perceive the relation of the curriculum to life out of school? If so it would seem to follow that one value to which teachers should subscribe is the importance of helping learners analyze their problems so thoroughly that the values they acquire are defensible. When democracy is regarded as more than a form of government, when it is held to be a way of life, its essence is found in the need for every human being to participate in the formulation of values and ends that regulate his life and conduct. Thus, the process in which teachers engage in working out a philosophy to help them meet the emerging needs of the future is the same process in which students should engage in order to prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

EARL C. KELLEY

The Road We Must Take

"Research in learning tells us that the teaching-learning process has to be human-centered. . . . This calls for not just a little fixing of our educational method, but in many cases a complete change of direction."

AS WE LOOK upon the social scene today, we see the human race beset by grave problems and dangers. We do not need to name them here, for they are well known. It is altogether apparent, however, that if any of us are to survive we must have better, more social, and more enlightened people. We have been too free with the words "must," "should," "imperative," in the past. We ought to have saved them for now. Before these words are finished, we may, in our inadequacy, have resorted to race suicide as a solution to all our vexations.

Also, as we look, we see our great school system, enormous in size, reaching to all of the people. It is perhaps man's greatest social experiment. Its purpose is to produce a people who are social and enlightened so that they can live together in peace and mutual aid. This great school system has been in existence long enough so that it should have produced this enlightenment by now. That it has not done so is the cause of our alarm.

We must recognize the possibility that in view of this fact, the school may have been running on the wrong track, carrying us all in the wrong direction. This is in the direction of authoritarianism, materialism, and their resulting isolation. This direction tends to produce people who lack skill in or capacity for mutual aid.

We are most fortunate, however, to have this great institution with its potential for human betterment. If we did not have it, we would indeed have cause for despair. We are fortunate, too, to have the findings of research into the nature of human growth and development, so that we can see a more promising path for our education to take. Having the school and scientific knowledge of the way in which growth and improvement
take place, our task becomes that of changing the direction of our education in accordance with our knowledge.

We know now, from research, that each human being is unique. We have accepted this fact in a superficial way for a long time, but we have only recently come to know how deeply and completely it is true. Because we have held in the past that uniqueness was a nuisance to be overcome, we have attempted to reduce it and to produce uniformity. Nature has gone to an enormous amount of trouble to produce unique individuals, while the schools, on their wrong track, have tried to repeal it.

Many things follow from the fact of uniqueness. The individual has his own set of experiences, unlike any other. His purposes are his alone. These are built into structure, and he can learn only in relation to them. His learning, then, is different from that of any other. The set lesson, with the predetermined outcome, is thus seen to be an impossibility. Whatever he learns, it will not be the same learning as that of his seat-mate, but something distinctly his own. How much of our teaching energy has gone into trying the impossible, to get all our learners to learn the same thing!

Since all learning takes place in relation to each individual’s unique set of experiences and purposes, we can see that each builds his own universe, of which he is the center. There are, of course, many similarities between his universe and those of his colleagues, but no two of them are the same. These similarities are valuable, because they give us our basis for working together. The differences are equally valuable, because they are the basis for the unique worth of the individual. They are also added basis for working together, since if differences did not exist, no one would have any contribution to make to anyone else. We could not think together if we had all learned the same things.

We can see from this that each human being knows some things that nobody else in the whole world knows, because nobody else has had his unique experience to learn with. He can do some things nobody else can do. Perhaps these are only potentialities, since he may never be in a situation where these unique knowings and capacities can be used. They are there, however, as potentialities, and situations can be created where they can come forth.

It is because each human being is unique, and has something no one else has, that he is precious—that he has great worth. It is the reason why each human is entitled to human dignity and respect. It is what John Donne meant when he wrote, “And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.” For whenever a human being is diminished or lost the whole of mankind suffers a loss. Something is gone which cannot be replaced. These words are not new, but they take on new meaning in the light of recent research on the nature of learning.

This is precisely the point on which the world is divided. Democracy holds that the individual is of unique worth. The totalitarians hold that the individual matters not at all. It is good to have research re-affirm the democratic ideal. It is not enough for us merely to say that we hold one opinion, they another. Man does not possess worth merely because Jefferson and many others have said so. Science says that man has worth because nobody else has what he has. If we must
live in a divided world, it is good to have support from science in our own position and beliefs. Let us hope that our schools, having gotten on the wrong track, do not unwittingly work for the wrong side.

It is of course not possible in this space to do justice to the great body of research now available to us in human growth and learning. I have selected only one aspect of it, although I believe it to be a central one. I believe, however, that what has gone before is not disputed by anyone who is familiar with the research. It is disputed by many, as can be seen by glancing at almost any newspaper or magazine. But it is always denied by someone who has not gone to the trouble to familiarize himself with what is now known concerning that which he so volubly discusses. In the remaining space, let us cite a few of the implications of this facet of research.

A Human-Centered Schooling

Since each learner is unique and learns in relation to his uniqueness, we will need to change our schools in the next decade so that they will be human-centered instead of "lesson"-centered. This constitutes a complete change of direction. The individual human being, his growth and adequacy will become the goal of the teaching-learning process. We will think of adequacy in terms of his concept of self and his capacity to relate to others, rather than his ability to give back the lessons we have tried to teach. This constitutes a revolution in our affairs.

Many teachers now say that they minister to the needs of the child, and they do it by making him learn the lessons they have set out for him, because the teacher knows what is good for him. What they really value most, however, is the lesson, not the learner. They are hurt when the learner does violence to the subject matter, which is what they really cherish. Caring most for that which lies outside the human is the basis for all materialism, and the teacher who cares more for the lesson than for the learner is like in principle to those whose values lie in things, rather than people. Being more concerned about things than people brings about many evils. Such a person must become authoritarian, for example, for his unique learners will not all accept his values.

Changing what we really care about calls for a new set of standards and values. We cannot measure achievement in the old terms after we have changed our goals. When we care most about humans, we will ask ourselves about the learner's development as a human, rather than asking the learner how much he knows of our lessons. Evaluation will be concerned with self and others, as cooperating units in the human family.

Critics of human-centered education often accuse us of having no standards. This is equivalent to saying that we do not care about anything. Everybody has standards, and these standards are in terms of values held. If we care most about people, we evaluate in terms of people. What the critics should accuse us of is not having their standards. While they want us to value items of subject matter, we must care about human growth, development, an improved self-concept and the courage this gives, adequacy in human relations, skill in giving to others toward commonly accepted goals. This is the new track in values, standards, and evaluation.

We will involve the learner in what is to be learned, and this we will do on all levels. We must do this, if we take into account the uniqueness of each individual. We will realize that the teacher
cannot possibly know what each learner can learn, and we will resort to the simplest solution, that of consulting the learner about it. Thus we will abandon the concept of the same lesson for all, which has caused so much frustration. Methods of teacher-learner planning are already well established, so that those who want to begin consultation with the learner as to what is to be learned can profit by much pioneering already done. Involvement in what is to be done is the very beginning of any enterprise, central to its success. It is impractical, not to say immoral, for a roomful of people to start a year’s undertaking when only one person knows what is to take place or has given consent to it.

We will encourage activities which bring people together, giving them opportunities to learn from each other. This will indeed be a “turn-around” from the track we now travel. Today we value learners who have nothing to do with others, and work in isolation. In many of our schools one of the worst things a learner can do is to give to or receive from another human being. We often deliberately pit people against each other, so that they must withhold from others and build their walls of isolation more solidly. This is mis-education in its most serious form, for it deprives the human organism of other people, out of which his own powers are built.

Man is distinguished from other living things by the development of his psychological self, his mind. This can only be developed in association with other humans. No one ever developed into anything worthy of being called human without other humans. When we isolate learners from their fellows, or pit them against each other, we deprive them of the very stuff out of which their human-ness must be built.

This is the most cooperative society in the history of mankind. We have grown so interdependent that there is scarcely anything one can do without the assistance and cooperation of many people. There was a time when man raised or found his own food, made his own clothing and shelter. But he lived very poorly, and we have become so specialized that we cannot do this any longer, nor would we be willing to tolerate the standard of living which isolation can produce. We are indeed on the wrong track when we educate learners in isolation and competition. When we do this we do a disservice to the learner in mis-educating him for the life he must lead whether he wants to or not. Skill in working with others is a requirement for survival.

Research in learning, then, tells us that the teaching-learning process has to be human-centered, because of the way a human is constructed, and the manner in which he perceives. This calls for not just a little fixing of our educational method, but in many cases a complete change in direction. The decade posed by some writers is not long enough for this change to take place, but perhaps it can be done in what remains of this century.

Attitudes, beliefs, and habits change slowly, especially when they call for new ways of doing one’s major work.

Neither, however, is the vision of a human-centered educational system an opium pipe dream. Much progress has already been made. There are many classrooms today where the learner is more important than any lesson. We have many teachers who have already humanized their methods, and sometimes this has called for real heroism. If we keep our eyes on the goal, realizing that changes in human beings take time, the next decade should make quite a difference.