Love as a Basis for Organizing Curriculum

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CONSIDER the question, "... what ... can be done with love in the redeveloped curriculum?" 1 Presented here is the thesis that aspects of love are basic to the central organizing foci for curriculum; love is basic to the learning that takes place to fill human needs. That is to say, learning experiences, in that they fulfill human needs, are structured by love.

Within the paragraphs that follow are references from several disciplines on the place of love in human experience. The references cite several psychiatrists, an anthropologist, a social psychologist, an educator, a religious leader, and a statesman. These statements trace out in line-of-thought the place of love in various levels of human experience. These statements in turn are related to a construct of educational objectives.

Aspects of love in the physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual levels of human experience are proposed as the central organizing foci for developing curriculum. Deleted from consideration in this presentation are: (a) the validation of those values named; (b) the body of data supporting the formulation of objectives as stated; (c) definition of the processes by which the proposed bases for learning relate to the classes of objectives presented; and (d) the body of theory substantiating the assumptions that are made.

The identifiable foci around which the various parts of curriculum may be organized are assumed to be within the nature of man. Some of these assumptions are the following:

1. Bases for curriculum predicate that behavior is acquired through experience. Curriculum design structures experiences for predetermined learnings.

2. Bases for curriculum are founded upon needs for learning. Curriculum design structures learning for need fulfillment.

3. Bases for curriculum are derived from learning needs. Curriculum design is a construct of needs valued by learning.

4. Bases for curriculum are value judgments. Curriculum design states values behaviorally.

5. Bases for curriculum should account for learning in toto. Curriculum design should state factors of learning for the whole person.

6. Bases for curriculum are the basic framework for learning. Curriculum design orders that framework into a comprehensible pattern for learning.

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1 Alexander Frazier, "Individualized Instruction." Educational Leadership 25(7): 622; April 1968.
A Basic Part of Humanness

According to Maslow, love is a basic part of humanness; "The need for love characterizes every human being that is born." 2 Love exists as an essential core in humanness and must be allowed to express itself as love, without which no psychological health is possible. 3

The same interpretation of human behavior is shared by Montagu. He is quoted at length because of the unusual force with which he has written:

... one's needs are satisfied by persons whom one loves.

What man wants is that positive freedom which follows the pattern of his life as an infant within the family, dependent security, the feeling that one is part of a group, accepted, wanted, loved, and loving.

... we know that the organism is born with an innate need for love, with a need to respond to love. Mere satisfaction of basic needs is not enough. Needs must be satisfied in a particular manner, in a manner which is emotionally as well as physically satisfying.

It is in the organism's ever present urge to feel secure that social life has its roots, and the only way in which this need can be satisfied is by love. It is a discovery of the greatest possible significance for mankind that the ethical conception of love independently arrived at by almost all existing peoples is no mere creation of man but is grounded in the biological structure of man as a functioning organism. The implications of this discovery are of the very greatest importance, for it means that man's organic potentialities are so organized as to demand but one kind of satisfaction, a satisfaction which ministers to man's need for love, which registers love, which is given in terms of love, a satisfaction which is defined by one word — security.

This is what the person seeks all his life, and society, culture, and man's institutions, however inefficient some of them may be, all exist to secure that one fundamental satisfaction. The emotional need for love is as definite and compelling as the need for food. The basic needs of man must be satisfied in order that he may function satisfactorily on the social plane, the most fundamental of the basic needs must be satisfied in an emotionally adequate manner for personal security or equilibrium. 4

While anthropologist Montagu has written from a breadth of contact with world cultures, Blanton has written from the depth of a psychoanalytic perception of human experience:

For more than forty years I have sat in my office and listened while people of all ages and classes told me of their hopes and fears. ... As I look back over the long, full years, one truth emerges clearly on my mind — the universal need for love. 5

From the perspective of social psychology, Fromm has conducted a historical analysis of societies. He states:

The deepest need of man ... is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. 6

Fromm gives as man's most basic need that of uniting himself with others into social units. He goes on to state that, "Love is union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality." 7 According to Fromm, love makes possible both the socialization of man and the fulfillment of individual capabilities. This, he states, is possible through each individual man's capacity to love in care, respect, responsibility, and in knowledge. 8 The dual role given to love as defined by Fromm is "... to have faith in the possibility of love as a social and not only exceptional-individual phenomena ... a rational faith based on the insight into the very nature of man." 9

2 Ibid., p. 36.
That man is loving as well as thinking by nature is acknowledged by Johnson. 10 Jung gives yet another, though still central, role to love in human behavior. He is quoted at length to preserve the differences that are unique to Jung's particular interpretation, for love is variously defined and used by the authors referred to in this article.

Eros (love) is a kosmogonos, a creator and father-mother of all higher consciousness. I sometimes feel that Paul's words, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love," might well be the first conditions of all cognition and the quintessence of divinity itself. Whatever the learned interpretation may be of the sentence "God is love," the words affirm the complexio oppositorum of the Godhead. In my medical experience as well as in my own life I have again and again been faced with the mystery of love, and have never been able to explain what it is. 11

Although a complete understanding of the overall concept may have escaped Jung, even with his lifelong experience in studying human behavior, this does not keep the role and value of love from being perceived within many human needs. While Jung attributes a divine quality to the nature of love in relation to human behavior, love, as defined by religious teachers, and as also defined by Fromm, is for the individual and his relationships with others. One among many examples of this point of view is:

The duty of the teacher is that of guide—the guide of ever-growing humanity. Unerring guidance—what is it but Love intrinsic? Love is the eternal teacher; and education is by Love, is basic in the reorganization of society. 12

That love is an organizing focus for coherent behavior is reflected through the diary of Dag Hammarskjöld as he wrote the following poem:

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The moon was caught in the branches
Bound by its vow,
My heart was heavy.

Naked against the night
The trees slept, "Nevertheless,
Not as I will..."

The burden remained mine:
They could not hear my call,
And all was silence.

Soon, now the torches, the kiss:
Soon the gray of dawn
In the Judgement Hall.

What will their love help there?
There, the question is only
If I love them.13

As a public figure in international law, Hammarskjöld had a little known, deep religious faith founded on love. This gave him the personal strength and the power of commitment to public service to face world problems and the pressures of national interests.

That love can hold and motivate individuals as well as social organizations, that love is the organizing focus for two major world religions (Judaism and Christianity) that have lived in millions of lives for several centuries in several countries, gives validity to the educational value of love.

The foregoing references to love may be summarized as stating that love is:

1. The physical basis for life
2. The basis for social cohesion
3. The emotional condition for need fulfillment
4. The basis for mental health
5. The spiritual basis for values.

In that love is central to the mode of need fulfillment, love is a part of the perceptual determinants 14 for learning:


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While the qualities of love are the structuring elements of the perceptual field for learning, love is a part of the central organizing foci for learning. Love then gives basis and structure for:

1. The individual fulfillment of needs
2. The social ordering of human relationships
3. The knowledgeable employment of skills
4. The educational organization instructing purposeful behavior
5. The teaching-learning process disciplined by problem solving
6. The values in curriculum.

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Figure 1. Love as Basis and Structure for Curriculum

Figure 1 restates the foregoing summary. The qualities of love as listed in Figure 1 come from the preceding references to the role of love in human behavior. The conscious levels of experience may be recognized as being frequently used in regard to educating the whole person. The perceptual field as a whole is comprised of the perceptual determinants. Under the bases for curriculum are listed broad area groupings naming what many educators variously propose as objectives for education.15,16

Figure 1, "Love as Basis and Structure for Curriculum," helps illustrate how the interrelationships of love with a structuring of the bases for curriculum may be interpreted. One way is this: love, as experienced in varying levels of consciousness, structures the perceptual field which in turn structures the bases for curriculum. In the following poem, "In Love Is the Foundation Laid for Education," is an interpretation of how love may structure curriculum.

In Love Is the Foundation Laid for Education

In love is the foundation laid for education;
For to love and be loved is to enter fully into life:
Then learning is born of experience.

In love is the foundation laid for education;
For to love and be loved is to participate in society:
Then learning is a child of social interaction.

In love is the foundation laid for education;
For to love and be loved is to value the person:
Then learning is for individual fulfillment.

In love is the foundation laid for education;
For to love and be loved is to be purposefully employed:
Then learning matures knowledge into wisdom.

In love is the foundation laid for education;
For to love and be loved is the goal most valued:
Then learning is Love expressing and experiencing itself in Being.

Figure 1 and its interpretation suggest an organizing focus for constructing curriculum. The objectives of education are ordered by and arise out of the perceptual field. The perceptual field is in turn structured

15 The individual experience, society, knowledge, teaching-learning process, educational objectives, and values are names used for groupings of bases for curriculum as cited by the researcher in "A Survey of Bases for Curriculum Design." Unpublished research paper, San Jose State College, California, 1966.

16 Terminology used by writers in the field of curriculum development frequently varies from any common meaning. A needed foundation from which to build curriculum theory is research of terminology and definition of terms used.
tured by the values in love. The basic structure through which love is expressed is an aggregate ordering of those aspects of human nature referred to as the whole person.

Many implications come from such a statement. A larger body of data is needed to demonstrate the reliability of the correspondences between love, the perceptual field, and bases for curriculum with the physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of man. How does the large body of research on learning by wholes relate to this structuring of curriculum? How are the values of love to be defined? Of the many centers for organizing curriculum, is basic need fulfillment through love perhaps a more valid basis than are some others for structuring curriculum?

References


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