

HELPING THE PROSPECTIVE TEACHER BECOME

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WHAT would a person be like if he had achieved a high degree of self-actualization? How does one come to be a fully functioning, self-actualized person? What are the components of a healthy personality? How can education assume the responsibility for the development of this kind of person? These are the concerns of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development as reflected in the recent publication: *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming: A New Focus for Education*.¹

From the studies and description of the self-actualized personality reported in this volume, the following composite picture emerges: he is a person with a positive view of self; is able to accept his self and the self of others; is greatly open to experience; recognizes life as a fluid process; develops and holds human values; acts spontaneously and creatively; and has available a rich perceptual field.

The development of a fully functioning individual presents a real challenge to teacher education. To meet this challenge the college of education will need to provide content and method which will help the teacher understand the child and become sensitive to him.²

During the year 1964-65 I was responsible for teaching a course entitled "The School Age Child"; a practicum course which required Caucasian college students from middle class backgrounds to work with Negro children from Detroit's inner city, low income families. The ultimate objective of the course was to help each student enhance his own process of becoming. As he worked with the school age children, in order to understand their personal development, he had to be aware of his own feelings, perceptions and experiences. Each student was involved in a weekly supervisory conference, an intensive laboratory experience and a two hour seminar meeting.

¹ Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming: A New Focus for Education*. Yearbook 1962. Arthur W. Combs, editor. Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1962.

² Abraham Maslow. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Princeton, N. J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962.

The aim of the seminar meeting was to afford the student the opportunity to explore literature which would stimulate thinking and self-reflection and encourage sensitivity toward and acceptance of others. Living with others, in co-operation, trust, human concern and helpfulness helped to foster the basic values of the course.

The seminar meetings were concerned with the following themes: (a) the importance of personality; (b) factors in perceiving, behaving and becoming; (c) attitudes of leaders which hamper or facilitate meetings with children; (d) procedures and processes which encourage group solidarity; (e) the use of activity as a means of helping children develop through further self-actualizing experiences; (f) the value of activity for itself; (g) the development of self awareness; and (h) special activities which the students might develop with their groups.

As the themes relating to the development of self awareness and acceptance of others were discussed, the students expressed great anxiety. Taking the cue from the expressed anxiety, the instructor arranged for a personal presentation by Clark Moustakas on self-awareness.³ It was the instructor's hope that this would allay if not eliminate the fears and pave the way for more genuine, fitting perceptions of the child from the low income, minority family. An additional experience to help the student with his development of self-awareness was the reading and self-involved reporting on Harry Overstreet's *The Mature Mind*.

To help the student with his acceptance of others, the instructor presented the paper, "Alienation, Education and Existential Life,"⁴ which enabled the student to see clearly the value of acceptance of others in the process of becoming. Dr. Moustakas points out in this paper that when an individual is not accepted and valued for himself, he quickly begins to move away from his self and thus desensitization and alienation result.

The laboratory experiences afforded the student the opportunity to meet regularly with school-age children in after-school groups. Each student was assigned a group and was allowed the freedom to meet the group in any manner and with any activity he desired.

Responding to a student request, the instructor presented a demonstration which represented one way in which creativity and personal development might be initiated through group activities. One of the students reported that the demonstration enabled her to see that what, from her past experiences, she had regarded as problems which required adult intervention, could be constructively resolved by the children themselves, if the leader had faith and patience in the process. The observation was discussed fully with the entire group. The instructor answered the various questions raised by the different students. The instructor continued to emphasize that this was her way of dealing with the group and that there were many other ways of achieving individual growth and group spirit.

Related to the laboratory experience was the writing of weekly reports. These

³ Clark Moustakas. *The Alive and Growing Teacher*. New York: Philosophical Library. 1962.

⁴ Clark Moustakas. "Alienation, Education and Existential Life." To be published in *Essays in Humanistic Psychology*. Edited by Henry Winthrop.

reports revealed the development of the process of self-realization and self-actualization. It was possible to note the struggles with which the student was confronted in his process of becoming. As the student concerned himself with the growth and development of his group, he, too, was involved in a program of personal growth.

The instructor felt that as the student met his group from week to week, he constantly explored the nature of his experience and thereby became more and more aware of his self. He created a non-judgmental atmosphere in which each child was valued as a person and he encouraged each child to become more fully himself. In so doing, he too continued *to be* and *to become* more fully *himself*.

The instructor viewed the supervisory conference as the most valuable vehicle available to assist the student in the process of becoming.⁵ She felt that this weekly meeting in a one-to-one relationship provided her the opportunity to deepen her understanding of the student's needs in the particular situation and it provided the student an opportunity to explore the creative use of his self as he worked with the children in his group.

Although the conference was loosely structured around the student's weekly report, this did not limit the development of the conference. The student was not only free but was encouraged to raise any concerns which he felt. The instructor sometimes waited and took cues from the student; other times the instructor initiated discussion through a stimulating question. The growth and development of the student was of utmost importance to the instructor: she was very careful, therefore, to create a climate in which there was a sense of freedom and relaxation. The instructor felt that when she was relaxed and free to listen and observe, she was able to discover that the student was expressing his specific needs for help.

The instructor feels that the organization and administration of the course, "The School Age Child," was one way of accepting the great challenge to teacher education. The various opportunities provided through the seminar meetings, the laboratory experiences and the supervisory conferences enabled the student to see himself as both a learner and a leader. The student was constantly encouraged to work actively toward a positive view of self; to accept his self and the self of others; to remain open to his experiences; to question the implicit; to exercise independence in thought and action and to act spontaneously and creatively. The instructor was careful to see that she maintained the kind of climate which supported the student as he continued to grow and experience the joy of becoming a more adequate person. ❧

⁵ Margaret Williamson. *Supervision—New Patterns and Processes*. New York: Association Press, 1961.



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