

HUMAN RELATIONS AND THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL TEACHER

Dr. (Mrs.) Victoria B. Denga

Abstract

The teaching of human relations is a long neglected but indispensable aspect of the child's total development. The paper took a look at human relations education and the yawning gap its past neglect has caused in the life of school children. This continued slippage could lead to unforeseen and incalculable damage to the educational system. The paper apart, from lamenting the non availability of such courses in teacher education programmes, suggested possible areas in which such courses could be offered. It also suggested the process of going about it, based on the immense advantages derivable from such a course from literature review. The course is a sine qua non to all human transactions.

Introduction

Humanistic psychology, normally referred to as the "third force" by Maslow (1971) is generally viewed as being complementary to the first two forces in psychology which are the psychoanalytic and the behaviourist. Each of these analysis is known to have uniquely contributed in its own way to an understanding of people and their functioning. Nevertheless, no theoretical system as yet has managed to account fully for all the complexities in human species. Humanistic psychology evolved as an effort to transcend some of the perceived limitations of the first two approaches as it builds upon their backgrounds.

When the humanistic approach to education is used, educators try to understand people in terms of how they view themselves. Gazda and others (1973) classify them as people who:

- (a) are aware of themselves and their existence.
- (b) Achieve their uniquely human qualities through interpersonal contact.
- (c) Are capable of making choices which guide their behaviour.

Concepts which permeate humanistic psychology include love, intimacy, creativity, warmth and courage. All these, including individuals, their personal values and their sense of themselves are given attention. The positive potentialities test of humans are emphasised and they are approached from an optimistic frame of reference.

Based on the aforementioned, human relations can be defined as the "integration of people into a work situation in a way that motivates them to work together cooperatively and with economic, psychological and social satisfaction". (Davis, 1971).

Conventional versus humanistic education

Traditionally in the conventional schools the cognitive needs of students have been given noteworthy attention. In essence this means that the teacher may coerce a student to reach high level of cognitive achievement to the detriment of the student's total development. This was the case before the advent of the National Policy on Education and even after the inception of the policy not much has changed. By implication, this means that where teachers are primarily subject centered or where they place the intellectual needs of the student above all others, it can be costly to the child's development. The child will be left with a one-sided personality because the child may turn out to be an academic success but an affective failure. This has always been the bane of the Nigerian educational system. It is perhaps the greatest indictment of the contemporary western education.

In contrast however, in humanistic education, the goal is to help each student develop his or her positive potentialities and become the best human being each can i.e. fully integrated and fully functioning. Thus from the humanistic point of view, the way people learn is just as important as what they learn (process and product). However, the ultimate teaching goal of Humanistic Education according to Burns and Brooks (1975) is to "develop effective strategies and humane technology for educating inner strength" as profoundly as possible.

Brief Literature Review

Research investigations contributing to the development of a comprehensive human relations model for helping have dealt with a variety of student population. Trux and Tatum (1966) studied the effects of empathy, positive regard and genuineness communicated to preschool children

by their teachers. From their studies they concluded that positive regard and empathy were significantly related to positive changes in the children's adjustment to school, to teachers and to peers.

Griffin and Banks (1969) conducted systematic human relation training for teachers working with inner-city students. Following training, the teachers were unanimous in evaluating the learning experience as the best in their school years.

Hefele (1971) studied the effects upon deaf students' academic achievement of teachers who received systematic human relations training and teachers who did not receive such training. The result revealed that both the primary and secondary students of the trained teachers attained significantly higher levels of performance in language skills, reading skill, motivation for learning and general achievement than the students of the untrained teachers.

A study of student teachers by Berenson (1971) compared a human relations training group, a didactic training control group, a Hawthorne Effect control group, and a control group on their levels, of interpersonal functioning. Following training, the human relations training group demonstrated the highest levels of interpersonal functioning. Classroom supervisors rated this group significantly higher than the other groups in total competency, classroom management, understanding children, and understanding the learning process. In addition to this discovery this group of student teachers was significantly more indirect, (democratic) in their approach to motivation and control and used less extended patterns of direct influence. They also demonstrated greater use of positive reinforcement in relating to their students. In the final analysis however, the human relations training group evidenced clear superiority over the other groups on a total of thirty- one different indexes of teacher competency and pupil learning. This direct effect on teacher competency and effectiveness accentuates the need to incorporate training in human relations skills into the conventional curriculum for teacher education.

Childers (1973) compared systematic human relations training with student teachers who had not participated in such training. Childers found that those who had taken part in the training gave more indirect responses to students as opposed to direct responses. They also gave significantly less criticism to students and stimulated more student talk and involvement.

The Role of the School in Humanizing Education

The broad purpose of education, simply stated is to facilitate the integration of a student's total personality in such a way as to maximize knowledge in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviour for productive living. Unfortunately, Nigerian schools have failed in the teaching of affective behaviour. This is evidenced in the upsurge of student cheating in internal and external examinations.

The process of education is a process of change. A person who has learned something acts differently from the one who has not. When students are educated in the real sense of the word, they are helped to develop their own unique personalities by bringing their own ideas and feelings into communication with others. This process breaks down the barriers that produce isolation in a world where, for their own mental health and physical well being, they must learn to be a part of the human race.

As a result of the preceding discussion and in considering where to concentrate efforts at creating a healthier society, educational institutions more than any other institution stand out as fertile ground for millions. Therefore they are supposed to beef up their programmes towards the proper training of teachers in human relations programmes.

Such programmes should incorporate courses like the following according to Burns and Brooks (1975). The array of humanistic education courses include training in "achievement motivation, awareness and excitement, creative thinking, interpersonal sensitivity, affiliation, motivation, joy, self reliance, self esteem, self assessment, self renewal, self actualization, self understanding, strength training, development of moral reasoning, value clarification, body awareness, meditative processes and other aspects of ideal adult functioning". The sequence of learning in such programmes could be conceptualized under the following guidelines. They are, according to Burns and Books (1975):

1. Focusing attention on what is happening here and now by creating moderate novelty that is slightly different from what is expected.
2. Providing an intense, integrated experience of the desired new thoughts, actions and feelings.
3. Helping the person to make sense out of his experience by attempting to conceptualize happened.
4. Relating the experience to the person's values, goals, behaviour and relationships with others.
5. Stabilizing the new thought, action and feelings through practice.
6. Internalizing the changes.

When the school places equal emphasis on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas of learning, the school would have gone a long way in humanizing the individual that passes through it.

The Role of the teacher in humanizing education

Speaking about the indispensability of human relations in education, researchers have concluded that the single most vital factor in the system appears to be the teacher. Very few people would deny the importance of the influence a teacher may have on a student's behaviour and personality development. The unfortunate thing is that teacher education programmes have not always provided our teachers with the proper training in human relations that would help to ensure that the influence teachers have on a student's personality formation is indeed in the student's best interest. Considerable attention must be given to the relationship between teachers and students if schools are going to help develop fully functioning persons who together might constitute a healthier society.

In order to contribute to the total well-being of children, teachers must attend to as many of the students' basic needs as possible. But unfortunately Rogers (1961) noted that in the process of deciding what children should be learning, educators sometimes fail to ask children about their learning needs. He opined that:

- (i) significant learning is facilitated in a therapeutic relationship;
- (ii) that educators interested in significant learning might gain some worthwhile ideas from therapy.
- (iii) Significant learning occurs more readily in reference to situations perceived as problems and it therefore seems advisable that students should be allowed to be in actual contact with the problems of their existence i.e. problems they wish to solve.

The above observation takes into consideration the fact that many of our most difficult problems in living are interpersonal in nature. Therefore, it seems reasonable to help students develop the skills necessary for establishing and maintaining affective interpersonal relationship i. e. teachers and significant others must help students become socially competent.

As an example, the conceptual practice in teaching is for the teacher to use behavioural objectives in teaching. He can also create a threat free atmosphere through the use of expressive objectives which are operant and deductive in behaviour. This view stems from the fact that humanistic education courses aim for long-term internalization, not short-term gains in mastery. As an example, in group discussion method class the teacher can utilize human relations skills of:

- (i) making decisions,
- (ii) accepting responsibilities,
- (iii) learning from emotional mistakes,
- (iv) accepting merited criticisms,
- (v) working cooperatively in groups and learning new group techniques,
- (vi) Understanding one-self and others,
- (vii) Being humble in victory,
- (viii) Being open minded in times of defeat,

With the use of expressive objectives which promote humanistic education, the teacher can help the students identify a situation in which they would work, a problem with which they are to engage, but unlike instructional objectives, it does not specify what from that encounter, situation or

problems or task they are to learn. An expressive objective which is evocative in nature, provides both the teacher and the student with an invitation to explore, defer, or focus on issues that are of peculiar interest or important to the inquirer. With an expressive objective, what is desired is not homogeneity of response among students but diversity.

In conclusion, for a teacher to be effective in facilitating the total growth and development of students, at least three primary condition need to be met:

- (a) The teacher must be adequately prepared in the subject or course to be taught.
- (b) The teacher must have some general knowledge or learning theory and the technical skills to present the material in a learnable fashion.
- (c) The teacher must have a well developed repertory of interpersonal skills through which to establish, maintain and promote effective interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

In support of the above, Weignand (1971) writes, "How we interact, relate and transact with others, and the reciprocal impacts of this phenomenon forms the single most important aspect of our existence".

Writing about the indispensability of human relations education, Fisher 1968, opined that: The world each of us personally inhabits grows steadily and rapidly larger.

No man today has any choice but to be a part of a greater and more diverse community. To forego the opportunity to educate our children faithfully and imaginatively for this larger world will be to fail them tragically and inexcusably.

References

Berenson, D. H. (1971): The Effects of Systematic Human Relations Training Upon the Classroom Performance of Elementary School Teachers *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 4 No. 2. 70 — 85.

Burns R. W. and Brooks G. D. (1975): *Curriculum Design in a Changing Society*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. Educational Technology Publications Inc.

Childers, W. C. (1973): An evaluation of the effectiveness of a human relations training Model Using In-class Student Teacher Observation and Interaction Analysis Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Georgia.

David, F. (1971): Inside Intuition: *What we Know About Non Verbal Communication*. New York Signet.

Fisher, .I. H. (1968): The Inclusive School in Editorial Board of the Teachers Colleges Recorder and of the Harvard Education Review. Problems and Issues in Contemporary Education Glen view, III Scot Foresman.

Gazda, G.M. (1971) Systematic Human Relations Training in Teacher Preparation and Inservice Education *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 4. No. 2. 47 - 51.

Griffin, A. H. and Banks, G. (1969): Inner-city Workshop for Better Schools. *American International College Alumin Magazine*, Fall.

Hefele, T.J. (1971): The Effects of Systematic Human Relations Training Upon Students' Achievement". *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 4, No. 52-69.

Maslow, A. H. (1971): *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. New York: Viking Press..

Rogers, C.R. (1961): *On Becoming a Person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Truax, C. B and Tatum C. (1966): An Extension From the Effective Psychotherapeutic Model to Constructive Personality Change in pre school Children *Childhood, Education* 42, 451 - 462.

Weigand J. E. (Ed) (1971): *Developing Teacher Competencies* Englewood Cliffs. N. J. S Prentice Hall.