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HUMAN SERVICE EDUCATION, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

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This paper focuses on the role of experiential learning as a component of human growth and human and social service education. Employing student development theory as a unifying theme, relations between experiential learning, personal development and human and social service education are explored.

Writing on the preparation of the human service professional, Gartner (1976) has argued that an effective transfer of classroom learnings to field settings requires a careful delineation of what can be best taught/learned in the classroom, what can be best achieved at the work site, what learnings best stem from practice, or from theory, and how the two can best be interconnected. More recently, Brittingham and McKinney (1987) have addressed this same concern within the undergraduate human service curriculum; specifically, they ask how classroom learnings can most effectively transfer to field settings. In this paper we examine experiential-applied learnings in human growth and development, suggesting the relevance of student development theory as a focal point for the articulation and integration of professional development in human and social service education.

Human Service Ideology and Human Service Education

Basic competencies in human service

education, which include knowledge of subject matter, practical skills and analytical abilities, are essential components for professional preparation (Chenault and Burnford, 1978). Here both theory and experience serve as dual educational guidepost for defining competencies to be acquired. Yet, this integration of theory and application places additional demands/tensions on the learner. Specifically, the student must come to terms with the inherent conflicts between professional ideals and goals and their varied applications; he/she must adopt a pluralistic approach to human services management practice, one which will enable her/him to value diversity in persons, while operating within established conceptual frameworks. A pluralistic perspective requires an awareness of the differences in various approaches to distinct issues and needs, as well as knowledge of consensually-derived principles for effective application. As such, students of human and social service education are challenged by the value-laden demands of their mission. Moreover, their ability to appreci-

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ate, and willingness to deal with value premises and their considerations, becomes an important component of their educational experience.

Human services ideology, which underlies the activities of the human service practitioner, involves the application of skills predicated upon basic conceptual premises (Chenault, 1974). These include the basic values we hold about people (viz., the role of independence and interdependence of individuals in society), our willingness/ability to act independent of authoritative expertise, our sense of accountability to others, both in fiscal and programmatic matters, our willingness to share responsibility, our recognition of the need for integrating (rather than segmenting) services, our ability/willingness to extend our knowledge/activities to many target groups, both those familiar, as well as those new, our involvements in systems approaches, and our continual search for alternative service models.

*Student Development Theory - Integrating
Persons: Growth with Professional
Development*

Student development theory presents a unique focus for examining how students, through experiential-field learning opportunities, are able to meet personal developmental goals which, in a broader sense, parallel human service learnings. Three models which suggest the relevance of experiential learning to human services education include the writings of R. Heath (1964), W. Perry (1970) and A. Chickering (1969; 1976). Each of these authors discuss student growth, based on a developmental view of emerging maturity.

In Heath's theory, the student learner evolves over three levels of development (low, medium, high). Students at the low maturity level appear to be narrow thinkers, afraid of risks, are externally controlled and lack a clear awareness of themselves

and others. Students at the medium maturity level are more capable of meeting daily tasks and are better able to cope with differences in other people; further, thoughts, behaviors and feelings are more coherent and better integrated. The student is also now more accepting of him/her self. Students at the high maturity level have attained an acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. Moreover, they are less afraid of the complexities and diversity within their world and are able to meet tasks with competence. For these students, the development of maturity is accompanied by a clarification of purpose (Chickering, 1976).

Perry's theory focuses on the student's changing social, moral and cognitive views of his/her world within an evolving structural framework. In this context, students pass through 9 stages of development, beginning with *dualism* (stages 1 and 2), in which students view the world in black-white terms. At this stage answers are either right or wrong; there appears to be only one right answer to a problem; statements or judgments are usually made without evidence, and what appears in print is viewed as embodying truth. In essence, students act through appeal to authoritative expertise (Chenault, 1974). During *multiplicity* (stages 3 and 4) students' view of the world is based on the recognition that there is not only more than one answer to a problem, but that all answers are equally valid. Here students feel that they have a right to their opinions, as do others, whether they are based on fact or belief. Over time students acquire a sense of *relativism* (stages 5 and 6) where they recognize that knowledge does not exist in an absolute sense, but is contextual and relative. Such students tend to see a problem from all sides. As such, relativists often have difficulty making decisions because they can now see the many varied alternatives to a

single issue/problem. Still later, students may achieve *commitment in relativism* (stages 7-9). At this stage students integrate personal identity and social purpose through the performance of trails and tasks, such as those afforded by experiential learning opportunities, which enable an active affirmation of self through recognition of individual responsibility in a pluralistic society.

Chickering's (1969; 1976) views add a further dimension to our understanding of student development. In this theory the growth process is segmented into distinct psychosocial phases, each amplified upon, over time, by the challenges for personal-social integration created by increasing tasks/demands for maturity. In part, these demands call for an expansion of caring. As Chickering (1976) notes, growth in caring implies a "transcendence of the egocentrism that is natural in childhood and often prominent, and not entirely inappropriate, in adolescence" to an extended sense of self whereby "the welfare of another person, a group enterprise, or some other valued object becomes as important as (or identical with) one's own welfare".

Several common elements characterize the ideas of Heath, Perry and Chickering. These include recognition of the developmental process as a foundation for the understanding and charting of student growth over time, awareness of the student's personal commitment to ideological issues as a culminating consequence of her/his experiences, the realization of student growth as a multidimensional enterprise and the acknowledgement of experiential learning endeavors as forming a critical foundation for the synthesis of personal, social and communal interests.

Experiential Learning, Student Involvement and Training in Human and Social Services

Experiential learning refers to learning

characterized by changes in judgement, attitude, feelings or skills acquired through direct participation in an event or series of events. While events which typify an experiential learning context often vary in form (e.g., volunteer services to the elderly, reading to the blind, an internship at a hospital) they usually share several common elements, including the idea of active participation and most often, the engagement of activities associated with the performance of some service to others.

As educators involved in student training and development through experiential learning, Chickering (1976) suggests that we need "to develop conceptual clarity concerning students' motives and learning styles, as well as the major outcomes of various outcomes of various educational programs and teaching activities". Phrased in terms of human service education, we need ask how experiential learning can aid individual students in their personal, as well as professional development, and what specific outcomes may we anticipate through the introduction of experiential learning opportunities which serve these interrelated agendas.

Motives for participation in experiential learning endeavors vary across students. In a study examining characteristics and motivations of college students volunteering in community service, Fitch (1987) observed that different as well as multiple motives appear to guide decisions to participate in such experiences. He notes, "although the volunteers in this sample may have been involved for altruistic reasons, it seems that the benefits of involvement were also important to them". That is, neither altruism nor egoism alone determined student interest; rather, engagements such as those studied, appear best viewed with regard to student perceptions of the benefits of involvement (i.e., costs of giving relative to receiving). Whereas, among these upper-

classmen, motives such as "the exploration of career options" and the belief that participation fulfilled an "integral part of religious beliefs" were unexpectedly, ranked near the bottom of those motives for participation surveyed.

Student motives for participation differ, just as *levels of involvement* in academic, or experiential learning activities differ. This

latter dimension has been identified by Astin (1984) as an important predictor of student success. He argues that student learning and personal development associated with an educational program are directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program. Specifically, he asserts, "the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly

Table 1
Some Selected Goals of Experiential
Education Programs

<i>Academic/Developmental Concerns</i>	<i>Purpose/Benefits</i>
1. To enhance learnings in an academic discipline	a. To acquire practical knowledge in an academic discipline b. To test and apply theories developed in a particular discipline c. To apply, integrate and evaluate a body of knowledge
2. To assist in the acquisition of generic, cognitive, liberal arts skills	a. To acquire general functional skills and attitudes for adult life b. To become responsible citizens c. To develop and practice self-directed learning
3. To further ethical and moral values	a. To develop and apply moral reasoning and judgement
4. To aid career development	a. To explore career options b. To develop career competencies
5. To support personal development	a. To gain self-understanding self-reliance, self-worth and self-confidence
6. To promote related educational outcomes	a. To increase motivation to learn b. To gain a sense of self empowerment

Adapted, with modification from Kendall, J.C., Duley, J.S., Little, T.C. Permaul, J.S. and Rubin, S. (1986) *Strengthening experiential education within your institution*. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education.

related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement" (Astin, 1984).

The encouragement of active student involvements, allowing for the personalization of the learning experience, appears as a critical theme in the student development literature. Among precollegiate learners, Rosenshine (1982) and Rosenshine and Stevens (1986) present evidence which suggests that learning is facilitated significantly when the learning environment is structured to encourage active, rather than passive participation by the student. Moreover, as Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) note among students in higher education, "Students need to engage with the subject, to develop an intellectual passion to understand. If students are studying mainly to obtain a qualification - however relevant to society's anticipated needs - our evidence is that there is a greater likelihood that the knowledge will be obtained passively, in a way which does not engage their active critical "faculties".

Training in the human and social services combines both academic credentialing, with learnings derived from experientially-based field settings. These events represent two different arenas as well as structurally distinct enterprises, although they bear common interests. Classroom learning possesses both distinct characteristics and expectations of the learner which differ from those created by experiential learning opportunities (Cantor, 1953; Coleman, 1976; Gartner, 1976; Walters and Marks, 1981). As suggested in the introduction to this paper the critical question indigenous to the preparation of the human and social service professional is what skills can be best taught in the classroom and what may be best learned in the field. Clearly, this issue asks what may be best achieved from theory, and what may best result from practice. And finally, we need ask how the two

can be best integrated. Experiential learning exercises, either in conjunction with established internships, or ongoing field assignments as part of a student's coursework may aid both conceptual learnings and personal development. Student development theory, suggests that such ventures are most advantageous when learning is dynamic, rather than static, and where students are actively involved in the learning enterprise. Moreover, it is apparent that such learning activities are usually motivated by realistic interests, in which cost-benefit arrangements play a critical role. Effective learning through experiential encounters also appears most profitable to students where student involvement require that participants be sufficiently mature to extend moral-intellectual understandings to real world concerns. Under such conditions students are best able to integrate theory and practice through challenges to personal beliefs which, by virtue of their significance and time of occurrence in the lifespace of the student, may serve to enhance her/his personal growth and development, as well as professional training.

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Stephen Worchel and George R. Goethals (1985). *Adjustment. Pathways to Personal Growth*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. The authors maintain that the rapidity of change in the modern world has raised new issues and challenges for personal and interpersonal adjustment. An important principle is that individuals are most comfortable with the familiar, and fearful of change. The greatest stress in one's life arises from change. Both positive and negative changes are stressful. The authors maintain that adjustment means different things to different people. Each chapter in the book begins with a biographical sketch of a person or people whose lives illustrate many of the ideas illustrated in the chapter. For example, Chapter 10, Affiliation and attraction, presents a sketch of Johnny Cash and his wife June Carter. Many of the ideas presented in that chapter are reflected in the lives of those individuals. The authors believe that adjustment can not be taught unless it is applied to an individual's own life. To help in this task, exercises have been included at the end of each chapter with the hope the reader will seek to relate them to his own experiences. Emphasis is placed on knowing and accepting of self, and taking control of one's life. A questionnaire designed to assess the difference between the person one is and the person one would like to be reveals the critical nature of change desired in the adaption process.

The Story of the Statue of Liberty. By Penick and Joseph Forte (1986). Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York. A detailed three dimension story of the construction and plans for the Statue of Liberty. It was the year 1875 when the sculptor, Auguste Bartholdi was commissioned by the Franco-American Union to design and build the statue. The statue was so large it had to be constructed in several parts. First, a wooden frame had to be built for each piece. Then the frames had to be covered with plaster for use in making the molds. The head, for example, measured 17 feet from head to chin, and 10 feet from ear to ear. In May 1885, Paris said good-by to the statue of liberty, when 214 crates were shipped with the parts. On October 28, 1886, President Grover Cleveland was present for the opening of the statue in New York. The booklet is designed to illustrate the various major parts and with color, and in three dimensions.