PHILOSOPHY AND IMPLICATIONS OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Humanistic Education refers to an educational philosophy that believes human beings are, by nature, selfdeveloping creatures. An educator's primary responsibility is to create an environment in which students can do their own growing. Humanistic educators have a broad understanding of the knowledge that children acquire as they grow, and highly value student's affective and social development as well as their intellectual development. The goal of humanistic education is to contribute to the development of energetic, positive, self-respecting, caring human beings who can meet all challenges. Humanistic education is supported by years of research and experience. One of the strongest reasons for supporting humanistic education is that, when done effectively, students learn! Considerable evidence shows that cooperative learning structures higher self-concepts, and the student's motivation and interest in learning all are related to greater academic achievement. Humanistic education is not psychotherapy. It is not the goal of humanistic education to help students overcome deep-seated emotional problems. Rather, humanistic education seeks to help students to learn useful skills for living and to deepen their understanding of issues relevant to their academic and social development.

Key words: *Humanistic education is an educational philosophy, cooperative learning culture, learning useful skills for living, academic and social development.*

INTRODUCTION:

The term Humanistic Education is generally used to designate a variety of educational theories and practices that are committed to the world-view and ethical code of Humanism; that is, positing the enhancement of human development, well-being, and dignity as the ultimate end of all human thought and action—beyond religious, ideological, or national ideals and values. Based on a long philosophical and moral tradition-from the ancient Biblical prophets and Greek philosophers to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child-the commitment to Humanism further implies the fostering of the following three fundamental tenets- (1) The first is philosophical, consisting of a conception of man-men and women—as an autonomous and rational being and a fundamental respect for all humans by virtue of being endowed with freedom of will, rational thinking, moral conscience, imaginative and creative powers. (2) The second tenet is socio-political, consisting of a universal ethics of human equality, reciprocity, and solidarity and a political order of pluralistic, just and humane democracy. (3) The third tenet is pedagogical, consisting in the commitment to assist all individuals to realize and perfect their potentialities and "to enjoy", in the words of Mortimer Adler, "as fully as possible all the goods that make a human life as good as it can be." Recent applications of humanist philosophy focus on the social and emotional well-being of the child, as well as the cognitive. Development of a healthy self-concept, awareness of the psychological needs, helping students to strive to be all that they can are important concepts, espoused in theories of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Alfred Adler that are found in classrooms today. Teachers emphasize freedom from threat, emotional well-being, learning processes, and self-fulfillment. Humanism, as a perspective in education, is based on human generation of knowledge, meaning, and ultimately expertise through interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. This self-directed learning is needs motivated, adaptive learning. Acquisition, development, and integration of knowledge occur through strategy, personal interpretation, evaluation, reasoning, and decision-making. The learning goal is to become selfactualized with intrinsic motivation toward accomplishment. This learner is able to adapt prior knowledge to new experience. The educator's role in humanistic learning is to encourage and enable the learner, by providing access to appropriate resources without obtrusive interference.

The learning goal is high order learning of procedural knowledge, strategy, reasoning, abstract analysis, and development of expertise.

DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

Historically, humanistic education can be traced back to the times of classical Athens, with its central notion of Paideia, and a few centuries later to the times of ancient Rome with it central notion of Humanitas. Up until the eighteenth-century, Humanistic Education and Liberal Education-studia humanitatis and artes liberales-were interchangeable synonyms, designating the education appropriate for a free man. The aim of such education was the attainment of full and worthy human life with the possession of culture and civic spirit. In the last two centuries, however, the cultural trends of the enlightenment-the shift to scientific and critical thinking and to liberal and egalitarian democracy—brought about changes in the theories and practices of humanistic education. It has become much more democratic and pluralistic, open-minded and critical, sensitive and considerate to cultural as well as individual differences and needs. Notwithstanding the differences in approaches and emphases, it seems that all contemporary humanistic educators share a commitment to humanize their students in a spirit of intellectual freedom, moral autonomy, and pluralistic democracy. They strive to provide the kind of education that, on the one hand, liberates their students from the fetters of ignorance, caprice, prejudice, alienation, and false-consciousness, and, on the other, empowers them to actualize their human potentialities and lead autonomous, full, and fulfilling human lives.

The roots of humanism are also found in the thinking of Erasmus (1466-1536), who attacked the religious teaching and thought prevalent in his time to focus on free inquiry and rediscovery of the classical roots from Greece and Rome. Erasmus believed in the essential goodness of children, that humans have free will, moral conscience, the ability to reason, aesthetic sensibility, and religious instinct. He advocated that the young should be treated kindly and that learning should not be forced or rushed, as it proceeds in stages. Humanism was developed as an educational philosophy by Rousseau (1712-1778) and Pestalozzi, who emphasized nature and the basic goodness of humans, understanding through the senses, and education as a gradual and unhurried process in which the development of human character

follows the unfolding of nature. Humanists believe that the learner should be in control of his or her own destiny. Since the learner should become a fully autonomous person, personal freedom, choice, and responsibility are the focus. The learner is self-motivated to achieve towards the highest level possible. Motivation to learn is intrinsic in humanism.

THE FORMS OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

Theoretically, Humanistic Education can be classified into four distinct forms or approaches;

1. Classical Humanistic Education:-

The first might be called the classical, which inherently implies the existence of an ideal of human perfection that should serve as a universal and objective model for regulating the education of all human beings qua human beings. As mentioned earlier, the origins of this form of humanistic education lie in ancient Athens, especially in the ideas of Pericles, Socrates, Protagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates. A few centuries later it was the Romans who established the studia humanitatis as a normative and formative education for free persons, which aims at the cultivation of sound judgment and noble character. The Renaissance was the first era in which people called themselves humanists. These humanists were determined to emancipate themselves from the ignorance, dogmatism, and self-abnegation of the "dark ages" towards the kind of truth, beauty, freedom, and dignity that could be produced by the human faculties if only properly cultivated and exercised. It was also these humanists who established the central theme in all classical humanistic education, adopted by Hutchins and Adler, that "no man was considered educated unless he was acquainted with the masterpieces of his tradition" and that "the best way to a liberal education in the West is through the greatest works the West has produced." Finally, from the enlightenment to the end of the 20th century-with the ideas of Kant, Mill, Newman, Arnold, Babbit, Hutchins, Maritain, Libingston, Adler, Kirk and others-classical humanistic education has become more egalitarian, critical, and liberal. Its ultimate ideal, however, has not changed: as put in the words of the Renaissance humanists Pier Paolo Vergerio, humanistic education includes "those studies by which we attain and practice virtue and wisdom; that education which calls forth, trains and develops those highest gifts of body and mind which ennoble man."

2. Romantic Humanistic Education:-

The second form of humanistic education is most commonly known as the romantic, naturalistic, or therapeutic approach. It makes its first appearance in the 18th century with the writings of Rousseau who blamed the obsession with cultural progress, encyclopedic knowledge, authoritarian education, and the pursuit of social status for the ills of society and for the production of the alienated, other-directed, and corrupt personality of the bourgeois. Rousseau introduced an alternative conception of the good life that ascribes goodness to man's natural inclinations and self-regulated development, to spontaneous and playful exercise of natural powers, and to self-directedness and personal authenticity. Good human beings, he contended, should manifest holistic integration of sentiment with reason and of personal interest with the common good. These new images of human goodness and naturalistic education have generated in the 19th and 20th centuries a manifold change in educational theory and practice. In the modern educational thought of Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, Neill, Rogers, Maslow, Combs and others, we encounter all of Rousseau's basic intuitions. To these they have added the presently familiar notions of care, growth, self-actualization, personal fulfillment, selfregulation, trust, experience, relevance, authenticity, democratic and pedagogical climate—all as growth-promoting conditions for the "young plant" in its continual and self-actualizing process of becoming. In sum, the romantic form of humanistic education can be characterized by its fundamental premise that there exists in every one of us an "inner nature" or a "fixed self" that is fundamentally good and unique, and that pushes to unfold and actualize itself-in accordance with its built-in code-toward healthy existence and full humanity. True education, therefore, consists of careful "drawing out" and attentive actualization of the individual' sinner nature.

3. Existentialist Humanistic Education:-

The third form of humanistic education is existentialist, based mainly on the philosophical insights of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, Camus, and Buber. Existenialist educators reject the classical notion of human beings as "rational beings" as well as the romantic assumption that there exists in every one of us an "inner nature" or "fixed self" that is fundamentally good and unique. The alternative advanced by most existentialists is that since the essence of man is freedom, in the matter of values humans can appeal to no external authority, either natural or supernatural, and are therefore destined to

choose, define, and create themselves as the true—and therefore responsible—authors of their identities. As Sartre put it, in "The Humanism of Existentialism," "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself"; and authentic human life, therefore, exhibits an acute sense of self-concern and acceptance of his or her freedom and responsibility for becoming the kind of person he or she eventually becomes. In the light of these philosophical and moral insights, existentialist humanistic educators seek to humanize their students by urging them to pursue neither ultimate truths nor self-realization, but to constantly choose, form, and create their identities and life-projects – enlarging their sense of freedom and responsibility for the meanings, values, and events that constitute the public as well as the private realms of their lives.

4. Radical Humanistic Education:-

The fourth form of humanistic education is most often identified with Radical Education or Critical Pedagogy and with the pedagogical theories of Freire, Apple, Giroux, Simon, and Kozol. From this vantage point, to consider educational issues independent of the larger cultural, social, and economic context involves either serious ignorance or cynical, if not criminal, deception. Poverty, crime, homelessness, drug addiction, wars, ecological crises, suicide, illiteracy, discrimination against women and ethnic minorities, technocratic consciousness, and the disintegration of communities and families, to name some of our most pressing problems, are facts of life that effect directly the physical, emotional, intellectual, and moral development of the great majority of children in our culture. Hence, radical educators argue, "pedagogy should become more political and the political more pedagogical". This implies three major changes in our educational system. It requires-

- (a) that educational discourse, policy, and practice would deal directly with the notions of power, struggle, class, gender, resistance, social justice, and possibility;
- (b) that teachers would aim to emancipate and empower their students towards the kind of critical consciousness and assertive point of view that allow people to gain control over their lives; and
- (c) that teachers, in the words of Giroux, "would struggle collectively as transformative intellectuals to make public schools democratic public spheres where all children, regardless of race, class, gender, and age, can learn what it means to be able to participate fully in the ongoing

struggle to make democracy the medium through which they extend the potential and possibilities of what it means to be human and to live in a just society."

Notwithstanding the differences among these four forms of humanistic education, it seems that in their educational projects of humanization they all accept Whitehead's point that "there is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations."The business of humanistic education is nothing less than to empower and guide individuals to lead a vital and sound life, marked by wide-awakeness and thoughtful deliberation, moral conduct and political involvement, authentic engagement in life and discriminating appreciation of beauty in both nature and art. Humanistic educators should further seek to develop well-rounded and integral persons whose culture is manifested not only in their broad-learning but also in wise and responsible utilization of knowledge—so that the "tree of knowledge" would also serve as a nourishing "tree of life." Its ideal is to achieve in their students the right integration as well as the right tension between a commitment to high cultural standards and a strong sense of individuality in both the forms of autonomy and authenticity. Finally, to achieve all this, truly humanistic teachers take the responsibility to set personal example in the art of living as well as to create at their schools a pedagogical atmosphere of care, trust, support, dialogue, respect, fairness, tolerance, inquiry, freedom, commitment, responsibility and reciprocity. Without these last elements, even the most beautifully woven theory of humanistic education would fail to become a lived reality for its teachers and students

HUMANISM AS AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

In nursing education, the philosophy of humanism has been the subject of much discourse. Many experts in the field see humanism as part of the natural change of nursing philosophy, which is able to better suit a multicultural population with varying needs (Mullholland, 1994). As stated in Billings and Halstead (2009), "The primary concern with humanism as an educational theory is the autonomy and dignity of human beings" (p.112). Humanism stems from existentialism, which focused much of its efforts on, "uplifting the place of the individual's role of personal choice and commitment" (Billings & Halstead, 2009, p.112). Educators who believe in the humanist philosophy of education create an environment where the student is primarily responsible for learning, emphasizing freedom of choice with regards to the

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learning process. The student is the director of learning, while the educator serves as a facilitator or "guide". The educator seeks to maximize the student's personal growth and support the student in becoming a mature human being, while at the same time taking care to be nonauthoritarian in their methods which creates a liberating learning environment for the student. The educator also assists the student in becoming "self- actualized", which Maslow defines as, "the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc." (Maslow, 1954, p.150). Humanist nursing curriculums should provide opportunities for the student to learn through a multitude of experiences and reflect upon them thoroughly, resulting in the development of self knowledge (Billings & Halstead, 2009, p.111). The overarching goal of the humanistic educational philosophy is to assist the learner in realizing and maximizing their true potential (Billings & Halstead, 2009). The metaphysical implications in the humanistic philosophy vary from more traditional educational philosophies. In medicine, what is real is empirical evidence. Objective assessments by the practitioner are considered reality versus the subjective. However, in humanism the subjective and what exists in the mind is considered reality. As stated earlier, humanism has its roots in existentialism in which they, "seek to find personal meaning in a world of impersonal thought" in a secular manner (Billings & Halstead, 2009, p.112). In humanism, reality is based on feelings and experiences of humans. The meaning that the person obtains in certain experiences is considered the ultimate reality. Personal meaning and subjectivity could be considered vague and hazy to some, but this is reality and the primary concern of humanists (Playle, 1995). Therefore, "reality is in the individual" (Bevis, 1989). Much importance is placed upon freedom of choice in the existentialist/humanistic philosophy (Billings & Halstead, 2009). This would lead one to believe that such philosophers would not consider concepts such as fate or karma as real. Knowledge in the humanistic philosophy is gained through experiences which, "illuminate the values and meanings central to each person's life world" (Kleiman, 2007, p.210). Phenomenological methods such as self reflection help the learner recognize what is true central to their personal beliefs and values (Kleiman, 2007). In research, humanists do not engage in quantitative studies but rather they want to explore the lived experience of humans taking a phenomenological approach to research and gaining knowledge (Traynor, 2008). Contrary to traditional educational philosophies, knowledge in the humanistic philosophy is gained by experience using both cognitive and affective processes (Scanlon, 2006). The philosophy of humanism has been subjected to many

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epistemological criticisms. Humanistic research (mainly qualitative) has been said to lack rigor, therefore truth. Some critics of humanism describe it as an, "attempt to sharply differentiate the profession from medicine, and later, managerialism, which have been represented as reductionist and failing to adequately respond to the whole patient" (Traynor, 2008, p.1560). Traynor (2008) goes on to say that the ambiguity of the humanistic model does not leave the nurse accountable for providing quality patient care. The axiological components of the humanistic philosophy are compassionate and respectful interpersonal interactions. In the humanistic philosophy, the optimal characteristics which a nurse should possess clearly identified. Kleiman (2007) states, "The tenets of humanism illuminate the value of and individual and the responsibility that human beings have toward one another" (p. 209). A nurse should be caring and compassionate when interacting with patients, coworkers and others. Nurses should also be empathetic and sensitive to patients while treating them with dignity and respect. These professional attributes are paramount in a humanistic nursing philosophy and are considered good for patients, coworkers and all human beings. By interacting with others in this way, the outcome should be a "favorable effect" on patients and colleagues, as well as the student as they achieve self gratification (Kleiman, 2007, p.212).

As of late, there has been a push towards humanistic educational models. Kleiman argues that, "The humanistic teaching method can be used as a template for teachers of all levels of students in various courses to help create a balance between scientific and technical aspects of nursing and the even important human-centered aspects, which illuminate the primordial nature of nursing" (2007, p.213). Humanism encourages learning through experience and doing. Methods such as journaling have been used which focus on reflection, allowing the student to, "search for personal meaning in human existence" (Billings & Halstead, 2009, p.113). Much research and commentary is available concerning "the curriculum revolution", which calls for a shift from the behaviorist paradigm to a more caring centered model. Bevis (1993) states, "The underlying problem is that both education and practice are driven by behaviorism, a closed and limiting theoretical base which is oppressive, supports authoritarianism and denies the existence of anything that is not observable" (p.56). She claims that these traditional educational nursing philosophies stifle creativity, and produce immature students (Bevis, 1993). She pushes for a "nursing educational revolution" that will make caring the center of nursing, which is humanistic in nature (Bevis, 1993). Some think that the humanist philosophy was adopted by nursing as a

backlash to the medical model and behaviorist paradigms. Humanism in nursing attempts to distinguish its self from the medical model as well as behaviorist paradigms nurses are prepared to deliver care that is often characterized as impersonal and mechanical (Traynor, 2009).

PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

There are five basic principles of humanistic education:

- 1) Students should be able to choose what they want to learn. Humanistic teachers believe that students will be motivated to learn a subject if it's something they need and want to know.
- The goal of education should be to foster students' desire to learn and teach them how to learn.
 Students should be self-motivated in their studies and desire to learn on their own.
- 3) Humanistic educators believe that grades are irrelevant and that only self-evaluation is meaningful. Grading encourages students to work for a grade and not for personal satisfaction. In addition, humanistic educators are opposed to objective tests because they test a student's ability to memorize and do not provide sufficient educational feedback to the teacher and student.
- 4) Humanistic educators believe that both feelings and knowledge are important to the learning process. Unlike traditional educators, humanistic teachers do not separate the cognitive and affective domains.
- **5**) Humanistic educators insist that schools need to provide students a comfortable environment so that they will feel secure to learn. Once students feel secure, learning becomes easier and more meaningful.

OBJECTIVES OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

Humanistic education is an approach to education based on the work of humanistic psychologists, most notably Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Carl Rogers has been called the Father of Humanistic Psychology and devoted much of his effort toward applying the results of his psychology research to person-centered teaching where empathy, caring about students, and genuineness on the part of the learning facilitator, were found to be the key traits of the most

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effective teachers. He edited a series of books dealing with Humanistic education in his "Studies of the Person Series," which included his popular book, Freedom to Learn and Learning to Feel - Feeling to Learn - Humanistic Education for the Whole Man, by Harold C. Lyon, Jr. In the 1970's the term "Humanistic Education" became less popular after conservative groups equated it with "Secular Humanism" and attacked the writings of Harold Lyon as being anti-Christian. That began a successful effort by Aspy, Lyon, Rogers, and others to re-label it "**Person-centered teaching**" replacing the term "Humanistic education." In a more general sense the term includes the work of other humanistic pedagogues, such as Rudolf Steiner, and Maria Montessori. All of these approaches seek to engage the whole person: the intellect, feeling life, social capacities, artistic and practical skills is all important focuses for growth and development. Important objectives include developing children's self-esteem, ability to set and achieve appropriate goals, and development toward full autonomy. Humanistic education's objectives are wider in their meaning. Being labeled as a person-centered teaching or based on human psychology, followings are the main objectives of humanistic Education:-

• Choice or Control

The humanistic approach a great deal on student choice and control over the course of their education. Students are encouraged to make choices that range from day-to-day activities to periodically setting future life goals. This allows for students to focus on a specific subject of interest for any amount of time they choose, within reason. Humanistic teachers believe it is important for students to be motivated and engaged in the material they are learning, and this happens when the topic is something the students need and wants to know.

• Felt Concern

Humanistic education tends to focus on the felt concerns and interests of the students intertwining with the intellect. It is believed that the overall mood and feeling of the students can either hinder or foster the process of learning.

• The Whole Person

Humanistic educators believe that both feelings and knowledge are important to the learning process. Unlike traditional educators, humanistic teachers do not separate the cognitive and affective domains. This aspect also relates to the curriculum in the sense that lessons and activities provided focus on various aspects of the student and not just rote memorization through note taking and lecturing.

• Self Evaluation

Humanistic educators believe that grades are irrelevant and that only self-evaluation is meaningful. Grading encourages students to work for a grade and not for intrinsic satisfaction. Humanistic educators disagree with routine testing because they teach students rote memorization as opposed to meaningful learning. They also believe testing doesn't provide sufficient educational feedback to the teacher.

• Teacher as a Facilitator

The tutor or lecturer tends to be more supportive than critical, more understanding than judgmental, more genuine than playing a role. Their job is to foster an engaging environment for the students and ask inquiry based questions that promote meaningful learning.

CONCLUSION

Humanistic education is supported by years of research and experience. One of the strongest reasons for supporting humanistic education is that, when done effectively, students learn! Considerable evidence shows that cooperative learning structures higher self-concepts, and the student's motivation and interest in learning all are related to greater academic achievement. Studies also show that humanistic education can lead to fewer discipline problems, less vandalism and reduced use of illegal drugs...Such research findings do not prove that particular humanistic education methods should be used in all situations. These results do show that humanistic education is a valid educational approach that deserves serious attention and respect. Humanistic education supports many goals of parents. What parent does not sometimes wish his or her children would listen more respectfully, choose less impulsively, calm down when overexcited, learn to be assertive without being aggressive, or make better use of their time? Many humanistic education methods teach students how to do these things. "Effectiveness training" teach students how to really listen to others, including parents. "Values clarification" teach students to "thoughtfully consider the consequences" of their decisions. Several humanistic education approaches teach students to relax and control their nervous energy and to plan and take more responsibility for their time. Humanistic educators often report that parents have told them how good communication was increased in their families as a result of some of the class activities and new skills the students learned.

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EII Bi -monthly Journal