CHAPTER 1

HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM

Learning Objectives

• Identify humanistic goals and roles in teaching.
• Choose aspects of confluence and consciousness that advance academic achievement.
• Compare humanistic psychology with behaviorism, Freudian, or cognitive psychologies in the contributions to learner creativity and confronting the complexities of society.
• Illustrate how humanistic legacies might be drawn upon when making decisions about current issues in school reform.
• Propose those features of the humanistic curriculum that meet acceptable social norms and those that require institutional, school, community, and parental guidance.

In view of the negative connotations of sensory learning and the imperatives for academic mastery, more rigorous standards, firm codes of discipline, and warnings against teaching anything but factual information, can we simply write off a humanistic orientation to curriculum? Such a dismissal would be unfortunate because there are strong arguments in favor of the humanistic approach.

The American people are committed to self-actualization. Repeatedly, parents express their interest in self-understanding, fostering not only their children’s emotional and physical well-being but also the intellectual skills necessary for independent judgment. The humanistic curriculum supports the American ideal of individualism, helping students discover who they are, not just shaping them into a form that has been designated in advance.

Americans place a premium on innovation and creativity. Thus it is a mistake for educators in the United States to respond to competition from abroad by imitating curriculum that emphasizes shaping a whole population to a high level of rigorous discipline and the same basic academic subjects for all. Although the average amount of learning in some areas may be higher in Japan and Singapore, the range of knowledge is narrower, and educators in these countries are uneasy about emphasizing rote learning at the expense of thinking and creativity.

Instead of adapting curriculum so that students score higher on multiple-choice examinations, Americans might be concerned with maintaining their advantage in creativity, problem-solving skills, and innovation. The humanistic curriculum features activities that are exploratory, puzzling, playful, and spontaneous—all of which are vital for innovation and self-renewal. The best interests of Americans lie in providing students with a curriculum that is fixed on an uncertain future—on what is possible and potential, not on what is merely utilitarian or what will make the learner a helpless captive to what is already known.

The humanistic curriculum also goes a long way toward solving a fundamental problem: that much of what is taught is not learned and much of what is presented and tested is not assimilated. Critics who think that greater learning is achieved by pouring more facts into children’s minds are mistaken. Earlier reformers
who tried to raise standards in the curriculum with rigorous academic programs met with failure. What went wrong? The new programs were often too far removed from the background of both students and teachers and did not take into consideration the importance of adaptation to local contexts and to individuals. This should not be interpreted to mean that subject matter must be easy. Rather, it must be brought to life, taught in a way that demonstrates its relevance to the learner. The humanistic curriculum offers an alternative to dull courses and depersonalization.

Widespread dissatisfaction with much of the systemic curriculum, as enacted under the No Child Left Behind legislation, is evidenced by high dropout rates, school vandalism, and discipline problems among the bored, the unhappy, and the angry. The problem is not just one of motivating students to acquire academic content. A larger concern is determining the appropriate educational response to students who live desperate lives—students who lack a purpose for living, good personal relations, and self-regard. The humanistic curriculum addresses these concerns.

There are signs of revival of the humanistic curriculum. The forthcoming enactment of the Common Core State Standards for grades K–12, although a hybrid of systemic and academic curricula, calls for individualism in its sequential offerings and affords teachers more freedom to provide the learning opportunities they believe will best enhance each student’s progress toward the expectations given by the Common Core Standards and the tests that will show attainment. Further, these standards include goals and practices associated with the humanistic values of creativity, rich experience, and inquiry.

Although the knowledge base for the postmodern humanistic curriculum has been psychology, the contentious issue in higher education regarding the value of the humanities versus the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects has drawn the wider foundations from the humanities to the question, “Is education for career advancement or personal enrichment?” Reports such as “The Heart of the Matter,” by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2013), point to the ways the humanities may enrich both individual and society, stating the goal of “Keeping America Free” through both the humanities and STEM subjects.

Reforms in medical education have introduced a blend of humanism and science. Medical educators recognize that one-eighth to one-fourth of their students suffer from severe depression, and they see a need for doctors who are more skilled in human relations. Hence, many of the nation’s 127 medical schools are designing humanistic curricula. Instead of using a lecture hall with the sole mission of transmitting anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology, there are human values courses, which focus on emotional skills and understanding.¹ Students at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine helped design their human values curriculum so that they could learn how to respond to their psychological needs at various stages of life and understand their own feelings. In this curriculum, students may face one another in a circle and talk about topics that were once almost taboo, such as their fears about talking with dying patients and of dying themselves. In learning to face an inability to cure every problem, doctors may be more likely to avoid overaggressive treatment and prolongation of patients’ pain.

In 1994, the C. Everett Koop Institute attempted to produce a new kind of medical student sensitive to the human side of the doctor-patient relationship. Accordingly, the curriculum allocates less time to lectures and labs and more time to working with needy families, learning to recognize emotions and telling students it is OK to feel weird and upset about what they are doing. Instead of being pressured to maintain stoic composure, students are encouraged not to suppress their emotions; rather, they are allowed to cry, laugh, or leave the room if they want when they walk into a place with 22 dead people—cadavers ready for dissection.

¹Clinical Education and the Doctor of Tomorrow (New York: New York Academy of Medicine, 1994).
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Similarly, postindustrial employers have adopted the learning-to-learn and problem-solving skills of the child-centered curriculum in their efforts to improve productivity. The value of cooperative learning and the importance of every worker learning to work with others is a common priority in industry. Industrial training includes how to resolve conflicts peacefully—for example, by acknowledging feelings before addressing surface concerns, by finding ways to increase respect for those with different backgrounds, and by making team decisions through democratic processes. Increasingly, employers are prizing the humanistic goal of self-awareness. They realize that workers who know something about themselves are more likely to persist, to be productive and responsible, and to defer gratification.

Executives, too, are participating in leadership programs for training emotions and building trust. Programs such as Outward Bound allow people to face physical and mental challenges (e.g., rappelling down sheer cliffs so they can learn their strengths and weaknesses and how they confront fears). More than 70,000 people participate in Outward Bound USA annually and more than 200,000 internationally. In 2008, Outward Bound programs were integrated into more than 140 U.S. primary schools as expeditionary learning schools. Intensive courses in team leadership use humanistic techniques such as ice breakers, which help people feel at ease and form close working relations, and problem-solving thought games that parallel the behavior of the workplace.

A further reason for not writing off the humanistic curriculum rests on the connections between motivation, emotion, belief about self, and the cognitive component of student learning. Without attending to motivations, teachers are unlikely to effect desired conceptual changes related to science, math, social studies, and other academic areas.

Recent neuroscience findings of the plasticity of the brain and the central emotions in connection to reasoning have launched transformation in teachers’ classroom behavior in motivating students to learn. After teachers and students learn about the brain and how they can change their brain to enhance their capabilities, learning applications at all grade levels may draw upon humanistic curriculum with its association to active learning, movement, music, stories, imagery, and social relations to build new brain circuits and memory.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM

Purpose

Humanists believe that the function of the curriculum is to provide each learner with intrinsically rewarding experiences that contribute to personal liberation and development. To humanists, the goals of education are related to the ideals of personal growth, integrity, and autonomy. Healthier attitudes toward self, peers, and learning are among their expectations. The ideal of self-actualization is at the heart of the humanistic curriculum. A person who exhibits this quality is not only coolly cognitive but also developed in aesthetic and moral ways—that is, a person who does good works and has good character. The humanist views actualization growth as a basic need. Each learner has a self that must be uncovered, built up, taught.

Role of the Teacher

The teacher provides warmth and nurtures emotions while continuing to function as a resource and facilitator. He or she presents materials imaginatively and creates challenging situations. Humanistic teachers motivate

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The teacher who adheres to the three essentials of humanistic teaching, as seen by students, does the following:

- Listens comprehensively to the student’s view of reality. (“She cares about my feelings and understands what I wish to say when I have difficulty in expressing it.”)
- Respects the student. (“He used my idea in studying the problem.”)
- Is natural and authentic, not putting on appearances. (“She lets us know what she feels and thinks and is not afraid to reveal her own doubts and insecurities.”)

FORMS OF HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM

There have been two prevalent forms of humanistic curriculum: confluent and consciousness. Although there are different definitions for confluent education, there is general agreement that it infuses affect with content. Confluent education generally supports the existing subject-matter curriculum. Some applications, such as “a curriculum of concern,” take learners to be the subject matter and their emotions, feelings, and thoughts the basis for inquiry and learning.

Children may, for example, seek answers to their questions about health, environment, and relations with others. In addition, basic skills are powerful concepts acquired through activities that engage students in physical movement and in the expression of their feelings.

A consciousness curriculum is tied to spirituality and transcendence—what we experience privately in our subjective awareness, such as a sense of connection to the world around us. (One may recall a wondrous teacher who, without explanation, stopped a subject-matter lesson and guided the class outside to experience a sudden rainstorm.) The curriculum may entail intuition, the mysterious, and the mystical, as students search for meaning and purpose in their work and life. It rests on the belief that there is a better way of being in the world, better expression of feelings, and more just relations with others.

Aspects of humanistic curriculum have been introduced in academic and social reconstruction curricula. Proponents of STEM programs are beginning to realize that the emotional qualities of the humanistic curriculum, such as flow, are necessary for improving complex achievement. Social reformers want to take advantage of the humanists’ success in increasing the student’s personal power and sensitivity to the feelings of others by building upon self-awareness as they develop critical awareness of unjust patterns in society.

A Confluent Curriculum

Rationale for Confluence The essence of confluent education is the integration of an affective domain (emotions, attitudes, and values) with the cognitive domain (intellectual knowledge and abilities). It is an add-on curriculum, whereby emotional dimensions are added to conventional subject matter so that there is personal meaning to what is learned. Confluentists do not downplay public knowledge, such as scientific information, in favor of subjective or intuitive (i.e., direct and immediate) knowledge. The confluent teacher of English, for example, links affective exercises to paragraphing, organization, and argumentative and other discursive forms of writing. By beginning with the student’s personal, imaginative, and emotional responses and working out from these, the confluentist helps learners both to acquire language skills and to discover themselves.

Confluentists do not believe that the curriculum should teach students what to feel or what attitudes to have. Their goal is to provide students with more alternatives to choose from in terms of their own lives, to take responsibility for appreciating the choices available and to realize that they, the learners, can indeed make choices. Shapiro and others have analyzed examples and nonexamples of confluence, concluding that a confluent curriculum includes the following elements:

1. **Participation.** There is consent, power sharing, negotiation, and joint responsibility by coparticipants. It is essentially nonauthoritarian and not unilateral.
2. **Integration.** There is interaction, interpenetration, and integration of thinking, feelings, and action.
3. **Relevance.** The subject matter is closely related to the basic needs and lives of the participants and is significant to them, both emotionally and intellectually.
4. **Self.** The self is a legitimate object of learning.
5. **Goal.** The social goal or purpose is to develop the whole person within a human society.

### Consciousness and Transcendency

**Mysticism** Although humanistic psychologists typically emphasize the affective and cognitive domains, some humanists are interested in treating higher domains of consciousness as well. David Destino, noting the current popularity of meditation among those striving for leadership and enhanced test scores through programs featuring meditation, has cited evidence that meditation enhances memory, creativity, and scores on standardized intelligence tests. However, concerned that meditation for competitive purposes departs from the Buddha and other early spiritual founders of meditation, who saw its sole purpose to be compassion and removal of human suffering, Destino conducted studies with findings suggesting that meditation does increase compassion even when undertaken for personal benefit.

Curriculum involving a cognitive mode of consciousness is associated with intuitive receptive practices-guided fantasy and various forms of meditation. For example, **transcendental meditation (TM)** is concerned with altering states of consciousness, voluntary control of inner states, and growth beyond the ego. It has been tried as an adjunct to the high school curriculum partly because it is seen as a way to diminish drug abuse among students. Essentially, TM is a simple technique for turning attention “inward toward the subtler levels of thought until mind transcends the experience of the substlest state of thought and arrives at the source of thought. This expands the conscious mind and at the same time brings it in contact with the creative intelligence that gives rise to every thought.”

TM has been used to reach some very commonplace curriculum goals, such as reduction of social tension, increased learning ability, and improved athletic performance. It has also inspired more novel goals, such as growth in consciousness and in other ways of knowing.

The Maharishi International University (MIU) in Fairfield, Iowa, offers degrees in a number of fields, such as physics, mathematics, biology, business, and education. However, as a university founded on a philosophy that uses transcendental meditation, it also offers opportunities for students to experience higher states of consciousness. Everyone at MIU—faculty, students, and staff—practices a twice-daily, hour-long routine of meditation. In addition, in all courses an effort is made to foster a principle of interdependence by which personal individuality is related to consciousness of whatever subject matter has been taught. As concepts are introduced in one course, students and teachers seek to recall corresponding concepts in other disciplines and how the concepts might be experienced in meditation. The probable consequence of this practice is a sense of personal relevance to knowledge and an integration of the different academic disciplines.

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One caution concerning transcendental meditation, practiced in such courses as the Science of Creative Intelligence, is that its inclusion in the curriculum may violate legal precedents opposed to sectarian indoctrination. The “science” of TM is held by some to be essentially a religious philosophy because its presuppositions about the source of life and energy reflect monistic Hinduism with pantheistic consciousness.

The religious concept of transcendence (i.e., the experience of going beyond any state or realization of being) has implications for curriculum. It suggests that students should learn how a particular mode of investigation in a subject field relates to other specializations. A transcending consciousness also helps us recognize the incompleteness of any subject. To learn that no discipline provides the full and final disclosure of the nature of things may help learners discern new possibilities, new directions, and new questions. A curriculum of transcendence should foster a spirit of criticism toward existing practices and encourage undeveloped potential and hope in improving one’s existence.

In his essays The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays, Dwayne Huebner has illustrated how the arts can enhance awareness of the meaning and the beauty of life and how the humanistic teacher puts emotional and intellectual needs of students before institutional demands. Noteworthy is Huebner’s illustration of how humanistic teachers risk themselves, accepting newness, surprise, pain, and happiness as they reshape their own values and listen to their students. Huebner views teacher insecurity as an indication of the doubt that allows them to “respond afresh to that which is given when afraid.”

Since the events of 11 September 2001, students are showing more interest in why they are here and who they are. A national survey regarding spirituality among college students found that 40% of entering freshmen indicated that during high school they put spirituality as of great importance to them. Similar interest in spirituality has been found among college faculty.

Clifford Mayes wants teachers to take a prophetic role exercising their intuitive capacities with spiritual energy in responding to the flow of classroom events with passion and compassion. He regards subject matter as tools for personal development.

Transpersonal Techniques  Biofeedback for controlling brain waves, deep hypnosis, yoga, and the use of dreams are additional transpersonal techniques that have implications for curricula. In English, for example, dreams may be used as a basis for creative writing because they contain the emotional impact of messages from the unconscious. Physical education, too, may use aspects of the transpersonal in learning to control one’s body for optimum health and physical fitness through biofeedback and yoga. Although yoga is used in military medical centers to build the confidence of wounded soldiers, public schools continue to find it necessary to win legal judgments for its inclusion, arguing their yoga programs feature exercises for improving health and eating habits and decreasing instances of bullying, with no instruction in religious dogma.

The use of techniques like relaxation and imaginary journeys are sometimes used in academic courses. A high school teacher relaxed his class and had them imagine they were electrons being pulled and pushed by the fields around induction coils. When these students later read a chapter dealing with induction coils, they had no trouble visualizing the forces described, and the quality of their lab work seemed to bear this out.

The forming of mental representations for concepts and key terms is important for long-term memory retention and comprehension. Reading comprehension is several grades higher when students can form mental representations for words that appear in the text. Use of analogy, metaphor, analysis, synthesis through drawings, and other visuals in math and science aims at acquiring powerful skill sets rather than forgettable cramming for a test.

A review of hundreds of studies regarding self-improvement techniques led the National Research Council (NRC) to conclude that many nonconventional techniques, such as sleep learning and mental imagery, can help people improve their abilities, and other techniques, such as extrasensory perception and

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psychokinesis (mind over matter), exist only in the minds of believers. Mental imagery and mental rehearsal help a person to perform better on skills that require a thoughtful, systematic approach. Some techniques such as biofeedback and cohesion (the process by which members of a group become committed to one another and their common goals) have useful applications but may not improve a person’s abilities. Biofeedback can reduce muscle tension, but the relaxed state it produces doesn’t necessarily make for better performance. Although cohesive groups exhibit loyalty, altruism, and a willingness to take risks, no clear evidence exists that cohesion is linked to sharper skills.

Emotions can be changed to promote higher intellectual activity as well as mental and physical health. Exposing people to nature, such as gardens or other natural vistas, can reduce blood pressure, pulse rate, and increase the brain activity that controls mood and lifts feelings. Positive emotions are associated with higher level processing, such as reflection and problem solving, than are negative emotions. Similarly, painful emotional states are transformed by using music and sound. Musical exercises that activate memories shared with loved ones reflect an aura of safety and trust in the world and can evoke a mood of wonder, joy, celebration, and love.

Responses to Depersonalization

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning is one response to the threat of depersonalization brought about by a narrow focus on basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Humanists believe that the basics should include a sense of ability, clarity of values, positive self-concept, capacity for innovation, and openness—characteristics of the self-directed learner.

The following are key ideas to consider in planning a curriculum for self-directed learning:

Achievement motivation. Those persons who are motivated by hope of success have an incentive to learn when the task is not too easy and when there is expectation of success. Persons motivated by fear of failure, on the other hand, tend to select tasks that are either so easy they cannot fail or so difficult that no embarrassment results when they do fail.

Attributive theory. Achievement-oriented individuals are more likely to see themselves as the cause of their success.

Children’s interests. When children find schoolwork distasteful and yet are driven to engage in more of the distasteful work, they acquire learned helplessness, having no interests related to learning. Freedom to undertake a self-directed study of something that concerns the learner seems to be an important condition for developing channeled effort.

The late Evan Keislar developed a curriculum model for self-development. The goal of this curriculum is to optimize future growth and development of the individual learner. Learners are helped to mediate key decisions by reflecting on their level of cognitive development and testing proposed courses of action. Resources are provided for helping learners deal with uncertainty, take risks, try out ideas, and profit from mistakes. The teacher’s role is to make sure that the student faces situations that arouse questions and lead to exploration. Challenges are matched to the child’s pattern of development. Although the teacher is available to help students find needed resources, the teacher does not do so when information is readily available. Because growth proceeds through encounters with conflict and tension, this curriculum promotes an optimum level of uncertainty.

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As with other humanistic curricula, the self-directed curriculum aims at development in several areas:

**Cognitive.** Children respond to the requirements of problematic situations, not simply to external directions. By anticipating consequences, they learn to make wise choices about goals. Allowances are made for those children whose thinking is tied to immediate perceptions and for those who are ready for inferential thought.

**Affective.** Children learn to deal at an emotional level with such uncertainties as social conflicts, evaluation, and challenge. They learn to view failure as a learning experience.

**Social.** Assertiveness training, role training, and experimenting with competitive and cooperative groups are among the activities provided.

**Moral.** Moral development is fostered through consideration of moral conflicts that arise from the social activities of the class and the wider community.

**Ego development.** The development of self-respect and self-confidence occurs through a social climate in which a person’s world does not depend on ability or level of maturity. Each individual has an opportunity to attain success, for there is no scarcity of rewards.

In many ways, self-directed curriculum is consistent with what John Dewey suggested more than 60 years ago: a curriculum that poses problems rooted within the present experience and capacity of learners, problems that arouse an active quest for information and invite the production of new ideas.\(^\text{14}\)

**Finding the Personal in the Academic** In concentrating on academic knowledge, the learner may be depersonalized. To counteract this danger, there are two courses of action: (1) recognizing the limitations of academic knowledge while acknowledging other forms of knowledge and (2) finding personal meaning of subject matter.

The optimally developed person has not merely accumulated encyclopedic knowledge, but can live well, acting wisely in a wide range of circumstances and situations. The kind of knowledge that permits optimal development is not likely to be found only in academic knowledge but requires know-how achieved through active expression or one’s existence and by interactive engagements with others and the natural environment. Walking and talking have led to great achievements through active expression. Good manners and the skills of actors, mechanics, artisans, physicians, and engineers are examples of knowledge acquired by emulating master practitioners. In short, there are many ways to gain knowledge other than through the academic fields.

Although academic knowledge is not sufficient for personal development, under some circumstances, it can enhance personal knowledge and enable a person to live better. What are these circumstances?

**Literature** Kenneth Resch believes that it is imperative for teachers to find their own personal connections in subject matter, to share these connections with students, and to hope that students will share their understanding. In reading a passage from Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (in which Wordsworth picks up a piece of stone rubble left from the destroyed Bastille and begins to muse of his youthful and lost past), Resch shares with his students some of his own seemingly trivial possessions and the memories they evoke. In turn, students share their memories sometimes by bringing things to class or by simply talking about possessions and the memories associated with them. In such an approach, poetry is related through personal experiences to students who begin to sense their own relationships and the romantic notion of responding to the past.\(^\text{15}\)

**The Arts** The late Philip Phenix believed that there is personalization when the arts—music, art, and dance—are taught with the idea of knowing how to produce patterns of the field and competencies in expressive movement or when they are taught so that the learner is at least able to vicariously participate in the activity.\(^\text{16}\)

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Margot Grallert has developed arts programs based on the belief that every person has an inner sense of self that must provide direction for learning, that the environment can stimulate individuals to find their personal directions and the conviction that there are no final answers. Grallert’s curriculum maintains a balance between expression and craftsmanship. Students are given help in learning to use the tools and skills they need to express themselves.

**Mathematics** Unless the student is helped to become a participant in the process of mathematics, symbol making, and manipulation according to the accepted canons of the mathematics community, the study of math is likely to be depersonalized.

Alvin White, along with 30 other mathematicians, promote humanistic mathematics through the *Humanistic Mathematics Network Journal*, now available online. This journal gives accounts of how math teachers are promoting feelings as well as thinking in mathematics, transcending traditional goals of classroom learning and emphasizing questions over answers.

In Chapter 1, the newer trends in mathematics curriculum are shown to be consistent with personalization. However, Nel Noddings carries personalization in this field to a new level when she argues that secondary school students should not have to take mathematics unless they want to study it, and, if they do, they will find it helpful to scatter their energies over a spectrum of studies. They will connect writing, history, biography, philosophy, science, and the like to mathematics. Noddings puts happiness as priority. By happiness Noddings means human flourishing as teachers care and as they prepare students for life. Accordingly, teachers help students understand the wonder of happiness and explore promising possibilities, including the development of a conscience through opportunities to learn how others have looked at suffering and to hear tales of noble responses to suffering. Her curriculum focuses on two domains: (1) the personal, with such themes as making a home, places and nature, character, and spirituality and interpersonal growth; and (2) the public domain with such concerns as preparing for work, community, democracy, service, and happiness in schools and classrooms.

**Science and Social Science** Personalization is enhanced through application and transcendency. Students see how knowledge of the material may be applied to the satisfaction of human need through technology and through the use of knowledge of science in understanding the self or seeing how the natural world supports personal life. Personalization exists when students are helped to see mysteries yet unprobed by scientific undertakings, as well as by shifting perspectives and alternatives.

In a curriculum that tries to reduce suicide among Native Americans, students draw on Zuni and Cherokee culture and traditions in helping them cope with their personal difficulties. For example, they focus on the Indian way of dealing with anger, recognizing that there is much for Indians to be angry about. They also learn about Indian ways to cope with grief and loss—composing poems, singing, and meditating—as well as address cultural factors that may contribute to self-destructive behavior. Eric Wargo reports that those First Nation groups that have revised tribal culture and language now have much lower suicide rates than other tribal groups and indeed lower rates than found in the general population.

An illustration of a personalized science, aesthetics, and ethics curriculum is David Orr’s “earth-centered” curriculum, in which students transcend abstract knowledge by transforming the ecologically unstable culture of their campus. Students learn to critically study the ecological implications of their culture, including the hidden costs of the way we irresponsibly consume and create waste in our schools. Through this curriculum, students begin by learning to reflect on their reality and to live by the garden ethic. The school

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is transformed from a decorative, pretty, vacuous landscape to one that sustains the value of self-sufficiency, caretaking, and community participation.\textsuperscript{21}

**History**

Personal development occurs in the study of history when the past is dramatically re-created and made available for persons now living and when students feel personally involved in the historical happening. History as only chronicle is depersonalizing. An outstanding example of teaching history as personal development is found in Arye Carmon’s Teaching the Holocaust,\textsuperscript{22} a curriculum that helps students formulate a set of moral rules for self through a confrontation with the Holocaust. The curriculum, which has been introduced in the United States, Germany, and Israel, places the adolescent at the focal point of the education process. The Holocaust serves as the subject matter used to respond to the needs of today’s adolescents.

The theory of Erik Erikson underlies the construction of Carmon’s curriculum.\textsuperscript{23} Erikson felt that persons are confirmed by their identities and societies regenerated by their lifestyle. To enter history, students must be able to relate their childhood to the childhood experiences of former generations. They must be able to identify with the ideals conveyed in the history of their culture. According to Erikson, in youth, childhood dependence gives way; no longer is it the old teaching the young the meaning of life. It is the young who by their actions tell the old whether life as represented to them has some vital promise.

The major objective of this Holocaust curriculum is to heighten each student’s awareness of the critical function of adult responsibility. This objective is achieved by fostering awareness of the human tendency toward stereotyping, prejudice, ethnocentrism, obeying authority, and thus escaping responsibilities.

The subject matter is organized into units—the socialization of German adolescents in Nazi Germany, the socialization of secret service men, the moral dilemmas of individuals and groups during the Holocaust, and the meaning of life in the post-Holocaust era. In each unit, students are given documents from the period. These documents provide historical background and serve as stimuli for discussion of the moral dilemma. The method of instruction is a combination of individual inquiry and group integration. Each person deals with a specific document; students form small groups to exchange feelings and opinions regarding the topics and their individual studies; then the entire class completes the discussion of the topic at hand. The content is not alien to the students and they cannot remain apathetic to it. Students face questions that are relevant to their own lives: Why sanctification of life rather than martyrdom? What are the dilemmas that confronted the individual and which confronted Jews as members of a community? Which of these dilemmas touch you personally? Why? What is the common denominator of the dilemmas? Discussion manifests a dialogue between the student and his or her conscience, and among student and peers.

During the first phase of the curriculum, resistance toward the subject matter increases. Students tend to resist giving up their stereotypical attitudes and other protective mechanisms. Gradually this resistance fades, only to be replaced by a feeling of helplessness. At this point the study has opened students to the possibility of critical thinking and moral judgment. Students then begin to formulate the universal rule for confronting moral dilemmas: “How would I have behaved if I had been in this situation? How should I have behaved?”

**Connecting Individual Learning and Social Learning**

Although the humanistic curriculum enables students to become knowledgeable about self and feelings, it has been faulted for not offering the societal perspectives necessary for social change. Hence, humanists are giving more of their attention to social, political, and historical connections in inequality and evil in the world rather than sole attention to the psychological factors that form people.

An example of how curriculum can be developed to synthesize personal and social change is found in the work of Lee Bell and Nancy Schniedewind.\textsuperscript{24} In their curriculum, the teacher focuses on personal

\begin{itemize}
  \item Arye Carmon, *Problems in Coping with the Holocaust: Experiences with Students in a Multinational Program*, American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Annals 450 (July 1980).
\end{itemize}
competition and uncritical acceptance of competition in the larger society. Questions as to why students need to feel superior to others and their uncritical belief in the superiority of American institutions and values are treated. The teacher begins by creating a trusting classroom and tries to develop the student’s sense of personal power. Affirmation activities are implemented by which students validate their own and others’ strengths. Students explore put-downs and how put-downs weaken personal power. Group support is developed through cooperative activities involving shared leadership and conflict resolution. Students examine the costs of competition on self-esteem and interpersonal relationships, as well as on political and economic relationships in society.

This curriculum is ordered so that the concepts of personal power, group support, critical consciousness, and action are applied first to the personal level and then to the community, nation, and world. At the personal level, students explore their feelings about ability grouping and standardized grading procedures. They consider alternative procedures that will validate everyone’s strengths. At the community level, students explore the effects of cooperation and competition in the workplace. At the national level, they study examples of political cooperation, like the successful farmworkers’ boycotts. At the global level, students engage in high-level activities, such as comparing personal egotism to social egotism in the context of nations.

Donald Moss has written an historical view of humanistic psychology from the beginning in ancient Greece to its flowering in the modern age. Moss highlighted moments that influenced humanistic psychologists. In the nineteenth century Kierkegaard posited higher individual consciousness leading to the belief that individuals can make personal choices and avoid dependency on science and objectivity, but take “leaps of faith” as they move from a sensuous state, in which emotions dominate, to a state of understanding universal humanity and finally enter a religious state of unity with God. In the same century Nietzsche explored the ways an individual could transcend conventional values and constraints becoming a “superman,” one who is free and responsible for becoming the kind of person he or she wants to be.

In the twentieth century Buber was concerned with the absurdities that individuals face because of their inhumanity and their tendency to construct relationships characterized as “I-It,” in which “I-It” is used for selfish ends. Buber instead offered an “I-Thou” relationship—a mutual sensitivity of feeling or empathy in which there is sharing of knowledge and feeling that makes life more spiritual.

Heidegger contributed to the notion that people can create better possibilities for living with his phenomenological idea that one’s view of the world has been shaped by historical events and that there is a need for reinterpreting this view based on revised views of the present and future. Sartre extended the idea of personal freedom with responsibility for our choices and actions, arguing that nothing restricts us from fashioning our own meanings and becoming what we desire.

Existential and phenomenological ideas are tied to both confluence and consciousness. Humanistic curriculum, in its focus on conflict, war, hunger, and the like, brings human conditions to students’ awareness and their questions of whether these conditions are natural, thereby opening new possibilities for themselves and their world.

**Third-Force Psychology**

Confluent curriculum has been influenced by a third-force psychology—so called because it addressed inadequacies in both behaviorism and Freudian psychologies. The third-force psychologist believes that behaviorism is mechanistic and that behaviorists view the learner as a detached intellect, ignoring affective responses and higher-order aspects of the personality such as altruism. Likewise, to the third-force psychologist, Freudian psychologies appear overly cynical about the motives of persons and emphasize humankind’s pathological and unconscious emotional forces.

CHAPTER 1
HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM

The late Abraham Maslow was a key figure in the development of third-force psychology. Maslow viewed self-actualization as having several dimensions. He saw it as a life achievement, a momentary state, and the normal process of growth when a person’s deficiency motives are satisfied and his or her defenses are not mobilized by threat. Maslow assumed that the human being has a biological essence. Hence, the search for self means attending to impulses from within, which indicate that a person is a part of nature as well as a unique being.  

If third-force psychology is a foundation of the humanistic curriculum, it follows that this curriculum must encourage self-actualization, whereby learners are permitted to express, act out, experiment, make mistakes, be seen, get feedback, and discover who they are. Maslow thought that we learn more about ourselves by examining responses to peak experiences, which give rise to love, hate, anxiety, depression, and joy. For Maslow, the peak experiences of awe, mystery, and wonder are both the end and the beginning of learning. Thus a humanistic curriculum should value and attempt to provide for such experiences as moments in which cognitive and personal growth take place simultaneously.

Consider this anecdote from a biology class:

The teacher was trying to teach us about sugars and we yawned as he added glucose to some Fehling’s solution. But when he heated the mixture and the blue solution turned into a red solid, I sat up straight and recognized the moment as a turning point in my life. Within a day I had bought a Gilbert chemistry set and began threatening my attic and the peace of mind of my parents.

Believing in the need to discover one’s potentials and limitations through intense activity, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced Chick-sent-me-high) began his studies of optimal and enjoyable experiences in which there is a deep concentration on the activity at hand—the person forgetting his or her problems and temporarily losing the awareness of self. Such experiences are termed “flow” and at their most challenging level allow the person to transcend self. “I am so involved in what I am doing I don’t see myself as separate from what I am doing.” Those who find their activities to be intrinsically enjoyable (in flow) develop their intellectual ability to the fullest. Flow experiences occur when environmental challenges match a person’s competencies and skills. In contrast, negative experiential states occur in overchallenged situations (anxiety) or when one is overskilled for the task (boredom). As our capabilities grow, we must take in increasingly greater challenges to stay in flow.

Csikszentmihalyi exhorts us to develop complexity in our consciousness, to acquire multiple interests and abilities, because our future depends on it. He holds that without resolving our personal conflicts, we will not be concerned for or do effective work for others. Complexity is made up of two closely linked processes: (1) differentiation, when individuals feel free to pursue individual goals and to become as different as they can be from one another and (2) integration, when individuals become aware of the goals of others and help them realize their goals.

How can the curriculum contribute to flow experiences and awareness of complexities? Although persons differ in their ability to experience flow—it is easier for some people to enjoy everyday life and to transform routine and threatening situations into opportunities for action—the ability to experience flow may be learned. Through meditation and spiritual discipline, a person can learn to control consciousness. Yoga can provide in concentration memory control and the formulation of specific goals. Offering a range of learning opportunities increases the possibility of matching appropriate challenge and competency. A curriculum goal might be to educate students so they will be able to experience flow and avoid boredom and anxiety, regardless of social conditions. To this end, students would learn how to recognize challenges, turn adversity into manageable tasks, and trust their skills. Awareness of complexity may occur through the arts—dance, music,

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and painting—which are generally enjoyed by students and can be taught to advance both differentiation and integration. However, the funneling of knowledge into narrow channels of abstract material, such as chemistry, biology, mathematics, and geography, works against awareness of the complexity of society and the need for interdependence. Instead of each academic subject being taught as if it had a separate existence, Csikszentmihalyi advocates a curriculum that will help students put academics together, showing the interconnectedness of causes and effects—how physics is related to ethics, how molecular biology can enhance empathy, and how history can relate ecology, economics, sociology, and the like in understanding human action.29 His curriculum would not enshrine the creative solutions of the past, but make it possible for creativity to reassess itself. As students perceive the network of causes and effects in which actions are embedded and their emotions and imaginations are trained to respond to the consequences of these actions, students will grow in awareness of complexity and have a chance of surviving in the future.

Carl Rogers provided a framework for a humanistic curriculum. He was a third-force psychologist who identified conditions that enable humans to grow and seek fulfillment, showing the importance of emotional relationships in which participants have positive regard and empathize understandings for one another. His writings offer practical illustrations of how teachers can change the way we think about students and learning.30 Rogers believed that all individuals have a positive orientation and that they can become better to the degree that they are willing to be real, empathetic, trusting in their own experiences, and expressing what they truly feel. He thought everyone has a natural ability to learn and wants to continue learning as long as the experience is positive. His research studies confirmed that learning best takes place when:

- The self is not threatened—external threats are reduced to a minimum.
- Students choose and pursue their own projects, selecting resources and procedures, but accepting responsibility for the consequences.
- If independence of mind, creativity, and self-confidence are the goals, self-evaluation and self-criticism precedes evaluation by others.
- Emphasis is placed on learning how to learn, which is usually more useful than learning specific information. Learning how to learn means being open to experience and change.

Rogers saw teachers as facilitators of learning rather than directors of learning. Humanists are willing to trust and take risks, not afraid to express their own thoughts and feelings (e.g., “You make me uncomfortable when you swear!”).

Although the golden years of humanistic psychology and the human potential movement from the 1950s to 1980s are associated with the work of Maslow and Rogers, these leaders learned from many contemporaries. By way of example, Rollo May showed the importance of listening to the individual’s perception rather than assuming the cause for another’s behavior. Wilhelm Reich focused on how the body defends against unacceptable feelings and creates techniques for overcoming these defenses. Fritz Perls similarly developed therapeutic activities in which peers helped individuals reconcile their self-perceptions and their desired potentials. The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology features articles describing applications of humanistic psychology in a variety of contexts in which the emotions, intellect, and the body contribute to self-actualization and health. The articles also treat the history of the field and reveal the tension between those who want humanistic psychology to be more empirical or scientific and those who are seeking ways for individuals to reach higher levels of consciousness, including practices drawn from the sages and mystics of the world. Humanistic psychologists are challenged by the findings from genetic and neurological studies that give new answers to old questions: “What does it mean to be human?” and “Is there a protean self or are our identities predetermined by genes or shaped by socially imposed categories and language?”

The following trends are noticeable in humanistic psychology. First, those with an empirical bent are responding to the call from the 1998–1999 president of the American Psychological Association,

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Martin E. F. Seligman, for a positive psychology that would focus on what makes people succeed, looking for how affect helps with existential questions together with the effects of hope and optimism. James Coan and others are responding with studies of how social contact can buffer life stresses and contribute to health and happiness.

Second, transcendentalists are infusing nontheistic spiritual traditions from Asia, such as Buddhism, aiming at high levels of consciousness and alternative ways to relate to the world. This direction is sometimes termed fourth-force psychology.

In contrast with typical efforts to develop skilled use of an analytic mind whereby students learn to use given categories and systems to evaluate something or someone and to analyze the present from past experiences, the transcendentalist encourages additional ways of learning and knowledge, such as being guided by intuition—an inner voice feeling, thought, or image. The interplay between the rational and nonrational is necessary for creative imagination and a prerequisite to logical thought.

Awareness makes possible a higher level of thinking that is beyond that found in formal operations. As Albert Einstein said, “No problem can be solved with the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see our world anew.” Vision logic is an example of transcendency to a higher level. Accordingly, highly actualized persons move from a single point in time and space to multiple positions with their different perspectives giving rise to insight and the possibility of transformation.

Third, new findings from the fields of neurology and genetics challenge the humanists by suggesting that consciousness is a chemical and neural activity and that personality factors, such as sense of humor, romantic love, cooperation, and aesthetics, are genetically predetermined. On the other hand, brain scientists are reminded that brains don’t work in isolation, that we are not fixed from birth and can change or be changed depending on the environment. Carol Dweck argues that belief about one’s self contributes to and can change one’s personality, influencing functioning in school, work, and relations. She, with others, took junior high students who were slipping in math and gave them eight sessions on study skills only. Half of these students were also led to believe that their intelligence was malleable with statements such as “Your mind is a muscle that you can strengthen” and “You have the power to enrich your own brain.” Students who learned the malleable mind-set rebounded with better math grades and positive motivation.

Neural connections depend on experiences, which are the basis for our identity. However, we are only beginning to learn how brain structures connect memories, interests, judgments, and more when a phenomenon occurs. Mathew Lieberman and associates at UCLA have identified those regions of the brain that communicate ideas and are central to empathy and indicators of one’s personal interests.

Humanists continue to believe that each self is unique with a subjectivity that allows individual interpretations of events and a potential to exercise choice and responsibility.

Psychological and neurological studies indicate the importance of overcoming negative emotions by enhancing emotional competence and by cognitive control of the emotions. Accordingly, schools are developing programs to help students stop and inhibit impulsive tendencies, to identify feelings, and to think of alternative solutions to their problems. It is believed that as students understand and recognize their emotions, they improve in problem solving and facilitate their cognitive flexibilities.

Unlike school models for self-regulation that draw from a cognitive psychology with its strategies for comprehending text and lecture and metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and controlling cognition, humanistic models center on motivation and emotions, including strategies for boosting self-confidence or self-efficacy, such as positive self-talk (“I can do this”) or increasing interest by making a game out of a required task, overcoming negative emotions such as anxiety in order to achieve their own goals.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS TO THE HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM

In his description of the origin of confluent education, Shapiro likened it to the history of the humanities, different philosophies of the humanistic movement in psychology, and the human potential movement including the countercultural programs of the 1960s and 1970s. Shapiro concluded that there is a humanistic impulse to express strivings and yearnings. Shapiro’s account makes clear that knowledge as well as affect is part of confluence. The work also reveals reasons for the failure of higher education to sustain research in confluent curriculum, including the protection of disciplinary domains and institutional hierarchical structures.35

Ancient Greeks and Romans

The classical conception of the humanities originated in the Greek tradition of an education to develop a harmonious and balanced person. This education attempted to answer what it meant to be human, to actualize the meaning of life and death and to experience the greatest happiness while achieving excellence in performance. Both the Greeks and the Romans, who adapted the Greek civilization, thought adding to a student’s knowledge was not enough; education should also benefit a student’s happiness.

The Athenians emphasized freedom and development of physical, psychological, and artistic capabilities. Of course, the Greek ideal for education applied only to the few, and education varied with social conditions at given times. The late Athenian period, for example, a time of prosperity, brought a demand for fame and fortune rather than a demand for knowledge for its own sake.

Greek philosophers with contrasting beliefs founded their own schools. Stoicism, for example, is one of these philosophies and of current interest because of its relation to self-control and character. The Stoics followed the Socratic ideals of self-sufficiency, endurance, and virtue by teaching students to be indifferent to painful circumstances and to accept what life brings. Later the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the early Christians promoted stoicism.

Today, stoicism is hot with authors such as Peter Gibbon who advocate the reintroduction of heroes into the curriculum in an effort to renew America’s greatness. As with Greek and Roman classics, the study of heroes is a search for better selves, to see how heroes can lift and improve our lives and that one’s character is as important as one’s intellectual ability. Bill Clinton, while president, said he read Marcus Aurelius twice a year.

As seen in Table 1.1, humanistic metaphors and ideas for teaching have continually reappeared: “The original is not the original.” Although these ideas for advancing the individual have been around for a long time, they have seldom been part of an institutionalized curriculum, which has a bias toward authority and control.

Traditional Humanities

The Greek and Latin cultures are periodically revived as repeating the best of civilization and humanity. They are justified on the basis of their aim at freedom of thought, creativity, and self-expression. However, this curriculum often becomes elitist, limited to selected classrooms and the imitating of Greek and Roman masters.

During the Renaissance in Italy, humanists stressed personal development, culture, and freedom, borrowing from the idea of harmonious development of mind, body, and morals—with the goals of individualization and self-realization. Their centering on the beautiful, including sensual beauty, is noteworthy.

The issue of how the traditional humanities relate to the present humanistic curriculum has been studied, showing that both deal with values, deep subjectivity, students’ feelings, and personal identity as well as inquiry. Continuity lies in the same goal: enlargement of the human spirit.

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TABLE 1.1 Humanistic Ideas in Conflict with Institutionalized Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanistic Ideas</th>
<th>Distant Voices</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Know thyself—the unexamined life cannot succeed.”</td>
<td>Socrates (469–399 BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The learner is not an empty vessel to be filled, but a flame to be ignited.”</td>
<td>Plato (427–347 BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Education is an internal process assisted by external agencies in which the individuals actualize their potential.”</td>
<td>Aristotle (384–322 BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Education should aim for freedom, creativity, and self-expression.”</td>
<td>Petrarch (1304–1374)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Individuals have the responsibilities and ability to live their own lives.”</td>
<td>Erasmus (1469–1536)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Character and the ability to evaluate one’s own personality, to determine and fulfill one’s own physical and spiritual needs, and to understand and cooperate with others are far more important than mastery of verbal or factual lessons.”</td>
<td>Montaigne (1533–1592)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mind and body are closely interrelated and cannot be separated.”</td>
<td>Locke (1632–1704)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Children are born good with both an instinct for self-preservation and sympathy and good feelings for their companions.”</td>
<td>Rousseau (1712–1778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No human being should control the will or decisions of another individual.”</td>
<td>Kant (1724–1804)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The relationship between student and teacher should be like that between mother and child—a shared process motivated by friendship, cooperation, mutual aid, and love.”</td>
<td>Pestalozzi (1746–1827)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with science and other disciplines, the humanities can be taught for personal significance or for lifeless reproduction. The difference can be seen by asking whether the study contributes to one’s self-understanding, inspiration, imagination, or wonder. Examples of this are shown by teachers like Kingsley Amis who, when teaching the British novel, asked his students to rank works, not in order of their importance, but by their “sheer enjoyableness.”

Progressive Education

The ideas of Pestalozzi, Rousseau, and other humanists influenced Frances W. Parker (1831–1902) in his leadership as superintendent of schools in Quincy, Massachusetts, and at the University of Chicago, where he advocated student choice and the student as the object of instruction, not the content fields. John Dewey followed Parker at Chicago, where his school curriculum added civic and social learning to the practical uses of content as well as a focus on individual development. Dewey’s views on student responsibility and learning by experience are consistent with confluent curriculum. However, he departed from the transcendental approach to inquiry and the moral question of right and wrong.

Spiritual Images

The Greek classics along with the Bible and formal religion were the sources for personal development and existential questions of most people until the twentieth century. Today, there is a transcendental movement in curriculum that goes beyond formal religion and draws from the writings of Frank Waldo Emerson (1803–1884) who proposed that education could awaken new possibilities by “bringing forth” the inner person rather than simply “putting in” information. Emerson advocated self-reliance, attending to one’s own intuition as to what is right or wrong, and being optimistic about one’s capabilities to transform his or her self.

The humanistic legacies have given rise to issues that are central in curriculum today. How can the individual escape from social conventions and the constraints of economic and political pressure for conformity? Can the curriculum advance personal affiliations and relationships necessary for living in an uncertain world? Should the curriculum develop student capacity to make choices in accordance with their dreams or merely help them to respond to the perspectives of government and employers?
CRITICISMS OF THE HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM

Three charges are commonly made against the humanists: (1) Critics fault humanists as too idealistic and indifferent to the difficulties of acting on humanistic principles, as well as accuse them of prizing their methods, techniques, and experiences instead of appraising them in terms of consequences for learners. A. Nattie Campbell believes Nel Noddings’s call for happiness education does not give guidance on how to overcome the societal and institutional barriers that prevent its implementation and that her blueprint is unrealistic. Campbell herself does, however, offer practical suggestions for administrators and teachers in learning how to care, such as inviting them to search for vocabularies in school literature for happiness-related terms—delight, awe, wonder, joy, zest, and so on—and then asking them if their educational world is replete with these kinds of words. If not: “What are you going to do about it?” “Who can help?” “How?” Some say the humanists have been lax in seeing the long-term effects of their programs. If they were to appraise their systems more thoroughly, the humanists might see that their uses of emotionally charged practices such as sensitivity training and encounter groups can be psychologically or emotionally harmful to some students. The self-awareness they encourage is not always a change for the better. The use of humanistic techniques, such as deep-breathing exercises, has been attacked by some parents as “new age” religious practice. There are anecdotes about an eight-year-old girl who supposedly was taken on a “mini vacation” and “left there” and a kindergartner who used deep breathing to drown out the sound of her mother’s voice when she was being disciplined. There have been suits alleging that the mental-health component of the humanistic curriculum amounts to “unauthorized practice of psychology by teachers.” There is fear among some parents of a curriculum that is effective in changing children’s values, attitudes, and behavior through a process of open decision making. (2) Other critics maintain that the humanist is not concerned enough about the experience of the individual. Indeed, some programs appear to demand uniformity of students and appear to regard open questioning as a dangerous deviation, getting in the way of development. Although humanists say that their curriculum is individualistic, every student in a given classroom is actually exposed to the same stimuli. For example, everyone may be expected to take part in group fantasy, hostility games, and awareness exercises. (3) On the other hand, as we have shown, critics would like humanists to be more responsible to the needs of society as a whole.

Rebuttals to these attacks take varied forms. Humanists admit that their educational approach can be misused. However, teachers who would abuse their teaching role would do so whether or not they had affective techniques available. Furthermore, because humanism helps teachers learn more about themselves, those teachers are likely to demonstrate fewer instances of negative and destructive behavior. Not all students should have to participate in the humanistic curriculum because it may not be appropriate for everyone at the curriculum’s present state of development. This curriculum promises a fuller realization of the democratic potential of our society. The goals of the humanistic curriculum call for students who can perceive clearly, act rationally, make choices, and take responsibility for both their private lives and for their social milieu.

F. Hanoch McCarty believes it is necessary to combat the perceptions of humanistic education as chaotic, lacking in purpose, and bereft of a common set of goals. He would change the phrases of the 1970s—“If it feels good, do it” and “Do your own thing”—by adding “as long as it does not rob others of their dignity and potential.” In other words, McCarty believes that humanists must be involved with the welfare of others and that one should not seek personal pleasure while others slave.

Shortly before his death, Maslow addressed the question of whether we can teach for personal growth and at the same time educate for competence in academic and professional fields. He thought it was possible,
though difficult, to integrate the two goals. (The teacher’s role of judge and evaluator in teaching to standards is often seen as incompatible with the humanistic role.) In his last article, Maslow expressed uneasiness over some practices in curricula of the ESALEN type. (ESALEN is a center in California that provided many approaches to consciousness and showed trends toward anti-intellectualism and opposition to science, discipline, and hard work.) He worried about those who considered competence and training irrelevant. For Maslow, the learning of content need not be the denial of growth. He thought subject matter could be taught humanistically with a view to enlightenment of the person. Study in a subject field could be helpful toward seeing the world as it really is if it entails training in sensory awareness and a defense against despair. To believe that real knowledge is possible and that weak, foolish human beings can band together and move verified knowledge forward toward some small measure of certainty encourages us to count upon ourselves and our own powers.

Many Americans view the humanistic approach negatively. Although most people would support increased human potential and self-worth as ends, they may be suspicious of what appear to be bizarre procedures, such as exploring the senses through touchy-feely exercises and emphasizing the sensual, if not the sexual. If thought, feeling, and action cannot be separated, then neither should feelings be separated from injustices faced by one’s fellows. Rather than feel the “joy” of a “blind walk,” students might feel the “revelation” and “outrage” of abused children.

Social reconstructionists demand that the humanists do more than strengthen present courses. New teaching techniques that involve learners and their feelings in each lesson are not enough. They want to broaden the boundaries of the humanistic curriculum from self-study to political socialization; they would like humanistic curriculum to include such problem areas as medicine, parental care, sexism, and journalism. These critics want humanistic curriculum to deal with the exposure of injustice so that the learner’s growth would be less restricted. The blending of humanism and social reconstructionism tries to answer this complaint.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Listening, self-evaluation, creativity, openness to new experiences, and goal setting are important curriculum goal areas. Learners have a real concern about the meaning of life, and curriculum developers should be responsive to that concern. Putting feelings and facts together makes good sense. It is alarming that studies of classroom interaction show that only 1% of instructional time is given to assessing student feelings about what they are learning. The importance of policy makers understanding the motives of students is shown in findings that girls who choose courses other than math and science do so not because they lack self-confidence in succeeding in these fields but because they fail to see the utility in them. Also, it is a good idea to help learners acquire different ways of learning. Still, few persons would want the humanistic curriculum to be the only one available or to be mandated for all. We have much to learn before we can develop curricula that will help students become self-directed.

Our best thinking today suggests that self-direction may follow from a climate of trust, student participation in decisions about what and how to learn (typically students report 85% of instruction is on the what and only 5% on the how to learn), and efforts to foster confidence and self-esteem. The obstacles to be overcome are a desire by some institutions and persons to maintain power over others, a distrust of human nature, and a lack of student experience in taking responsibility for their own learning.

A fruitful approach toward improving humanistic curriculum has begun. It includes focusing on the physical and emotional needs of learners and attempting to design learning experiences that will help fulfill these needs. The idea that curriculum standards and activities should match emotional issues that are salient at particular times is powerful. Curriculum developers might ask how a particular subject matter could be structured in order to help students with developmental crises. For example, adolescents who are experiencing an identity crisis and trying to reconcile conflicts with parents might study history to illuminate the origins of parental attitudes and beliefs, considering the present validity of these origins. Students might use the sciences
to meet their needs for coherence and understanding the world rather than studying isolated subjects. Or they might use the arts to express their feelings and their natural desire to be themselves.

A related idea is for teachers to give more attention to the motivational and affective orientations that students bring with them. Inasmuch as the intentions, goals, and beliefs of students drive and sustain their thinking, then the enacted curriculum would encourage student expression and examination of their beliefs along with other perspectives. Through challenge, choice, novelty, fantasies, surprise, functionality, and other features of the humanistic curriculum, teachers cultivate students as whole persons who care about others and pursue their own dreams, not just follow the trajectories set by government and employers.

Although many have accepted the dominant categories of curriculum purposes related to economic interests and political conceptions of control aimed at filling students as “empty vessels,” others are exploring humanistic approaches concerned with motivation and learning of students as “flames to be ignited.”

QUESTIONS

1. Consider a topic of interest to you. How could this topic be taught to avoid depersonalizing learners?

2. What is your response to those who believe that schools should not undertake the complicated responsibilities that an affective curriculum implies and that such programs may infringe on the civil liberties of children?

3. Discuss the expected outcomes from a primary classroom in which there are the following: (a) a “sad corner”; (b) an “I feel” wheel, with an arrow that points to the words fine, tired, sick, or scared; and (c) two plants, one that is ignored and another that is loved, to show children that “the plant we love more will grow more, like people.”

4. Designers of affective programs have been accused of equating good mental health with conformity. They are said to promote compliance with school routines and instruction and to discourage the kind of initiative, individuality, and creativity that demands change, or “rocks the boat.” Can you recall an instance of a student exercising influence upon an institutional practice?

5. Reflect on some of the ideas, concerns, and activities associated with the humanistic curriculum. Which of these are likely to prove fruitful and have a continuing effect on what is taught? You may wish to consider (a) psychological assumptions about the importance of freedom, learning by doing, and risk taking; (b) views of knowledge such as those stressing subjective or intuitive knowledge and the idea that the subject that matters is the one in which the learner finds self-fulfillment; and (c) instructional techniques (values clarification, cooperative games, use of dreams, etc.).

6. What heroine might you want students to image? Why?

7. Why have great thinkers throughout history called for freedom in learning, yet schools as institutions have chosen to control content and how it is to be learned?

SUGGESTED STRATEGIC RESEARCH

READING EMOTIONS OF STUDENTS

Observe or videotape students in a learning situation and ask teachers if students are expressing positive emotions (hope, pride, empathy, and joy) or negative emotions (fear, frustration, shame, and anxiety). Compare teacher judgments with students’ self-reports on recalling their feelings? How do students’ emotions intersect with performance and desire to learn?

OVERCOMING STEREOTYPIC THREATS (GENDER, MINORITY, AND SOCIAL CLASS)

Ask students to use their intuition in predicting what will happen if before teaching a lesson such as fractions or sound they conduct a relevant experiment, using a beaker filled with water. Let students express their core intuitions and feelings about their expectations. Compare performance in learning the concepts with a group that did not preface their learning with an intuitive experience.

Ask representative samples of targeted students to submit a brief note or letter stating their expected degree of success in the course or a forthcoming activity together with an expression of their hope for the future. Later compare the achievement of those who wrote the notes with achievement of the matched students who did not write.
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IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS IN A SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM THAT MAKE FOR ALIENATION AND THOSE THAT FACILITATE SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Ask students to describe the factors that make their school or classroom a good place to be and the factors that make it more like a prison. Students may document using digital videos.

EXTENDING A RESEARCH FINDING

A profitable way to begin researching a humanistic question is to regard a published source as the beginning of research, not the end product. Select a statement or reference in Chapter 1 and either replicate it or determine what is missing that you might address.

DETERMINING STUDENTS’ ORIENTATIONS TO LEARNING

We believe persistency in the face of difficulty depends on whether one is “performance oriented” (worries about making errors) or “learning oriented” (likes new challenges). Are these orientations stable traits of an individual or do they vary with the subject matter or context?

DETERMINING THE POWER OF THOUGHT VERSUS THE POWER OF EMOTION

The emotional system tends to monopolize brain resources, making it easier for an emotion to control thought than for a thought to control an emotion. Imagine an experiment that would show the value of trying to activate the two systems.