the 1960s, this tendency was reflected in the curriculum field for the Tyler Rational began to be criticized as scientific and some humanistic psychologists claimed that the spirit of humanity is lost in such a curriculum of behaviorism. As the teacher and intellectual predecessor of Tyler, Bobbitt could not avoid this kind of criticism and he was often oversimplified as a scientific curriculum expert. On the other side, Dewey enjoyed much more reputation after his death and most of his disciples put ideas like experience curriculum and child-centered pedagogy under his name. In this way, a fake distinction between Bobbitt and Dewey was made and they were put in two rival camps.

The 1970s also saw a great amount of academic writings on the history of American education got published. Researchers like Cremin and Callahan published their influential works in that time. While most of them accepted this kind of narrative when describing the beginning of the curriculum studies. This fact made this stereotype widely accepted afterward.

Chapter 4: Bobbitt, a Professor of Educational Administration as a Curriculum Expert

Previous chapters show us that the divergence between Bobbitt and Dewey was not as great as supposed and actually they shared many basic ideas about what could be called authentic learning and how the curriculum should be constructed. But how can we explain that they did leave quite different images in the history? This part will focus upon their social positions to explain what impacted on their being accepted in the practical field.

Bobbitt's fame in the field of curriculum studies to some extent covers an important fact that he actually worked as a professor of educational administration, instead of curriculum, at the University of Chicago during his whole career. Actually, Callahan (1962), NAKATANI Kaoru (1985) and KONO Kazukiyo (1995) have already noticed this fact. While, all of them belong to the field of educational administration and none of them intended to connect this with Bobbitt's curriculum theory.

The development of the studies of educational administration in America has a very close connection with the development of its public educational system and institutions. Here we

need some space to give a brief stretch of this process. In April 1635, Boston Latin School was created by public vote and in 1642, the first education-related legislation passed the Massachusetts legislature. In 1789, with the development of the school district system, the Massachusetts legitimated an independent institution called school committee, which developed into the broad of education later. Several years later, in order to improve the quality and equality of education inside a state, several states began to create its own board of education and until 1900, 34 states had founded their boards of education. Except for the south, a free, ecumenical and state-dominated public educational system has already been founded in America at the end of the 19th century.

Among these universities, Colombia University with its Teachers' College, was the first one to offer a course of educational administration in 1899. Charles B. Gilbert, a former superintendent of schools in New Jersey, and recognized as an outstanding man in his field, gave the first graduate course. After that, this course experienced great changes, for more and more professionally trained researchers, instead of experienced superintendents began to dominate this course. And this was just the time Bobbitt joined this profession.

From a 1912 paper, Bobbitt had showed his affection to the "recently developed principles of scientific management" (Bobbitt, 1912, p.260) and he believed that "the fundamental tasks of management, direction, and supervision are always about the same" (Bobbitt, 1913, p.7), which would be divided into eleven principles, for example, "Definite qualitative and quantitative standards must be determined for the product"; "Where the material that is acted upon by the labor processes passes through a number of progressive stages on its way from the raw material to the ultimate product, definite qualitative and quantitative standards must be determined for the product at each of these stages" (Bobbitt, 1913, pp.11-96).

One of his papers titled *The Elimination of Waste in Education*, could tell us why he turned from the educational administration to curriculum studies. In this article, Bobbitt praised the Grey School, where students were divided into two groups and the program was "divided into regular and special studies. The regular studies in the elementary school consist of arithmetic, history, geography, and the formal language studies of reading, writing, spelling, and composition. The special activities are nature study, manual activities, drawing, literature, music, and play. Half the day is given by the pupil to the regular studies, and half the day to the special activities" (Bobbitt, 1912, p.261). This arrangement was no doubt under the principle of efficiency, but from another standpoint, it predicted that special activities, like nature study, manual activities, drawing, literature, music, and play, were going to occupy the equal positions in curriculum as those traditional subjects.

This transformation, from the arrangement of materials or school plants in an efficient way to the arrangement of these teaching programs, of course under the guidance of the principle of efficiency, could explain why and how Bobbitt did such a turn in about the middle years of the 1910s.

It is fair to say that curriculum studies have a close connection with the educational administration from the very beginning.

Chapter 5: The Tension inside the Administrative System

Compared with Bobbitt, Dewey kept a distance with educational administrative forces. Jackson's study has revealed this fact.

The Dewey School, which began with only fifteen students, housed in rented space, faced financial problems from its start. Harper, then president of the University of Chicago proposed that Dewey substantially increase both tuition and class size. Dewey agreed to the former strategy but resisted the latter" (Jackson, 1990, p. xv). Dewey strongly insisted the latter one, and the pupil/teacher ratio during the first few years when he took charge of the school was always about nine or ten to one. While the result was that the Dewey School was always fighting with financial problems.

"Viewing the education of the child in the light of the principles of mental activity and processes of growth made known by modern psychology", Dewey insisted the later one and put the discussions between children and teachers in a very important position. While, since the psychology in that time was only a burgeoning subject, the psychological principles Dewey could apply into educational practice were "so few" and "general". They were "insufficiently numerous and detailed to give much guidance to the practitioner" (Jackson, 1990, p. xxiv).

This made it hard for other principles to trust Dewey's experiment when visiting his school. "Not only the purchase of expensive equipment and the facility in which it is to be housed but also the salaries of highly skilled personnel and the support services they require" made this kind of school very expensive. What made it worse was that even Dewey himself admitted the possibility of failure in such a school. On the other hand, Bobbitt, who had rich experience in educational administration emphasized that his curriculum is efficient, without any ambiguous definitions. No wonder that Bobbitt became welcomed in most public schools with the development of public educational systems across the whole country, while Dewey's influence has not been widespread as others had initially hoped it would be. Only a small group of private schools accepted it.

It is fair to say that the University of Chicago played a role of the leader of the education in

Western America during that time. With the radical development of public education, more and more teachers were asked to get trained in the summer sessions and other courses there. In 1930, 4957 people were reported to attend the course in the university, including Bobbitt's *Curriculum*. On the other side, professors became more and more active in the educational practice. In a 1925 speech, President Burton was very proud that Professor Bobbitt was called to "assist the school systems of Los Angeles and Toledo in reorganizing their High Schools" and he was confident that the School of Education was "strong in curriculum construction" (Murphy & Bruckner, 1976, pp.364-365). Bobbitt's curriculum theory was obviously widely welcomed at that time, with the development of public educational system.

However, people never succeed without paying any cost. Bobbitt's success also left some negative impacts. The first one is that teachers began to lose their authority to make the curriculum. The authority to develop curriculum, no matter in a district level or in a national level, was held by the upper ones of the educational administrative system. Bobbitt himself actually always worked with those principals and superintendents, rather than any teachers. The job of teachers, no matter how many fields Bobbitt defined, was only of the execution.

Another one is the indication of the widely usage of test in educational system. Ralph Tyler is generally believed to be the most important pioneering scholar of educational evaluation that we are familiar with nowadays. While, Bobbitt's articles in the 1930s show that the tension inside the administrative system would always be transferred to the terminal, as he said "the necessities of administration force schools to systematize the curriculum. Since the reasons are numerous and pressing, there is a strong tendency to over-systematize, to mechanize, and to standardize the curriculum" (Bobbitt, 1934a, p.257). Test has already been recognized by Bobbitt a way to prove the achievement of the work to make the school and curriculum more efficient. This system laid the administrative foundation of the test that we are familiar to nowadays.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In brief, Bobbitt's curriculum theory did not go through two stages. Rather, his theory was consistent from the beginning to the end, emphasizing the concept of experience curriculum. It would be better to put him as in the mainstream of the educational theory of enlightenment. He also stood very close to Dewey in curriculum theory and to put them in two rival camps is only out of some misunderstandings.

However, different social and academic positions of them made their influences upon American education quite different. As a professor of educational administration, Bobbitt's curriculum theory got widely accepted with the development of public education, while

Dewey's influence was basically restricted in a small group of private schools.

This result has great impacts to American education. One is that teachers in front-line began to lose their authority to decide the curriculum, while this authority began to be gathered to those upper classes in such an administrative system. Another one is that test began to be recognized as an indispensable segment in such an administrative system, as the evidence of its improvement. Test, which has its root in administration, rather than only the evaluation, would dominate the process of education. These are problems that we do face nowadays.