

INTRO ANDRO 2

CONTRIBUTIOS from the social sciences

The central role of self-concept in human development (and learning) received increasing reinforcement from the entire field of psychiatry as it moved away from the medical model toward an educational model in its research and its practice. In the earlier half of the 20th century there were 2 dominant theories in the behavioral sciences. Freudianism and behaviorism, in which Freud placed major motivational emphasis on deep inner drives and urges and the behaviorists placed the emphasis on external, environmental influences. Freud, like Darwin and the behaviorists, saw man as merely another type of animal, with no essential differences from animals and with the same anti-social tendencies. Psychologists like Maslow who investigated how humans learn were concerned with the study and development of fully functioning or self-actualizing persons. They are critical of the approach used in the physical sciences and by the behaviorists, breaking things down into their component parts and studying them separately.

Maslow wrote "Growth (learning) takes place when the next step forward is subjectively more delightful, more joyous, more intrinsically satisfying than the previous gratification with which we have become familiar and even bored; that the only way we can ever know that it is right for us is that it feels better subjectively than any alternative. The new experience validates *itself* rather than by any outside criterion."

Carl Ransom Rogers (1902- 1987) was an influential American psychologist and among the founders of the humanistic approach (or client-centered approach) to psychology. He applied what he learned in providing therapy to teaching, and his student-centered approach to education was based on five basic hypotheses. The first was *We cannot teach another person directly: we can only facilitate his learning*. Since every individual exists in a world of experience of which he the center, it requires a shift in focus from what the teacher does to what is happening in the student.

Rogers second hypothesis was *A person learns significantly only those things which he perceives as being involved in the maintenance of, or enhancement of, the structure of self*. This hypothesis underlines the importance of making the learning relevant to the learner, and puts into question the academic tradition of required courses.

Rogers grouped his third and fourth hypotheses together: *Experience which, if assimilated, would involve a change in the organization of self tends to be resisted through denial or distortion of symbolization, and The structure and organization of self appear to become more rigid if under threat; to relax its boundaries when completely free from threat. Experience which is perceived as inconsistent with the self can only be assimilated if the current organization of self is relaxed and expanded to include it*. These two hypotheses

acknowledge the reality that significant learning is often threatening to an individual, and suggest the importance of providing an acceptant and supportive climate, with heavy reliance on student responsibility.

Rogers fifth hypothesis extends the third and fourth to educational practice: *The educational situation which is most effectively promotes significant learning is one in which (a) threat to the self of the learner is reduced to a minimum, and (b) differentiated perception of the field is facilitated.* Differentiated perception is the tendency to see things in limited, differentiated terms, to evaluate in multiple ways, to be aware of different levels of abstractions, to test his inferences and abstractions by reality, in so far as possible. Rogers see learning as a completely internal process controlled by the learner and engaging his whole being in interaction with his environment as he perceives it. He also believes that learning is natural, and required, a life process as breathing is. The living organism has one basic tendency and striving, to actualize, maintain, and enhance its experience.

Rogers stated that individuals may remain dependent on others to tell them how to live because they have always done so, or they may drift into dependence without realizing it, or they may temporarily wish to be dependent because their situation appears desperate. Few people, however, when they examine their own situation and perceive it clearly, deliberately choose dependence, deliberately choose to have the integrated direction of their self undertaken by another. When all the elements are clearly perceived, the balance seems invariably in the direction of the painful but ultimately rewarding path of self-actualization and growth.

Philosophical issues have been prominent in the literature of adult education since its beginnings, there are many questions and issues which are debated. Some of these questions include: What is the purpose of adult education- adult education for *what*? What is the relationship between content and method of instruction? Should individual interests and desires prescribe the curricula of adult education, or should the needs of society play a determining role in the creation of educational programs? What implications do different theories of knowledge, or of the nature of man and society, have for the planning and operation of adult education programs? Philosophy seeks to answer not the questions of *can* or *how* do adults learn, but *why* and *to what end*?

Scholars in the field of adult education have found that learning subjects can be fitted into three categories according to the major conceptions they have about the purposes and values of continuing education for themselves. The three types are: 1. The *goal-oriented* learners, who use education for accomplishing fairly clear-cut objectives. These individuals did not make any real start on their continuing education until their middle twenties and after, sometimes much later. The continuing education of the goal-oriented is in episodes.

There is no even, steady, continuous flow to the learning of such people. The need or interest appears and they satisfy it by taking a course, or joining a group, or reading a book.

The second type of learner is the *activity-oriented* learner, who take part because they find in the circumstances of the learning a meaning which has no necessary connection, and often no connection at all, with the content or the announced purpose of the activity. Activity-oriented people are course-takers and group-joiners. They might stay within a single institution or they might go to a number of different places, but it was social contact that they sought and their selection of any activity is essentially based on the amount and kind of human relationships it will yield.

The third type of learner is the *learning-oriented* individual, who seeks knowledge for its own sake. Unlike the other types, most learning-oriented adults have been engrossed in learning as long as they can remember. What they do has a continuity, a flow and a spread which establish the basic nature of their participation in continuing education. For the most part they are avid readers since childhood; they join groups and classes for educational reasons; they select the serious programs on television and radio; when they travel they make sure to prepare and appreciate what they see; they choose jobs and make other decisions in life in terms of the potential for growth which they offer.

No matter what type of learner, adult education is a very pervasive activity. A recent study found that almost every adult undertakes at least one or two major learning efforts a year, and some individuals undertake as many as 15 or 20. It is common for a man or woman to spend 700 hours a year at learning projects. About 70% of all learning projects are planned by the learner himself, who seeks help and subject matter from a variety of acquaintances, experts, and printed or digital resources.

What motivates adults was also studied, overwhelmingly adult subjects reported anticipating several desired outcomes and benefits to result from their learning. Some of the benefits are immediate: satisfying a curiosity, enjoying the content itself, enjoying practicing the skill, enjoying the activity of learning; others are long-run: producing something, imparting knowledge or skill to others, understanding what will happen in some future situation, etc. Pleasure and self-esteem are critical elements in the motivation of adult learners.

Adult learners proceed through several phases in the process of engaging in a learning project. Helping them gain increased competence in dealing with each phase might be one of the most effective ways of improving their learning effectiveness. The first phase is deciding to begin, setting an action goal, assessing his interests, seeking information on certain opportunities, choosing the most appropriate knowledge and skill, establishing a desired level or amount, estimating the cost and benefits.

A second phase is choosing the planner (which may be the student himself), an object (e.g., texts, workbooks, audio recordings, videos), an individual learning consultant (teacher, instructor, counselor), or a group. Competence in choosing a planner and using him *proactively* instead of *reactively*, collaboratively rather than dependently, are crucial in this phase.

Finally the learner engages in the learning episodes sketched out in the planning phase, the critical elements here being the variety and richness of the resources, their availability and the learners skill in making use of them.