

CREATIVITY  
IN  
EDUCATION

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## Introduction

The system of education in this country is, next to religion, the last system to alter its methods in the course of progress and change in this society. (Jourard, 1968) The main reason for this phenomenon is that those who become teachers in the system are those that have made it through this same system and have been indoctrinated to accept the goals and values of the system. (Schabas, 1969, p.62) When these people teach, they impose these same values again upon their students, flunking those who do not fit into the system because they have different values and passing those who have accepted and strived for the goals of the system. (Coombs, 1962, p.12) These people often teach their students in the same way in which they were taught because of an unconscious, or even conscious, desire to take out the frustrations of their school years on their own students.

Whatever the cause of the static nature of our educational system, the fact is that we must change that system. The change must be initiated with the purpose of educating people to be more creative. The underlying assumption of this purpose is expressed by Calvin Taylor: "Psychologists are convinced that all people are, to some degree, potentially creative." (Taylor, 1964, p.178) In pointing out the necessity that man change his educational system to develop more creative people, Taylor says that "creativity, perhaps more than any

other human quality, is vital to the shaping of man's future."

(Taylor, 1964, p.156)

Before presenting ways in which the system must change, I would like to examine some of the ways in which creativity is hindered in our schools. Educators must understand what they are doing wrong before they can begin doing what is right.

### I. Inhibiting Factors

The system is inherently frustrating because it is based on ideas that are contrary to basic human drives and needs. A child does not naturally desire to sit in a classroom all day to be let out only at recess when he may "let off steam" that he has accumulated throughout the day. Hopefully, when he returns to class, he will be ready to study again. An example of the children's desire to go to school can be seen at three o'clock on Friday afternoon when they are "let out" to go home for the weekend. Children are naturally active and curious; the studious college or high school bookworm is one frightening product of the school's pressure on children to sit still.

It seems that the whole atmosphere of a school is pervaded by a facade of orderliness and control. The school is characterized by 25 children walking silently down the hall so that they will not "disturb" anybody, by teachers yelling at kids for chewing gum, or by a child being embarrassed in front of his class for not listening to the teacher's commands. (Shedd, 1968, p.32) When the teacher assumes the role of dictator in the classroom by telling all students that his word is final and that there is no possibility for disagreement, the

child soon learns that this game is called "get away with as much as you can." The child's imaginative powers are being used in the wrong way. No human being is infallible, as much as some teachers wish this were so.

This pervading feeling of being controlled, commanded and disciplined is one of many related facts of a school system that produces people that fit into society and do not question existing conditions of society; in fact, these people are tenaciously trying to maintain everything the way it is now. In a world in which man's very survival and existence depends on change, it is frightening the way education seems to be one of the systems of our society most guilty of trying (and succeeding) in perpetuating the production of people who think alike and conform to the norms of social and psychological behavior. (Moustakas, 1967, P.6) Our education system has the lofty ideals of enlightening minds and expanding the horizons of young people.

(Samples, 1967, p.57) The system says that it seeks to produce creative people. Because of man's innate curiosity and unique self, it seems that he would be much better off if he were allowed more freedom in choosing what he wants and does not want to learn. (Goodman, 1960, p.82) Creativity cannot be produced; it can only be encouraged.

Considering the fact that our country is based on the democratic process, it is amazing that our schools are run by those who have the most economic and political power rather than those who are truly concerned about the education of young people. Educational systems profess to the goal of educating people to become citizens able to participate responsibly in our society. But where, except in prisons, is the atmosphere more anti-democratic and pro-authoritarian than in

our schools? (Becker, 1967, p.49) The argument against allowing a more democratic atmosphere to prevail in schools is that children are too young to know what is good for them. (Coombs, 1962, p.6) So they must be coerced into "learning" certain subjects. One problem is that people do not basically trust themselves and their own desires so that it is impossible for them to trust the desires of others, especially children, who are so open and free in expressing themselves if they are allowed to do so. (Moustakas, 1967, p.6) If a child is not allowed to make decisions in regard to his own desires and needs, he feels helpless in his ability to control his environment. Eventually, he either gives up and willingly allows others to make decisions for him (Moustakas, 1968, p.2) or he revolts against the society actively or passively. (Moustakas, 1967, p.6)

An accompanying pattern (characteristic) of the overall atmosphere of authoritarianism prevailing in our schools is the method of deciding what courses students shall take and the system for evaluating the students who take the courses. The uniqueness of each student is conveniently forgotten so that students may prepare for junior high school, high school, and college courses, requirements, and tests. (Goodlad, 1968, p.30) It is not even considered a possibility that students may not want to take such courses because the students are "too young to know what is good for them." The problem, however, becomes obvious when college students cannot function when given a free assignment. (Moustakas, 1968, p.2) By forcing a student to take subjects he does not like, let alone the further degradation of flunking that student, the teacher educates the student not

to have a wider, more knowledgable view of mankind, but to hate that subject and to become more closed even to the idea of the acquisition of any knowledge. (Moustakas, 1967, p.130) His distrust and fear of teachers and those in authority increases and his true respect for them decreases. In order to gain recognition in the properly accepted manner, that is by getting good grades, (Moustakas, 1968, p.2) he is forced to cheat, and to cheat in any way possible becomes the name of this game. Many of his creative energies are channeled in this direction and simultaneously wasted. The system of grading contributes greatly to coercing students into "learning" exactly what teachers and administrators decide they should learn. In the face of the fact that an individual learns only when the fact or concept is related and important to the individual, (Moustakas, 1967, p.10) those who set up the curriculum say that some of it is bound to rub off. What a waste of time and energy on the part of students and teachers!

Education, especially in the lower grades, is largely socialization. (Moustakas, 1967, p. vii) The socialization process is mainly the teaching of conformity and insincerity under the pretense of teaching manners. (Goodman, 1960, p.24) As much talk as there is about maturation, the educational system does not wait till the child is ready to recognize and see the need for respecting the rights of others. The teachers believe that the child must be taught good manners, or else he will never see the need for being polite. Teachers do not inculcate honesty and politeness in children by insisting on "nice" manners; they encourage dishonesty and facades.

Teachers refuse to recognize the fact that children are basically selfish and that they will develop good, honest manners on their own when they see the need for others' companionship and help. (Neill, 1960, p.193) Children allowed to develop in such a manner do not feel the need to be polite to someone whom they do not like or respect. Why should they? Both parties recognize that the politeness of "How are you?" is usually a mask which people feel they need so that they can be accepted and liked by everyone. This insecurity is developed, not innate, and it is caused by the very fact that students are taught that only those in authority know what should be learned, not the individual. If everyone were self-reliant, (Becker, 1967, p.115) and had confidence in himself, there would be no need for being "nice" to those whom we care nothing about, except as they are needed to bolster our ego.

Torrance has listed several forces in our society that "inhibit creative growth." These forces are also present to a great extent in our schools: success-orientation, peer-orientation, sanctions against questioning and exploration, overemphasis or misplaced emphasis on sex roles, divergency equated with "abnormality", and the work-play dichotomy. (Torrance, 1964, p.98)

Reader, if you wish to explore more fully Torrance's descriptions of these inhibiting factors, please refer to his book, Creativity: Progress and Potential, 1964, p.98 I would like to elaborate more now on my own ideas about creativity.

## II. In the Direction of Creativity

In trying to solve this problem of educating students to become individuals who are creative and can think for themselves, two ideas seem to me to be of utmost importance.

First, we must accept Carl Rogers' idea that "the basic nature of the fully functioning individual is constructive and trustworthy." (Rogers, 1961, p.194) Rogers qualifies his statement by saying that "when we are able to free the individual from defensiveness, so that he is open to the wide range of his own needs, as well as the wide range of environmental and social demands, his reactions may be trusted to be positive, forward-moving, constructive. We do not need to ask who will socialize him, for one of his own deepest needs is for affiliation and communication with others. As he becomes more fully himself, he will become more realistically socialized."

(Rogers, 1961, p.194) Our educational system is based on the opposite idea: Each person is basically savage and untrustworthy; his drives and needs must be controlled so that he will not get out of hand and interfere with the rights of others. (Moustakas, 1967, p.7) It is exactly this control and manipulation of students that forces them into anti-social behavior. The circle is vicious because whenever a student acts in an anti-social manner, immediately it is assumed that more control or punishment is needed to "teach him a lesson." We must break up this circle if we are to move forward as a strong nation, for our biggest and best resource is the educated person. By assuming that students must be controlled and manipulated, we are not producing "educated" people, only "trained" people. (Jourard, 1968)

Another important concept in trying to solve the problem of how to educate people creatively is that of the self-actualizing relationship. It involves, basically, the idea of the individual first being true to himself; then, being true to others will come naturally. In being true to himself, the individual expresses all of his feelings, needs, and desires in a spontaneous manner. He becomes outwardly what he is inwardly. Thus, there is neither need nor room for phoniness or facades. If every individual strived to be himself in this self-actualizing way, the world would have fewer problems. Life would not merely be existence, but really being alive. Everyone would be much more sensitive to the needs and desires of others.

### III. The Fully Functioning Person and the Self-actualizing Relationship: Implications and Changes for Education

As applied to the teaching situation, the implications of the concepts of the fully functioning individual and self-actualizing relationships are many. The changes required to carry out these implications are equally numerous. (Coombs, 1962, p.74) I will explain here some of the concepts of teaching that must be changed in order that the schools may begin to educate fully functioning individuals capable of self-actualizing relationships.

If the concept of the self-actualizing relationship is to be applied to the teaching situation, the teacher-student relationship of most classrooms must change. (Coombs, 1962, p.74) Instead of the teacher playing the role of the dominant, all-knowing dictator of the class, he must assume the more difficult role of moderator, question-asker, and information-giver. The teacher who is a dictator in the

classroom seems to be trying to convince the kids and himself that he is all-knowing; he is trying to prove himself to be great because in actuality the more worthless or ignorant a person feels himself to be, the more such a person will try to exert his power, subtly or directly, over others. (Kelley, 1952, p.84) Such is the true picture of the dictating teacher. Conversely, the more secure and confident of his own abilities a teacher feels, the more he will allow and even encourage creative and individualistic responses from his students. The seemingly unapproachable high status of the teacher must be given up so that teaching can become what it professes it is: the process of educating students. The students are not educated unless they themselves are involved willingly, physically or mentally, in the process. (Moustakas, 1967, p.10) The students, by taking a greater role in the educational process, also learn proportionately more. What status is given up by the teacher is gained by the student in knowledge. The teacher must admit that he does not know the answer to every question; thereby he learns answers to many questions. Also, the students will realize that those in authority are not to be respected because of the fear that they arouse in students but because of the fact that they are human beings. Both teacher and student will discover that every person is basically a worthwhile person if only he is allowed the freedom to be himself.

One obvious way in which creativity is discouraged is through the practice of "motivating" students. Educators say and know that the most effective kind of motivation is intrinsic, not extrinsic. Yet, the most prevalent, and frequently the only, kind of motivation found

in schools is that of grades, Honor Rolls, and blue stars. Moustakas says that "Motivation is often used to trap attention and coerce effort, to persuade people to engage in projects which have no intrinsic worth." (Moustakas, 1967, p.129) By forcing a person to engage in such projects, teachers are forcing students to accept values other than the students' own. In Moustakas' words, adjustment is "an external means of influencing which leads to inauthentic, conformist living." (Moustakas, 1967, p.129) It certainly does not promote a "positive assertion of the self." (Moustakas, 1967, p.129) The student, by giving up his own values, is impaired in his "creativity and his will to explore and actualize." (Moustakas, 1967, p.5) According to Moustakas "the creative life is always based on self-values, not on the values of the system." (Moustakas, 1967, p.133)

Thus, if teachers find it necessary to motivate students extrinsically, either the teacher is poor or the students should not be taking the course because it is of no interest or value to them. Motivation should not be a concern of teachers because, if it is a concern, it immediately becomes extrinsic motivation; there is no necessity to motivate intrinsically because either one is motivated intrinsically or one is not.

Along with extrinsic motivation, Moustakas lists the following three "methods or attitudes of modern living which contribute to the deterioration of uniqueness and individuality:" (Moustakas, 1967, p.130) analysis, diagnosis, and evaluation. Unfortunately, one of the institutions of our society which makes great use of these methods is the educational system. In analyzing an event or person, one has to work

in the past to find causes. This process does not recognize that reality is "contained in the immediate experiences of the person and in his unfolding life." (Moustakas, 1967, p.130) By trying to diagnose and evaluate a person, one can "form an insightful picture," but one can never form the whole picture because man is made up of so many parts. To use Moustakas' words, "Man is not bounded by a fence or frame." (Moustakas, 1967, p.130) Too often a student who is considered to be a "C" person begins to consider himself a "C" person and acts according to that perception.

The implication of this idea is that tests should not be used as devices for categorizing students. The more categorization of students there is in schools, the less opportunity students will have for developing "well-rounded" lives by encountering people of different abilities and backgrounds. Also, the less of a total, unique person the student will feel himself to be because of the many ways in which he has been categorized and placed in groups of people with the "same" abilities and backgrounds. Teachers should encourage, rather than stifle, differences.

#### IV. Characteristics of the Creative Person and Implications for Education

With regard to the order and the specific ideas which I have decided to discuss at this point, Kelley describes my feelings: "perhaps one cannot hope to establish a completely logical order of ideas when all are interdependent, and when there is need to tell them all at once." (Kelley, 1952, p.55) Nevertheless, I will try to explain the idea that the self-actualizing relationship, which I believe is necessary to maintain between teacher and student, consists primarily of

creativity. Creativity can be described in many ways. I will name a few which are relevant in their application to, and use in, education. They are important because they show how much we need to change our present methods of teaching.

According to Ernest Becker, if we were to develop a "comprehensive theory of the limitations of self-reliance, ... we would answer the problem of education in a democracy." (Becker, 1967, p.229) It seems that if we encourage the "self-creation of meaning" (Becker, 1967,p.229) and discourage anything that "hinders self-reliance" (Becker, 1967, p.230) that creativity in individuals will be greatly enhanced. Concerning the self-creation of meaning, Philip Phenix writes: "Since the object of general education is to lead to the fulfillment of human life through the enlargement and deepening of meaning, the modern curriculum should be designed with particular attention to these sources of meaninglessness in contemporary life." (Becker, 1967,p.230) A comparable concept is found in the writing of Moustakas when he refers to the creative life as being based on self-values, rather than those of the system. (Moustakas, 1967, p.133) The teacher, then, should encourage her students to find their own values rather than accepting those of authorities or of the system. Self-values lead to self-reliance, a prerequisite for creativity.

Another indication of creativity can be found in the student who disagrees with the teacher. (Mustakas, 1967, p.46) Moustakas says that "Resistance to external pressure permits a person to maintain self-consistency. It is a healthy response, indicating that the will of the individual is still intact." (Mustakas, 1967, p.5) Such a student

in the classroom would normally be considered disruptive and a trouble-maker. If education is to be what it professes to be, it must allow and encourage such responses from students. Rogers says that the fully functioning person is not necessarily "adjusted to his culture; (Rogers, 1961, p.193) I would venture to say that he is usually not "adjusted" to his culture. Of course, adjustment here is based upon others' point of view, not the person who is, or is not, "adjusted." Thus, such a person may consider himself to be perfectly "adjusted" and happy, but he is not considered to be "adjusted" by others around him. (I have interpreted the fully functioning person of Carl Rogers and the actualizing person of Everett Shostrom and Clark Moustakas to mean the same thing.) According to Rogers, the fully functioned person "would be the type of person from whom creative products and creative living emerge. . . He would most certainly not be a conformist." (Rogers, 1961, p.193) Instead of assuming pessimistically that the disruptive student is stupid or a trouble-maker, teachers should assume optimistically (and more realistically) that such a student is expressing himself in a healthy manner, without intent to harm anyone or anything. In referring to the "dissidents" on campuses, an editor of a typical Mid-western newspaper cautioned that we must "separate the urge to create from the impulse to disrupt." (Bartlett, 1969) I agree with him, but I think it is time that we slant our views in favor of the "dissidents" rather than against them. If we do not, Moustakas warns that we will continue producing people who "assume the expectations, convictions, and values of others, ceasing to be real selves and wearing the masks of convention and propriety." (Moustakas, 1967, p.6)

According to Moustakas, dishonesty in any form, in oneself or others, is a form of manipulation or control, and "manipulation is responsible for much of the human misery, grief, and suffering in the world." (Moustakas, 1967, p.78) Honesty to oneself is necessary for finding one's identity and for communicating in a meaningful way with others. It is an important characteristic of the creative individual since it is the only way in which such an individual can express himself. "Every form of dishonesty is immoral and is a powerful deterrent to authentic growth and to the development of the real self." (Moustakas, 1967, p.78) When an individual is honest, one usually thinks of him as expressing his feelings, attitudes, and beliefs rather than his observations of the weather or his response to an objective question on a test. Both of these expressions involve being honest, but the former involves more courage than the latter. If teachers are to encourage honesty, they must be open to many possibilities for responses. When teachers reject responses from students, they are promoting insecurity and lack of confidence in a child. Thus, the student becomes reluctant to express his true feelings for fear of being ridiculed or rejected. This reluctance is very dangerous since it takes much sympathy and understanding to alleviate the situation and any further rejection, especially of sensitive students, creates even more fear to express their feelings. Moustakas warns that the situation is dangerous because "rejection of significant dimensions of the self are experienced by the person as the rejection of the entire self, even though the criticizer or rejector believes he is separating the individual from his behavior and condemning only the behavior." (Moustakas, 1967, p.7)

In the 1962 Yearbook of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Chairman, Arthur W. Coombs, states that the perceptual view of learning "provides the basis for the descriptions these four authors (Coombs, Kelley, Maslow and Rogers) give to the truly adequate personality." (Coombs, 1962, p.74) The basic principles of this approach or frame of reference is "fraught with significant implications for educational practice:

1. Behaving and learning are products of perceiving.
2. Behavior exists in and can, therefore, be dealt within the present.
3. All people everywhere have a basic drive toward health and actualization.
4. Much of a person's behavior is the result of his conception of himself." (Coombs, 1962, p.67)

Coombs believes that "if the perceptual view of learning and growth is accepted, the classroom will need to deal much more adequately than heretofore with feelings, attitudes, convictions, beliefs, doubts, fears, loves, hates, and values." (Coombs, 1962, p.74) Once the student realizes that the teacher will not reject him as a person because of an idea of his, the student will gain more of the self-confidence and self-reliance needed for him to become a self-actualizing person.

Another characteristic of the creative person necessitates greater acceptance of students' ideas on the part of the teacher. This characteristic is the concept of "intuitive" as opposed to "logical" thinking. These two basic kinds of thought are potentially strong in each of us, but society accepts only the logical mode of thought as being valid. When a person thinks intuitively, he is being "irrational" or "emotional", or he is thinking like a woman. According to a writer in the Saturday Review, "Non-creative people, when solving problems and patterning their world, draw heavily upon conscious or substantive modes of thought. Creative people, on the other hand, are dependent

upon their use of the preconscious or intuitive." (Samples, 1967, p.57) Thus the schools, professing to the goal of educating free individuals, but being accurate in their reflection of society, discourage creativity by not accepting the intuitive mode of thought as being valid in the solving of problems. If schools continue to claim "to be attendant to developing the individual to lead a better life" (Samples, 1967, p.57) and to recognize that "the leisure segment of our lives is increasing" (Samples, 1967, p.57) then they must accept the intuitive form of thought as being valid and even necessary for man's well-being.

In view of the fact that creativity plays such a large part in the development of a fully functioning person, I have tried to show how we must change our present system of education if we are to produce fully functioning people. There is scientific evidence that a potential for creativity is present in all people, (Taylor, 1964, p.178) and that the extent to which this potential is developed is determined not entirely by the person, but is controlled to a large extent by the society or environment to which the person belongs. (Torrance, 1965, p.264) We must allow and encourage creativeness in students.

#### V. Characteristics of a Fully Functioning Person and Implications for Education

In regard to the discussion of the characteristics of the fully functioning person, Arthur Coombs has stated that "we need a new definition of the supremely healthy personality - not in terms of averages, but in terms of ultimates." (Coombs, 1962, p.2) The practice of defining people in relation to what is normal or socially accepted

should be and is being discarded. The fully functioning individual cannot be classified according to predetermined standards because he is a unique person who expresses himself in unique ways. Jourard maintains that this topic is the major concern of humanistic psychology, and that the problem can best be stated by asking, "What is man at his best?" (Jourard, 1968)

According to Rogers, there are three basic characteristics of the life of a fully functioning person which "enable a person psychologically to move in any direction:"

1. increasing openness to experience
2. ability to live fully each moment (existentially)
3. increasing trust in his own organism (Rogers, 1961, p.193)

The first of these characteristics implies that the teacher must create an atmosphere in the classroom that is respectful of new ideas so that students will not be afraid to express themselves. Only when they feel that their ideas will be accepted, will the students speak up; and only when new ideas are brought up, will new experiences be possible.

According to Kelley, the teacher can help the students to know what it means to "live fully each moment" by presenting knowledge as "something to be lived" rather than something that is "absolute and existing before learning can begin." (Kelley, 1947, p.73) If students are taught that knowledge is not absolute and that we learn only what we perceive to be valuable to our purposes, (Kelley, 1947, p.73) then maybe people will come to realize that life is meant to be lived in the present, not the past or future.

To me the key concept that I am trying to convey is that respect for the student and his ideas is essential in the education of that student. If the student perceives (and he readily will) that the teacher has no respect for his ideas, he begins to think that he is not worthy of respect as a person; he begins to distrust the validity of his own ideas. I believe that this lack of respect for students on the part of teachers and other authorities is one of the main reasons for the psychological, academic, and social problems of many adults. Torrance says that the most important concept in discussing the rewarding of creative thinking is respect - "respect for the questions and ideas of the child, respect for his right to initiate his own learning effort, and respect for his right to reject, after serious consideration, the adult's ideas in favor of his own." (Torrance, 1965, p.252)

#### Conclusion

I have tried to show the relationship between creativity and the fully functioning person who is capable of a self-actualizing relationship. Creativity is a necessary component of such a relationship. Thus, if our schools are to be true to their proposed goals of producing fully functioning individuals, and if our nation is to produce the creative people it needs to survive, then our educational system must change so that these goals can be reached. We must start believing in the inherent goodness and worth of individuals and their ability to make the right decisions for themselves and others involved.

In order to produce a fully functioning, creative individual,

it seems to me that the teacher must strive to attain the level of a self-actualizing relationship with the student. To achieve this relationship, it will be necessary for teachers to allow their students to express feelings and ideas as long as the rights of others are not infringed upon. Also, teachers must express their feelings and ideas freely so that teachers and students can understand each other. It will be necessary for both students and teachers to respect their own ideas; the respect of others' ideas will naturally follow.

In striving to achieve a relationship with their students, that is self-actualizing, teachers must become active participants in the learning process, not dictators and commanders. The atmosphere of the school and classroom must be democratic and free, not authoritarian and confined.

A more satisfactory method of evaluating students must be initiated. Such a method must undoubtedly include more students' evaluation of themselves and teachers. It seems to me that the best judge of the effectiveness of the teacher is the student. There should be less teacher evaluation of students and more student evaluation of teachers so that ineffective teachers may be discovered and relieved of their jobs.

Once the concept of student evaluation of themselves and teachers is accepted, it will be easy for educators to recognize the need for student goals, interests, and values to replace those goals which are pre-determined and set up by administrators. The "troublemaker" in the class will no longer be considered as such, but he will be looked

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