Running Head: FORMULATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND AN ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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Formulation Of An Educational Philosophy And Organizational Framework As The Foundation For Further Curriculum Development

The purpose of an educational philosophy and organizational framework for nursing education revolves around the nature of people, their growth, and how students, as well as faculty, make decisions about themselves. This philosophy forms the foundation on which teaching approaches are developed. A philosophy derived from humanistic psychology in which the major goal of teaching is to enhance a student’s individual potential and responsibility for personal growth creates learning opportunities that are most beneficial to students and instructors (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). This philosophy requires a change in the teaching style of the majority of nursing education programs, from being didactic, directive teachers controlling the learners, to continually striving to facilitate the process of learning. This is the philosophy that this faculty as adopted.

Overview of Humanistic Psychology

Because a humanistic educational philosophy originated with the principles of humanistic psychology, a background in the discipline was reviewed. Prior to the introduction of humanism, psychology was dominated by two major theories of human behavior: psychoanalysis (Freudianism) and behaviorism. Humanistic psychology grew in large measure as a reaction to the seeming inadequacy of these theories to deal with the higher nature, or humanness, of people (Tageson, 1971). Freudianism dealt with unconscious behavior and pathological personality development, while behaviorism was related to the environment and its control of human behavior through conditioning.

Humanistic psychology differed greatly from both. It promoted an eclectic interpretation of human growth and development, which built on other theories, as
demonstrated in Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs (Goble, 1970). Humanistic psychology emphasized healthy personality development instead of pathological personality development. It concentrated on conscious rather than on unconscious behavior. In opposition to the behavioristic theories of environmental control, humanistic psychology integrated elements of Maslow’s theory of motivation, Carl Roger’s theory of self-determinism (Evans, 1975), and Glasser’s theory of individual responsibility (Glasser, 1975). It also emphasized a phenomenological approach to the study of human consciousness. This approach described and classified, but did not interpret phenomena such as human experience as it was known through the senses. Research studies led to identification of elements in human relations that fostered growth and development, thereby expanding the strictly objective methodology used by behaviorists to study human behavior (Rogers, 1983).

Aim of Humanistic Psychology

The aim of humanistic psychology was to promote the full development of human potential. Because it was person-centered, it placed the utmost value on the dignity of the human being. It stressed self-realization and self-actualization as the goals of human development. It strived to create a “fully functioning” (Rogers, 1983), “self-actualized” (Maslow, 1968), or “responsible (Glasser, 1975) person. The characteristics of this kind of person are well described by Maslow (1968). Everything one can imagine that was good or right about a person applied to people who were self-actualized, fully functional and responsible. They were mature, competent, and stable. They were humble and listened carefully to other people, admitting that they did not know everything and that they were always learning. These individuals were involved and committed to work that
was done well and to the best of their ability; they were open to change and were not threatened by it as were rigid inflexible people (Rogers, 1983). These people were inner directed and had a sense of psychological freedom. They had the strength and self-confidence to stand up for their beliefs and values. They accepted themselves and their natures, and were equally accepting of others. They felt a kinship to their fellow man and a responsibility for and commitment beyond their own needs to fulfilling those of others. They were able to enjoy other people, accepting them as they were, recognizing in them their own separate individual potential for growth. They developed and maintained harmonious relationships with other people that were non-exploitive, but were instead, respectful and caring, facilitating each other’s growth potential (Watson, 1967).

The application of these principles to the process of learning led to the development of a humanistic approach to education. Humanistic education was education of the total person. It allowed the learner to realize and develop his full potential, going beyond basic cognitive learning into the realm of affective learning.

Humanistic education encouraged individuals to ask the questions: What did I think? What did I feel? What was the significance of this learning experience to me? How did it help me grow as a person? It was infinite in that the learner was always in a state of becoming, and we were all learners throughout our entire lives. In comparison, the traditional, didactic, teacher-oriented goal was to impart cognitive knowledge to create an educated person, but this ignored the affective realm of human development.

Humanistic education was person centered. The person was helped to recognize and develop his own unique potential, facilitating the process of individual growth and positive behavioral changes through active learner participation. As a consequence of
direct involvement in the learning process, students’ recognition or self-worth, personal needs, and self-fulfillment became apparent. Willima Glasser (1975) said that a person had the potential for learning to be responsible for fulfilling his personal needs of loving and being loved, for feeling worthwhile to himself and others, and for doing this without interfering with other people’s abilities to fulfill their won needs. He also stressed that people have the ability for both self-evaluation and self-control and must exercise these abilities in order to fulfill the need to be worthwhile (Glasser, 1975). Meaningful learning was a matter of self-responsibility and was basically self-directed. The learner must define his own learning needs and be assisted to find a personalized way in which to meet them. The instructor became the person who helped him or her find the way, and therefore facilitated the learning process; but the learner personalized it.

_Philosophy Statement_

- Health care today is in a hyper-dynamic state caused by continuous fluctuations in payment systems, technology, delivery systems, professional relations as well as societal outlooks and expectations.

- Faculty possesses the combined ability, talent, expertise and creativity to meet the many challenges of the educational environment.

- The learner and the faculty have valuable and vast life experiences that contribute to the development of goals.

- The faculty provides a holistic education process to those that express a need and desire to learn. It is the responsibility of educators to provide a learner centered environment based on adult learning principles that will stimulate the developmental skills the learner will need to be successful in professional pursuits.

- It is the responsibility of the learner to be an active participant in the learning process and to seek opportunities in which to apply the knowledge gained.

- Adults learn in a collaborative, and caring environment and this is a shared process between the faculty and the student. A collaborative and caring environment encourage the application of learning, free exchange of ideas, development of creativity, and critical thinking.
Education is a life-long learning process, intended to promote professional growth and competence.

Organizing Framework

The organizing framework seeks to define the concepts of learner, environment, life experiences, critical thinking, collaborative learning, holistic education and caring and the relationship shared by each of these concepts.

Concepts

Learner

The learner is defined as a participant in a health care setting. These participants, as adult learners, are self directed and capable of identifying their own learning needs. They have varying learning styles and rates and learn best when learning activities incorporate immediate application. The learning activities will include classroom as well as clinical experience within a hospital and other health related settings.

Environment

The environment encompasses all those factors impacting the learner as she/he interacts with her/his surroundings. The dynamics of these factors require the learner to act and react through interaction, which is rooted in previous life experiences as well as her/his innate abilities.

Life Experiences

Adults have innumerable experiences that serve as resources during new learning experiences. Recognizing different types of experience provides insight into the development of educational offerings and clinical opportunities. By recognizing that students bring a variety of life experiences and skills to the clinical setting, the learning opportunities can be tailored to fit the learner.
Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a resolution for a problematic situation. Critical thinking is a purposeful and systematic process requiring conscious discipline. The critical thinking process requires an awareness of elements of thought and a proficiency in the examination of assumptions and communication of implications and alternatives. The critical thinker becomes an active, empowered participant who is aware of interaction with the world, who has a global view of issues, and who is able to regularly take considered action.

Caring

Caring is a comfortable and shared relationship built on mutual trust and respect between the teacher and student. Natural caring is a human process in which one person assists another in growth and actualization.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a mutual exchange of knowledge from varied disciplines. The exchange is presented in a caring manner. The learner’s and facilitator’s self-concept and self-esteem are essential components to collaboration.

Holistic Education

The whole person concept can be enhanced with exposure to various disciplines such as the natural and social sciences, fine arts, humanities and communication.

Relationship Statement

The learner is the center of the educational environment. The concepts of life experiences, collaborative learning, caring, holistic education and critical thinking are placed in concentric circles within the environment. The circles indicate the dynamic
nature of the concepts within the educational environment. The broken lines indicate the inter-relationships among the concepts as they impact each other as well as the learner.

Summary

In summary there are unifying concepts that are rooted in humanistic theory. The concepts of the learner, environment, life experiences, collaborative learning, caring, holistic education and critical thinking are basic to the concepts and processes that provide the organizational framework for a nursing curriculum.
REFERENCES


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