The Human Curriculum: Roles of Dialogue and Organizational Theory

This writer attempts to reconceptualize the human curriculum through (a) analyzing the concept of dialogue in the human curriculum and (b) analyzing three organizational theories which specifically address the development of the human curriculum.

Many educators have addressed themselves to existing theoretical problems in the curriculum field. Several of these attempts have been made by Goodlad, Tyler, Bobbitt, and Phenix. However, these attempts must be developed even further. For example, Kliebard (1970) contends that although Tyler's rationale is a laudable attempt, the field of curriculum must recognize the worth of his rationale: Tyler's approach to curriculum development, not the universal model of curriculum development. Additionally, Goodlad (1966) claimed that "Tyler put the capstone on one epoch of curriculum inquiry." The next epoch is long overdue (Kliebard, 1970). Thus, it is the purpose of this essay to address one of the present-day concerns in the field, the human curriculum, in terms of further reconceptualization.

This will be accomplished by (a) analyzing the concept of dialogue in the human curriculum and (b) analyzing three organizational theories which specifically address the development of the human curriculum. Additionally, each of these areas will be considered in terms of their practical or direct application to the actual development of the human curriculum. To date, our knowledge concerning the process of actually humanizing the curriculum is limited. More often, educators have been concerned with the product. If the practical or direct application is to be meaningful, educators must consider the process and the product.

The Concept of Dialogue in the Human Curriculum

To fully understand the concept of dialogue, educators must begin with the actual process of learning to dialogue with one another. This concept of dialogue in their organization (specifically the school) can be viewed in terms of the communication events which occur on a daily, monthly, and/or yearly basis. For example, to establish what is working for the communication events, educators must consider the concept of dialogue. Conversely, to consider what is working against the communication events, educators must consider the concept of dialogue. Thus, for educators to progress in their own system it is essential for them to recognize and analyze the components or characteristics of both dialogue and monologue. Only then can they recognize how the members in their organization function as dialogic or monologic communicators.

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The monologic communicator primarily aims at (a) power over the other, (b) persuasion for personal gain, (c) shaping another's image regardless of the other's concern for developing a unique self, and (d) development of one's own personal prestige and status at the expense of another (Makay and Gaw, 1975).

Conversely, the dialogic communicator primarily aims at (a) unconditional positive regard—valuing the worth of the other person to help him/her become what he/she can become as an individual, (b) love—one is nonmanipulative, accepting of the other for who that person is, (c) courage in communication—letting oneself actually be known, (d) genuineness in self and image projection—not playing roles, rather developing oneself in accord with the authentic or actual self, (e) accurate empathic response—ability to perceive the standpoint of the speaker, (f) realistic communicative equality—each person views the other as unique and distinct persons, not as objects for manipulation or exploitation, and (g) presentness—full involvement, one with the other, taking the time to be easily accessible (Makay and Gaw, 1975).

Once educators can distinguish a dialogic communicator from a monologic communicator, they can determine what is predominantly effective or ineffective communication in their organization. The type of communication between people in the organization involves both information and relationship, the latter determining the former (Brown and Keller, 1973). Thus, based on this information, educators can determine whether their organization is characterized as (a) dialogic or monologic and (b) whether the communication is predominantly effective or ineffective. To better understand these ideas, it is necessary to consider exactly how the dialogic and monologic communicators function in the organization.

The Dialogic Communicator

The dialogic communicator reduces or minimizes the level of misunderstandings by engaging in a meaningful dialogue. The communication event is not manipulative or coercive, but one in which the communicators respond in accord with the essential characteristics stated before to allow a meaningful dialogue to occur.

Conversely, the monologic communicator sets up many barriers which minimize the effectiveness of the actual communication events among members of the organization. Some of the barriers which contribute to the ineffectiveness of the communication events are (a) semantic differences—each person attributes different meanings to different words, given their specific frame of reference, (b) nonverbal communication—posture, facial expression, or vocal tones may contradict the verbal message, (c) the role of expectation—we are equipped to notice some things and ignore others in our environment, (d) cultural forces—the differences in social, moral, and ethical values can affect encounters, and (e) power—each individual acquires power via hierarchical position, status, or class which he/she can use positively or negatively (Brown and Keller, 1973).

Once the functions of the dialogic or monologic communicators in the organization are established, educators can truly analyze the positive and/or negative effects of each type. For example, it can be noted that the organization in which the dialogic communicators are prevalent is more cooperative. The necessary changes can be made with little dissension among members, although a genuine regard for differences in opinion is recognized. Since unconditional positive regard is given to others, the differences are not regarded as personal attacks on one another. Thus, if the actual changes are to occur (for example, development of the human curriculum), the members who comprise the organization have to become dialogic communicators. Only these communicators can truly contribute to the effectiveness of the organization.

If dialogic relationships do not exist among members in the organization the "human" aspects of the human curriculum cannot be developed. In essence, for educators the human curriculum becomes mere educational jargon rather than a process to
To fully understand the concept of dialogue, educators must begin with the actual process of learning to dialogue with one another. Working against communication events is the opposite—monologue.

develop and understand. The idea will survive only until another trend or fad takes its place. Hopefully, the concept of dialogue as an essential and integral component in humanizing the curriculum will allow educators in their own organizations to consider the development of the human curriculum in another perspective. However, to humanize the curriculum, more than the concept of dialogue is needed. The second component, organizational theory, must be considered in terms of its relevancy to the actual development of the human curriculum.

The Concept of Organizational Theory in the Human Curriculum

To ensure the usage of dialogic rather than monologic communication, educators must recognize the need for an organizational transition from bureaucratic to professional. Presently, the resistance to this change in several organizations (for example, school) can be attributed to (a) limited identification—learning to listen creates anxiety, for the flux and changes which can occur are endless and unpredictable; each individual must reach a stage of identification before confidence or comfort sets in, (b) fear—the anxiety created by changes, (c) dependence—reluctance to assert one's own individuality and independent way of thinking to promote possibilities for change, (d) status or position—little communication between upper and lower hierarchy members; power in relationships is maintained, and (e) tradition and certainty—little predictability or guarantee that the new system will be effective.

It is this resistance to change that creates a bureaucracy in which the concept of dialogue becomes dysfunctional. Thus, for dialogue to become functional the change from bureaucratic to professional aid is needed. This change can be accomplished by a procedure referred to as assessment and diagnosis. By doing this, educators in the organization can establish (a) what needs to be improved or solved, (b) what changes are necessary for improvement or solutions, and (c) what outcomes are expected. This assessment and diagnosis includes provisions for both the organization and members of the organization. For example, Benne (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1971) proposes the following democratic norms for change: (a) change must be collaborative, (b) change must be educational for participants, (c) change must be experimental, and (d) change must be task-oriented. More specifically, in a school system, when the educators in the upper hierarchy (supervisors, principals) begin to communicate and to serve as liaison between persons to subvert tensions, the change becomes functional.

Of course, this change can occur only
when specific skills are developed by both the superiors and subordinates. More specifically, each individual must (a) listen for recall, (b) perceive the needs of large and small group situations, (c) be perceptive, and (d) be able to dialogue with other members in the organization. Once the individuals in the organization develop these skills, they can begin to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organization, both internally and externally. For example, the organizational objectives are clarified since there is consistent and honest communication among members and each member can recognize his/her job as it relates to the organizational philosophy and structure since communication in the hierarchy is both horizontal and vertical. Once again, the development of the concept of dialogue in the organization is necessary for this process, the transition from bureaucratic to professional, to occur. It is also necessary for the development of the skills of subordinates and superiors.

More importantly, educators must recognize that the actual process of humanizing the curriculum can now begin only because the organization itself is humanized. To better understand the specific organizational ideas posited throughout this section and to develop concrete or practical applications to the school as an organization, three humanistic organizational theories can be considered. More specifically, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, Likert's System Theory, and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid will be considered. Each of these theorists is concerned with the humanization of organizations. At this point, it should be recognized that one of the primary concerns of educators is to humanize their organization, for the human curriculum can be developed only when the organization is humanized. Additionally, the direct application of each theorist can aid educators in the actual development of their human curriculum. The first theorist to be considered is McGregor.

**Theory X and Theory Y**

McGregor (Sanford, 1973) proposes two sets of assumptions about human behavior in organizations referred to as Theory X and Theory Y. More specifically, Theory X is a person who is characterized as one who (a) has an inherent dislike of work, (b) has to be coerced, preferring his/her work to be directed, rather than taking any responsibility, and (c) associates little intrinsic value with work, for his/her concern is primarily for the intrinsic rewards offered. Conversely, the Theory Y person is characterized as one who (a) naturally likes work, (b) needs no coercion, for he/she exercises self-direction, accepting responsibility, and (c) uses his/her imagination and creativity to solve organizational problems.

Both of these theory types can allow educators to distinguish the predominant types which exist in their organization, specifically Theory X or Theory Y. Additionally, this perspective can aid in determining whether the communicators are primarily monologic or dialogic. By using these ideas, the members of the organization can actually assess and diagnose (a) what needs to be
improved and why, (b) what changes are necessary for such improvements, and (c) what outcomes are expected. To summarize, educators can begin to understand the key components and the actual process related to humanizing their curriculum. For further analysis of their organization, Likert’s System Theory can be used.

**Likert’s System**

Likert’s (Sanford, 1973) system can be viewed as a categorizing system, indicating whether the organization is one of four types. More specifically, whether it is exploitative/authoritarian, benevolent, consultive, or participative. Each of these categories is based upon different assumptions. For example, the latter type referred to as participative is based on (a) supportive relationships, (b) group decision making and supervision, and (c) high performance goals for the individual, group, and organization. By using Likert’s system to classify the organization as a specific type and McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y to specify member types in the organization, educators can clarify if (a) the organization actually needs improvement, (b) the members need to improve attitudes, interpersonal relations, and (c) the communication is monologic or dialogic.

Thus far, the organization has been viewed primarily in terms of concern for people. Another primary consideration is the production aspect of the organization. This varies from organization to organization, as does the concern for members of the organizations. For example, some schools can be noted for their high standards in terms of production (maintaining an emphasis on academics which produce honor students) but low standards for their members (interpersonal aspects are minimized). To better understand the various concerns for production aspects, the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid can be analyzed.

**The Managerial Grid**

Blake and Mouton (Sanford, 1973) propose a managerial grid which classifies the organization in two terms: (a) concern for production, and (b) concern for people. An x- and y-axis with representative points is used to depict this grid. More explicitly, the y-axis represents the concern for people whereas the x-axis represents the concern for production in the organization. Their specific points of reference are as follows:

1.1 There is little concern for production or the people in the organization.
1.9 There is little concern for production, but the concern for the people in the organization is very high.
5.5 There is an average concern for production and the people in the organization.
9.1 There is a high concern for production, but little concern for the people in the organization.
9.9 There is a high concern for both production and the people in the organization.

Educators can use these specific points of reference to clarify the production and the people concerns in their organizations. Once consideration is given to the humanistic organizational theory, educators can reach 9.9 on the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid. Thus, these organizational theorists, McGregor, Likert, and Blake and Mouton can provide educators with a specific frame of reference which begins to clarify the process and product in the development of the human curriculum. Additionally, given the functional aspects of the dialogue process stated earlier, educators can consider exactly what is meant by developing the human curriculum and begin to do so. Educators must address these components (dialogue and organizational theory) if they want to provide a foundation for the development of the human curriculum and a true assessment of what the process and product is all about.

**Discussion**

To promote human learning and personal growth, the human curriculum must include (a) process not just product, and (b) evaluation as a continual process, not just an end-of-the-year assessment. In essence, this calls for a change in our per-
spectives in education. Bauer (1975) contends that whether we are ready or not, we must consider letting go of the traditional system and address ourselves to new models which encourage all participants to become partners rather than adversaries. Once again, to become such partners, educators must recognize and support the idea of their organization as professional, not bureaucratic. More specifically, each staff member must develop this idea in his/her own organization to ensure growth of their organization.

Schmuck (1975) contends that many curriculum specialists have ignored the importance of creating self-renewing, vital, and growing staffs as a primary base for educational improvement. In addition, he posits that humanistic staff relationships have not usually been viewed as a prerequisite to humanistic instructional changes. He accounts for the lack of humanism by citing such things as interpersonal norms and power interests which can interfere with the viability of new practices. However, he does offer a solution to these problems which encourages staff members to collaborate humanistically in solving their own problems. More specifically, it is referred to as organizational development. Once again, a specific organizational theory is used to assess and diagnose (a) what needs to be improved or solved, (b) what changes are necessary for improvement or solutions, and (c) what outcomes are expected. Similarly, this essay posits the use of three other organizational theories for such assessments and diagnosis purposes. Educators can find the use of such humanistic organizational theory in their organizations can directly affect their educational progression or change, both theoretically and practically.

Presently, the human curriculum is only addressed in very general terms, theoretically and/or practically. In order to address the human curriculum in more specific terms, this essay analyzed two components, dialogue and organizational theory. Although each of these areas was analyzed in terms of both process and product, the complex issues of the actual development of the human curriculum can still be noted. However, this essay hopefully served a more important function—that of dismissing the idea that the development of the human curriculum can be addressed on a superficial level.

On the contrary, if the human curriculum is to be considered, it must be developed upon a solid foundation, rather than one which collapses with new educational trends or jargon. Thus, the need to analyze then use the key component (dialogue and organizational theory) which builds and strengthens the foundation is of utmost importance if stability is to be maintained. Once the stability is established, the growth of the organization can continue. More significant, at this point, it is well to indicate that the continuous growth of the organization is dependent upon the members. They must continually work at both the process and products aspects of dialogue and organizational theory in order to truly humanize their curriculum. Then and only then can educators actually contend that they are developing the human curriculum.

References


