

EDUCATION FOR A WORLD FULL OF PEOPLE

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There is considerable pressure today on educators at every level to give more attention to what have been called the survival skills. Usually, what is meant is the educational triad of reading, writing, and arithmetic. But I submit that the most important, and least talked about, survival skill is simply the ability to get along with other people.

At the global level, people are going to have to learn to live with people of different cultures and ideologies in order to survive our frightening capacity to use nuclear power to antagonistic and destructive ends. At the individual level, there are few among us who can escape the necessity for intimate human relationships to give life its very meaning. And inbetween these macro- and micro-needs are the needs for all of us to work productively with groups of people to accomplish the tasks of modern society. In short, human survival and the quality of life depend on world-wide statesmanship, on the ability of people to cooperate with fellow workers and neighbors to accomplish societal tasks, and on the capacity of individuals to establish meaningful relationships with one another.

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Education has always had the charge of serving society's needs, and as we move into the post-industrial era society's needs are clearly people-related. There are urgent problems that society must solve--crime in the streets, immorality in government and industry, increasing dependence on drugs (legal and illegal), a rising divorce rate, the civil rights of minorities and women, job dissatisfaction for the majority of workers, paralyzing labor strikes, a bumbling confusion and lack of knowledge regarding social reform. By this time, we should have the message that throwing money at social ills will not solve the problems. We need better knowledge of individual and societal development, and we need a cadre of skilled people to apply such knowledge. Furthermore, we should look not only at the negative side of the problems to be solved, but at the positive side of enrichments to be won--through lifelong learning for workers with increasing amounts of leisure time, through cultural revitalization and the stimulation of aesthetic appreciations, and through the creation of deeper interpersonal satisfactions. Society's need is for highly trained career specialists who can create new knowledge about individuals and groups, who can design new programs through the application of such knowledge, and who are skilled in working with other people.

The needs of society are great, but education serves individuals as well as the state. And individuals are telling us in all sorts of ways that they want and need help in living with themselves, their families, and their co-workers. In a study of

goals priorities at the University of California, students wanted much more attention given to helping them achieve trusting relationships with others and to helping them understand themselves (Peterson, 1973). Carl Rogers (1969, p. 6) has observed that the public demand for interpersonal growth experiences such as those provided through sensitivity training and encounter groups is "utterly beyond belief." Current estimates place the number of people participating in personal growth experiences of one kind or another at between three and six million people. For the most part, education has turned a deaf ear to the pleas of the public, leaving the difficult matter of educating for interpersonal effectiveness to entrepreneurs who see dollar signs in the consumer demand and to industry which sees business efficiency in improved interpersonal functioning on the job.

There is both a need and a demand for an educational curriculum deliberately designed for career and personal interests in human relationships. I suggest that the student personnel profession should assume a major responsibility for developing and teaching in such a curriculum. In the early years of my association with the student personnel profession, we talked about our jobs as working with extracurricular activities. Then we began to talk about co-curricular programs. Today, I am talking about the curriculum as an appropriate arena for student personnel workers.

Historically, the curriculum has always grown and changed to meet the needs of the times. In the early years of education in

this country, the classical curriculum of Latin, Greek, and rhetoric prepared the sons of the aristocracy to be ministers, lawyers, and gentlemen. When it became apparent in the mid-1800s that growth and production were the national priorities, the land-grant institutions were established to teach the applied subjects of agriculture and the mechanical arts. In the middle of this century, the community colleges met the changing needs of the nation by introducing vocational and technical curricula such as auto mechanics and data processing. Today, the needs of the country are shifting once again as we move into a highly interdependent post-industrial era.

While history documents a constantly evolving curriculum, it also provides ample evidence of continuous and sometimes acrimonious resistance to change. In the early 1800s there was much snorting and derision about the need of a college education for farmers. How unnecessary it seemed for a farmer to go to college to learn what he had been doing, apparently reasonably adequately, all his life. Much as agriculture was held to have no intellectual content because it was done by people without education, so the subject of applied human relationships is held to be non-college material because it is done every day by people without much knowledge about the subject. Who 150 years ago could have dreamed what a formal curriculum in agriculture would do for farmers? Who among us today can imagine how the improved practice of human relationships might change our world?

The Morrill Act did not bring a full-blown, sophisticated agriculture curriculum into instant reality, but it made it possible for the intellectual leadership to study the issues, and it also legitimized a commitment to work toward steady progress. Similarly, there is no full-blown sophisticated curriculum for helping people to develop personal and career skills in interpersonal relations. But there are many people who are committed to pushing at the frontiers of knowledge through study, through research, and through practice. There is no lack of intellectual challenge in the human relations curriculum. Indeed, one of our problems is that the subject is so complex that it has defied our attempts to study it.

The Morrill Act changed more than the curriculum of some colleges, however. It changed the posture of higher education from isolated scholarship to active involvement through applied research and extension. Once again, there is a call for education to become involved with the issues of our times. To date, most of the study of human relations has been academic rather than experiential, pure rather than applied, and consultative rather than involved.

The development of a new curriculum may seem overly ambitious--especially in these days of fiscal austerity--but I think we are much closer to a curriculum in human relations that most people realize. Indeed, there is a human relations curriculum of sorts already in existence, but neither the subject matter nor the methods of the curriculum have been given clear articulation. Bits

and pieces of human relations education lie scattered across the curricular landscape. The task now lies not so much in curriculum building from the ground up as in articulating a clear sense of direction so that existing components can be pulled together into a coherent whole.

Education for personal and interpersonal competency has both vocational and non-vocational components. There is the societal need to train people for work in human relations careers such as social work, teaching, medicine, law enforcement, business administration, and other careers involving skilled interpersonal competencies. In these career specialties, the new human relations curriculum should become the service curriculum for the professional schools of health, business administration, education, criminal justice, etc.

Accompanying human relations education for careers, however, are certain non-vocational components. These are directed toward helping individuals become happier, more effective persons--with what is known in the jargon of the personnel profession as student development or personal development. Both liberal education and education for personal development accept the common goal of enhancing the quality of life for individuals. Whereas the goals of liberal education are to sensitize students to their common humanity, the goals of education for personal development are to sensitize students to the individualistic aspects of their human existence. It is concerned with self-actualization, the development

of unique talents, self-understanding, and the like.

There was a time when it was assumed that the goals of both liberal education and personal development would be attained through association with small, closely-knit academic communities, but the trend today is for students to have less and less immersion in the collegiate environment. Most students now attend college part-time rather than full-time. Most are starting their college experiences on commuter instead of residential campuses. The fastest growing new clientele for colleges are adults and older students. And most expansion of educational programs is occurring off-campus rather than on. In brief, colleges are giving up the luxury of providing an enriched, if somewhat isolated, environment in which the probability of bumping into growth-producing experiences is slightly greater than would occur in the everyday world of work. If we wish to offer the new clientele some of the personal growth benefits that accrued from a college education in the past, we are going to have to become much more deliberate in our efforts. And if we wish to improve education for personal development, we are going to have to set about the difficult task of identifying cause-and-effect relationships so that we can do something more than hope that students will bump into some good experiences on their way through college. I think we can and should teach students directly and deliberately how to achieve some of the personal attributes that are so glowingly described in the catalogue.

Since I understand that the professional interests of student personnel work are well-represented in this audience, let me take a few minutes to trace what I see as three possible models for approaching the study of personal development, which incidentally has been newly complicated--or enriched, depending on your point of view--by attention to the newest variation on the theme which is adult development. I can do no more today than present a capsule description of three models of student development. Those of you who are interested can pursue discussion and references in my 1976 book Accent on Learning.

Let's talk first about the humanistic approach to student development. It arises out of the theories of Maslow and Rogers and other so-called Third Force psychologists who believe that there is in each person a self-actualizing person waiting to emerge under the right conditions. The humanists stress the dignity and worth of the individual, holding that if people and cultures would not thwart and misdirect development, people would grow in healthy and self-actualizing ways. We can understand their thinking best through the organic metaphor. If plants or people are raised in a properly nourishing environment, they will grow naturally toward their full potential; a poor environment on the other hand, will stunt or arrest growth. The goal of the humanists is to help students grow in unique and individualistic ways; they would no more impose their ideas on the direction that growth should take than a gardener would try to make a tulip out of a rose.

The humanists are frequently accused of lacking both program and theory, but that is not quite true. The misunderstanding arises because humanists are prone to talk about "loving" and "caring" and "accepting"--words that many cognitively-oriented educators find hard to accept as formulae for determining program direction. But these words represent a program for action to dedicated humanists. They want honestly to create a campus environment of trust and caring in which all persons--students, faculty, staff--feel that they matter and that how they develop makes a difference to their colleagues. Humanists also present a specific educational program for student development with primary emphasis on the use of small, intimate, and supportive groups. The theory behind such groups is that, through the creation of a challenging yet accepting environment, students can become free to find that self-actualizing person within them that is waiting to emerge.

A second theoretical model for student development is represented by the developmentalists who are making a vigorous appearance now at the college level. They pose some interesting contrasts to the humanists. Developmental approaches to student development grow out of the work of personality theorists such as Erikson and Loevinger and cognitive theorists as as Piaget and Bruner. Unlike the humanists, developmental theorists are perfectly comfortable taking a position that some directions of development are "better" than others and should serve as desirable goals for everyone.

To illustrate the developmental position, let me describe briefly one model that was specifically created for understanding the college years. It is the intellectual and ethical development scheme of William Perry of the Bureau of Study Council at Harvard (1970). Perry observed that students moved through a common developmental sequence. At the lowest level of development are students who perceive the world in absolutist terms of right and wrong, good and bad. They seek to learn from their teachers, who are perceived as authorities, the "right" answers. These students at the low end of Perry's developmental scale are close to some conceptions of the ideal student--simple, unquestioning, and obedient. Needless to say, Perry found few of these paragons at Harvard.

As the student begins to develop through interaction with a stimulating environment, he perceives greater diversity of opinion, accepts it as legitimate but temporary, still hopeful of a final answer. Gradually it becomes clear that uncertainty in this world and its knowledge is extensive and widespread. Students in the middle stages of development attempt to deal with ambiguity by not trying to make sense of it, granting instead that "anyone has a right to his own opinion." At the highest levels of development, the student finds his own identity and his own commitment. In the theory of developmentalists, growth moves through sequences from simplicity to complexity and from differentiation to integration.

Developmentalists would implement their theory by providing appropriately challenging and stimulating experiences which would

push the student into the next stage of development. They emphasize the role of cognitive reasoning and problem-solving with their description of the developmental stages providing the clue for the type of problem that would serve as the appropriate stimulus for the student at a given stage of development.

Whereas the humanists have found great difficulty being accepted in academe, the developmental theorists offer some testable hypotheses, which have more appeal to their cognitively oriented colleagues. Beyond that, their model for student development fits into classrooms and cognitive exercises very well. It is too early to assess the promise of the developmentalists. The proof of the pudding will lie in further research and their ability to design courses and experiences that seem worthwhile to students.

The third approach to student development is familiar to many of you who read the research on students reported by people such as Trent and Medsker (1968), Chickering (1969), Feldman and Newcomb (1969), and Astin (1968). Multidimensional models for student development grow out of descriptive research of what happens to students as they proceed through college. These models conceive of people growing at different rates along separate, but not necessarily independent dimensions. They typically measure developmental status along 7 to 12 scales or vectors or competencies spanning the breadth and depth of human abilities. Multidimensionalists are usually not much concerned with theory but if they bow to any theorist, it is to B. F. Skinner and behaviorism in which the responses of organisms

are linked to the stimuli of the environment. They try to establish the connections between cause and effect. The most forthright statement of an empirical approach to student development has been made by Panos (1968) who suggests that rather than starting with broad goals for education, we might go at it the other way around and find out what actually happens to students in college. "Perhaps" he says, "after we have been able to discover and adequately document what the outcomes of college are we can think about whether we like them or not and what we can or cannot do about them (p. 309)."

To date, educators have followed the Panos prescription only to a point. Major attention has been given to what happens presently to the average student on the average campus. Some people, most notably Arthur Chickering (1969), have related student change to campus environment and made some recommendations about how to deliberately educate to maximize the types of change that take place now without much conscious planning. But by and large the educational community has not taken a position on what we like or don't like about what happens to students as they proceed through college, and we certainly have no program to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

In sum, I think the time is right for the student personnel profession to take some leadership in helping colleges and universities to accomplish one of their most important missions--to enhance the growth and development of human beings. If the profession is to make progress and to gain the respect of students and academic

colleagues, it will have to begin to educate a new generation of student development specialists in the graduate schools and in in-service workshops. These specialists will need to be able to contribute to the scholarship and research and theory and practice of human development from birth through adolescence and college--from marriage through retirement and death. Until the profession develops its own scholars and theorists and researchers, it will make no long-lasting contribution to student development, and the concept will die aborning.

Now let us turn to the career components of the human relations curriculum. There is now a substantial body of knowledge and skills associated with human services careers. Education, health, and welfare, of course, are the big three in the human services. But in our interdependent society, it is difficult to find a career that does not call for some measure of skill in working with people. Business and government are recognizing the full measure of their dependence on the interpersonal skills of employees, supervisors, and managers. More people lose their job because of a failure in interpersonal relationships than because of a lack of technical job knowledge. And yet, educational institutions are only recently acknowledging their responsibility to provide a core curriculum for the career needs of people who plan to spend their lives working with people.

The competencies needed for interpersonal development include the communications skills, especially the art of listening and

the oral skills of articulating ideas, directions, and desires. Most people admit that the communications skills can be directly taught, and even that they are academically respectable. But we don't work very hard or very efficiently in teaching students oral communication, and it is the unusual teacher or course that concentrates on developing the useful and extremely rare skill of listening to what people are saying. Among other competencies that should be included in the curriculum for interpersonal development are empathy and sensitivity to the feelings of others, tolerance for differing viewpoints, understanding of socioecultural influences, and the ability to participate constructively in group activities. In brief, there is no lack of subject matter for the curriculum in interpersonal development.

If the human relations curriculum is to become reality we shall have to give attention to the teaching and learning methods that are the tools of implementation. Much as the methods for teaching agriculture and the laboratory sciences differ from the methods of the classical curriculum, so the methods of a people-oriented curriculum will differ from those of a traditional academic curriculum.

I think that I can identify six reasonably distinctive methods that are presently used to teach and to learn in the presently scattered human relations curriculum. First, and probably most important, is experiential education. Learning to respond to human needs is neither a library subject like the classics, nor a laboratory subject like the sciences. It is basically a field-study

subject in which much of the learning must take place under real life conditions. Although field study, or the more au courant experiential education is one of the hottest innovations in academe today, it is an old and familiar method to student personnel workers. As you will quickly recognize, it lies at the very heart of educational experiences inherent in student activities and group living. But the new experiential education that is the headline grabber of educational innovation today is a sophisticated and distant relative of the old experiential education that spawned the folk wisdom that "experience is the best teacher." Experience is not always a very good teacher; sometimes it is unnecessarily cruel, and it is usually inefficient. Experiential education is, or should be, a set of carefully designed experiences directed toward some clearly articulated goals. The design for an effective internship, for example, is likely to include the selection of an appropriate learning environment, the supervision of a knowledgeable and experienced advisor, and a periodic review of the learning experience.

Student personnel workers have usually had considerable experience with experiential education, but if the profession is to offer the expertise and leadership that I envision as the future role for student personnel workers, then graduate and in-service training programs will need to develop sophisticated methodologies for the design, the conduct, and the assessment of experiential education.

The second major methods component of the human relations curriculum lies in traditional academic education. There are people who claim that psychology, sociology, and anthropology as presently taught, do not represent valid approaches to a realistic understanding of human interactions. While I agree that too much of the attention of the social sciences is directed toward the narrow goal of preparing undergraduates for graduate education, it seems apparent that we cannot make progress in building a solid human relations curriculum without the benefit of knowledge accumulated over time in the academic disciplines. By itself, experiential education can culminate in a dead end because it does not move beyond the immediate experience of the participants. The progress of society is heavily dependent on the ability of each generation to stand upon the shoulders of previous generations. The academic disciplines possess the capacity to lay solid foundations and to stimulate the search for new knowledge. As such, they are vital components of the new curriculum. On the whole, the student personnel profession has been more interested in training administrators and counselors than in training scholars and researchers. There is, I think, a need to attract scholars from the disciplines to work in the interdisciplinary area of human relations education, and there is a need to train some student personnel scholars dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in applied human interactions.

A third methodology lies in a strong tradition of the student personnel profession--counseling and guidance. The practice

of human relations would be much easier if it were not for individual differences--if there were some generalized laws of human behavior that could be laid down in the laboratory or classroom and applied to real life situations. But it is the existence of individual differences that provides the need as well as the central core of the human relations curriculum.

Everyone from librarians to policemen is getting into the counseling act, and the need of people in a wide variety of human services careers for some training in the techniques of counseling is obvious. But today's counseling methods leave much to be desired. Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, much counseling is still remedial in philosophy. It is concerned with shoring up weakness rather than building strength. And people who are going to work in education, health, welfare, criminal justice, etc. need a thorough understanding of how to identify and build upon the strengths they find in individuals, whatever their present circumstances.

A fourth methodology for the human relations curriculum is to be found in the T-group, sensitivity, encounter group movement. I debated for awhile as to whether these methods are not a version of experiential education, but I think not. Although T-group learning is direct and experiential as opposed to the indirect and vicarious learning of traditional academe, the T-group methodology probably has more in common with academic learning than with experiential education. Indeed, one of the problems of the T-group is

that an individual who behaves in an open, trusting manner in the laboratory atmosphere of the T-group does not always transfer these behaviors back to the reality of home or office. The T-group laboratory is an artificial, as opposed to a real life, experience. But, as such, it may be an appropriate model for the laboratory of the human relations curriculum. The T-group was created for the purpose of studying interpersonal interaction under laboratory conditions. As originally formulated, it was more akin to research than to training because the atmosphere in which the human interactions took place was artificially controlled by a set of rules that grew out of a substantial body of theory.

A strong human relations curriculum does need a research component. It may be that we should consider resurrecting the old conception of the T-group and laboratory education to see what use it has, if any, for further contribution to research and theory in interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, perhaps we have learned all we can learn from that particular model. Maybe the research components of the human relations curriculum await the creation of some new theory and a new kind of laboratory in which to test it.

A fifth methodology is beginning to make its appearance in human relations curricula. For want of a better term, I shall simply call these new methods "structured exercises." They have their counterpart in the mathematics problems and the case studies of the more traditional curriculum. Their purpose is to give practice

in solving problems. Here I refer to such exercises as the human potential seminars which are designed to give practice in self-confidence and self-regarding behavior. There is also assertiveness training designed to give leadership practice to women accustomed to playing supportive roles. In addition, there are values clarification exercises designed to give practice in thinking through some of the personal and moral issues of our times. The new techniques of simulation, role-playing, and games are also problem-solving exercises that have the potential for making pedagogical contributions to human relations curriculum.

Finally, there is a sixth methodology which should be included in the implementation of the new curriculum. Let us call it skills training. I am thinking here of the use of microteaching and microcounseling techniques that attempt to break complex human relations abilities into component skills. Human relations skills training has its counterpart in such traditional educational skills as typing, vocabulary development, music, or surgery. It is now apparent that the teaching skill of "asking probing questions," for example, can be directly taught and that people can make significant improvement with practice. Likewise, there is evidence that the counseling skill of empathy can be developed and improved with practice.

These six methodologies form a strong foundation for the articulation and further development of a curriculum in interpersonal relations. The student personnel profession has had experience with experiential education, with academic curricula,

with counseling and tutoring methods, with the laboratory methods of T-groups, with the problem-solving exercises of assertiveness training and values clarification, and with skills training such as microteaching and microcounseling. When all of these educational methods are pulled together and directed toward the common end of helping people to relate more effectively to people, it is encouraging to see how much of the new curriculum already exists.

I have tried to demonstrate that there is a growing need on the part of individuals and society for deliberate education in interpersonal relations. There is also a respectable body of content and an exciting array of teaching-learning methods. I hope that some of you, here as graduate students today, will contribute to scholarship, teaching, and practice in the emerging curriculum that will help us to live effectively with one another.

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