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Student Development and the College Curriculum: What is the Connection?

The authors raise questions about and pose creative solutions for curriculum options which foster student development.

The college years have been identified as a time of profound developmental change (Feldman & Newcomb, 1973; Trent & Medsker, 1967). New ways of thinking are discovered and internalized (Kitchener & King, 1981; Perry, 1970). A sense of personal identity is constructed (Chickering, 1969). A value system is explored and adopted. Career orientation is sought and formed (Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963). Interpersonal skills are teamed and applied (Chickering, 1969; Heath, 1978). Yet, despite all these documented changes, there remains the nagging question: Can we in student personnel do more to foster the total development of our students?

In 1972, Robert D. Brown, writing on behalf of the American College Personnel Association's (ACPA) Tomorrow's Higher Education (THE) Project, called on the profession to rededicate itself to "total student development" (p. 7). In looking to the future, Brown examined the roles of student personnel workers and pointed out changes in the profession that could facilitate achieving our goal of fostering student development. The counseling role has been central to student personnel work for many years but counseling does not reach enough students. In proposing a new role for student personnel professionals, Brown raised the question: "Can

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student development really be fostered effectively without the support and influence of the academic dimensions of college life?" (p. 8).

Brown challenged the profession to become involved in the students' academic world and argued that student development can and should be accomplished through credit courses. Parker and his associates (Widick, Knefelkamp, & Parker, 1975) at the University of Minnesota, took this challenge seriously and developed *The Themes in Human Identity* course that will be discussed in more detail later.

Parker and associates (Parker & Lawson, 1978a, 1978b; Widick, Knefelkamp, & Parker, 1975; Widick & Simpson, 1978) expanded Brown's (1972) student personnel role definition by suggesting we act both as psychological educators in the classroom and as consultants to faculty. A main focus of the faculty consultation project at the University of Minnesota was to help faculty understand the developmental levels of students, to adapt instruction to meet the needs of students at each of these developmental levels, and to facilitate intellectual development. Knefelkamp has also expanded on her work with Widick in using the classroom as a vehicle for facilitating development, and with her associates at the University of Maryland subsequently developed the Center for Applications of Developmental Instruction.

A number of years have elapsed since Brown's (1972) call for new roles within the student personnel profession. In assessing the progress made toward the goal of promoting development, Paul Bloland (1986), himself a member of the ACPA THE Task Force, shared his views on the developmental movement. He pointed out a discrepancy between the espoused theory of student development and the practice of the profession: "In the real world, student affairs staff are carrying out their traditional functions and many new ones but in traditional ways and with staff who are still not well schooled in student development or even in higher education" (p. 1).

Bloland (1986) contends that while a small group of student affairs professionals are doing significant research on the development of college students, this activity has not increased the credibility of the profession to the faculty at large. In fact, Bloland does not perceive faculties altering their approaches to teaching or increasing their support for student development programming, nor does he see hope for future change in this regard. Thus, while there have been efforts to broaden the role of the student affairs professional, the role has not significantly changed.

In light of Bloland's (1986) analysis it seems important that the profession examine the progress made in implementing developmental theory through the college curriculum. The purpose of this article is to consider the college curriculum as a vehicle to facilitate development. Rather than present an exhaustive review of the topic, we will provide an overview of the work reported by student affairs professionals who have attempted to implement developmental theory in credit courses. We will close with a discussion of issues requiring consideration as efforts continue to promote student development through college courses.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

Developmental theory has been applied through the curriculum in varying degrees. Several articles in the literature describe courses which have as a goal the facilitation of student development but, upon closer examination, are designed **to** teach a variety of skills with little or no connection to human

development theory. Galassi and Lemmon (1978) describe a course designed to facilitate student development at a women's college, while Gordon and Grites (1984) describe a course to help students deal with developmental tasks. Neither includes developmental theory in the course content or in the design of the instructional process. Rather, they focus on a set of useful skills such as interpersonal relationships, goal-setting, and planning.

What is missing in these approaches is a theoretical perspective which describes the student, explains the processes occurring in the person as development takes place, provides a rationale for skill development, describes the sequence of changes that occur in the developing person, and, generally, gives guidance to the professional practices which attempt to foster development (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978, Rodgers, 1980).

CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSES

Other articles describe career courses which purport to apply developmental theory. Rosenthal (1985) describes such a course for learning-disabled college students. Ware (1985), Carver and Smart (1985), and Heppner and Krause (1979) also describe courses based on career development theory. They list career skills taught and provide evaluative data which indicate that students often emerge with, for example, increased skills, self-awareness, career certainty, and maturity. Barker (1981) reports on a career guidance course based on the theoretical framework of Tied man and O'Hare (1963). Instruction was provided to help students deal with a number of career tasks, which resulted in gains in abilities to perform the tasks. Holland's (1973) career theory served as the framework for a career development seminar described by Ganster and Lovell (1978) in which students were assisted in identifying their own Holland career typology and applying this knowledge to career planning. Greater career maturity resulted from seminar participation.

These studies represent efforts to use career development theory in the design and teaching of career courses to foster the development of a broad range of career skills and increased career maturity. However, the use of a more broadly based, formal theory of human development is needed to enhance the total development of students and increase their ability to deal with a broad range of challenges, problems, and tasks, including, but not limited to, career issues.

COURSES WHICH APPLY HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THEORY

A third group of studies found in the literature show attempts to implement student development theory through the college curriculum. Perry's (1970) cognitive development theory was the basis for several of these courses. Perry has provided a theory of how college students progress through increasingly complex stages of reasoning, thinking, and making meaning of their experiences. He observed students passing through stages of dualistic, multiplistic, and relativistic thinking, to a final stage of commitment within relativism where they have constructed their own sense of values, identity, and life plan.

A freshman course taught at the University of Minnesota entitled *Themes in Human Identity,* designed by Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker (1975), was the first attempt to use Perry's (1970) theory to design course work that would promote cognitive development. The course expanded the student personnel worker's role as a developmental instructor. It was designed around literary selections such as Miller's *Death of a Salesman,* which were used to prompt cognitive conflict and ultimately force students to alter their cognitive structures.

Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker paid particular attention to maintaining a balance between the developmental variables of challenge and support. The instruction was tailored to the needs of students manifesting characteristics of either dualistic or relativistic thinking. Developmental change was measured by means of the KNEWI (the forerunner of the Measure of intellectual Development [MID]) and the authors found that while 32% of the students manifested dualistic thinking on the preassessment, only 3% remained at that level at the end of the course. A similar pattern was seen in the shift to relativistic thinking: 20% demonstrated relativistic thinking at the outset as compared to 68% at the conclusion of the course. This study provides evidence that one can implement developmental theory in a college course and measure the outcome in terms of developmental change. it was also replicated using the instructional approach designed to facilitate movement from a dualistic framework and similar results were found (Stephenson & Hunt, 1977).

Expanding on the experience with the *Themes in Human identity* course, Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1976) adapted Perry's (1970) theory to explain the career development process. They reasoned that if Perry's theory could describe the way students think about subject matter, instructors, and other students, the same theory would have relevance to how students think about careers, career and life planning, and counselors. Based on their study of student responses to interviews and other instruments, Knefelkamp and Slepitza identified nine areas of qualitative change that are part of the career development process: locus of control, analysis, synthesis, semantic structure, self-processing, openness to alternative perspectives, ability to assume responsibility, ability to take on new roles, and ability to take risks with self.

Touchton, Wertheimer, Cornfeld, and Harrison (1977) found the Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1976) model to be useful in designing a career planning course and in measuring student growth. They geared their course to students who were still in the dualistic stage of cognitive development and chose applicable components of the Knefelkamp and Slepitza model. The cognitive developmental changes were measured using an instrument designed by Knefelkamp and Slepitza which was not further identified. Most students (76%) showed an increase in complexity in thinking about careers. On a pretest 71% were at the dualistic stage while at semester's end only 21% manifested this kind of thinking. Swain (1984) and De Sesa-Smith and Parnum (1984) have also reported success in designing career courses based on the Knefelkamp and Slepitza theory of development. These authors do not, however, report using development measures to assess change.

Chickering's (1969) psychosocial developmental theory has served as the foundation for several college courses. He describes the content of development during the late adolescent and young adult years, thereby expanding on Erikson's stage theory (1963, 1968), and describes student development as a series of developmental vectors or tasks that arise in the lives of college-age individuals. The seven tasks are: Developing Competence, Managing Emotions, Developing Autonomy, Establishing Identity, Freeing Interpersonal Relationships, Developing Purpose, and Developing Integrity. Chickering proposes that progress toward successful resolution of earlier tasks is necessary before later tasks can be addressed. Rodgers (1980) sees Chickering's conceptualizations as useful for determining developmental goals and defining the developmental content of courses.

Stonewater and Daniels (1983) implemented Chickering's (1969) theory in a freshman-level course designed to help students acquire both an understanding of and the skills used in the career decision-making process. The course was based

on the assumption that students need to develop autonomy, a sense of purpose, and satisfying interpersonal relationships in order to be effective in career decision-making. The Student Developmental Task Inventory ISDTI) designed by Winston, Miller, and Prince (1979) was used to measure developmental outcome, specifically in the three tasks emphasized in the instruction. Developmental change was shown on the autonomy and purpose scales of the SDTI but not on the scale which measured the freeing of interpersonal relationships.

The last group of courses to be discussed in this section attempt to use Kohlberg's cognitive theory of moral development (1969, 1971). Kohlberg outlined a series of stages in an invariant sequence determined by the cognitive structures used in analyzing moral situations and making moral judgments. Development of moral reasoning is an outcome of one's ability to organize and integrate his or her social experiences and is governed by the general level of cognitive reasoning that the person is capable of using. Straub and Rodgers (1978) utilized Kohlberg's theory in a combined English-Psychology course, designed and taught by student personnel professionals. The course, *The Awakening Woman: Psychological Themes of Identity, Development and Liberation Through Literature,* made use of exposure to cognitive conflict and inadequacies in moral reasoning in literature to stimulate restructuring of the students' own moral reasoning. The impact of the course was assessed using Rest's (1974) Defining Issues Test (DIT). The results indicate substantial stage shifts, largely from stage 3 to 4 and from 4 to 5, revealing a change from conventional to more principled patterns of moral reasoning. The P score of the DIT measures the use of principled reasoning and 72% of the students had P score increases.

This review shows that several theories of human development have been applied through the college curriculum to enhance student development. However, efforts to facilitate student development through credit courses have, for the most part, been isolated attempts by individual student affairs professionals, impacting very few students.

BROAD-BASED DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

Two institutions of higher education, Alverno College and Brigham Young University, have made programmatic efforts to implement developmental theory through the curriculum as well as through other avenues.

In the early 1970s, Alverno initiated a comprehensive and unique liberal arts program of outcome-oriented developmental education (Earley, Mentkowski, & Schafer, 1980). Eight competences were identified: communications, analysis, problem-solving, valuing, social interactions, taking responsibility for the environment, involvement in the contemporary world, and aesthetic response. Each competence was subdivided into six sequenced levels of development. The focus was to integrate the development of these eight key competences into the content of the curriculum to insure that both academic subject matter and developmental competences were adequately addressed. A Perry measure was used to assess thinking as the students progressed through the six levels of the "valuing process" (Mentkowski, 1980). The goal is to produce a competent student who, as a matter of habit, can analyze situations and materials, communicate effectively, integrate personal values into daily decisions, and be effective at problem solving and social interactions.

Programs in Student Life at Brigham Young University (BYU) represent another effort to apply broadly a developmental philosophy. During the past two years we at the Counseling and Development Center, a division of Student Life, have

redesigned its career education and learning skills courses guided by developmental principles. The content of one such course, *Life-Planning and Decision-Making,* now utilizes a developmental focus, drawing on Erikson's concept of identity and Chickering's seven vectors informing identity development (Lawson, MacArthur, & Heaps, 1986). Perry's (1970) theory of intellectual development provides the framework for understanding how students deal with identity, autonomy, competence, life-planning, decision-making, and valuing. We have drawn on the work of Knefelkamp (1974) and Widick and Simpson (1978) to gear our instructional process and content to students at the dualistic and multiplistic positions. Through instruction we seek to offer support while we challenge the students' thinking. To assess developmental levels, we have used the Measure of Epistemological Reflection developed by Baxter-Magolda and Porterfield (1985). In a pretest-posttest comparison using gain-scores as the measure of change, students showed positive movement in decision-making and in recognizing the role of peers and the instructor in the learning process (Lawson, Isakson, Heaps, & Baxter-Magolda, 1986). These domains where growth occurred relate to the content and instructional process of the course.

A collaborative project involving both Student Life and Housing Department personnel (two separate organizations at BYU) has sought to implement student development theory and an ecosystem planning model in an on-campus residential setting using an academic course as well as other programming. The project is known as the Heritage Developmental Community. A major component of the project is a series of weekly workshops, carrying one hour of General Studies credit from the Counseling and Development Center. The course design uses Chickering's (1969) developmental vectors to help students gain an awareness of their own development. They complete the Student Development Task Inventory Winston, Miller, & Prince, 1979) and receive feedback on their development along Chickering's vectors of autonomy, interpersonal relationships, and purpose. Interpersonal and social development instruction follows assessment.

From the foregoing review of literature, it would appear that more is being done in student affairs and with college faculty to foster student development than one might expect after reading Bloland's (1986) assessment. Yet, efforts to implement developmental theory in the college curriculum are not overly impressive. To facilitate greater efforts in this area, we offer the following observations and suggestions.

Expanded Use of Developmental Theories' Many of the courses within student affairs do not use formal developmental theory as a basis for their content, for understanding students, or for designing an instructional environment to promote development. An interesting study reported by Heineman and Strange (1984) suggests some reasons for so few applications. It examined the uses of developmental theory by entry-level student affairs practitioners. Of 357 employed college student personnel graduates, 92% had completed one course on human development as part of their masters education. Data were not provided on the numbers who had more than one such course but the number was likely not large. Participants were asked how they had used developmental theory. A large number (92%) said they had used theory to explain or understand student behavior. A smaller number had used developmental outcomes to evaluate the effectiveness of a program 154%). Less than half (45%) had used developmental theory in the content of a program or workshop for students. Only 30% had conducted inservice training on developmental theory and only 13% had been

asked by a supervisor to study a particular developmental theory. Research like this offers an explanation for Bloland's (I 986) comments on why we do not find more evidence of curriculum applications of developmental theory. These findings call for new direction in training student affairs professionals.

Clear Definition of Goals of Student Development. Ekins (1985) asserts that if we are to be successful in facilitating student development, we must better define our goals and integrate these goals with the missions of our institutions. We cannot assume that developmental learning will occur simply because the college has an excellent curriculum. Ekins is in favor of requiring students to explore some of the developmental opportunities available to them in the college.

Systematic Model for Implementing Developmental Theory. Our literature review suggests that greater success in implementing developmental theory in course design can be obtained by following a systematic application model. Examples of such models are those used by Widick, Knefelkamp, and Parker (1975), Touchton et al. (1977), and De Sesa-Smith and Parnum (1984), implementing the theories of Perry (1970) and Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1976) in course design and instruction. The model requires a developmental stage assessment of the students involved, identification of areas of qualitative change to be fostered, and designing interventions which provide appropriate challenge and support.

Use of Development Measures. Several articles in the review describe courses which use developmental theory but lack theory-based measures of developmental outcomes. Mines (1985) and others point out that to meet the goal of student development, we must use development assessment techniques. Mines discusses the issues involved in developmental assessment and shows how to increase the sophistication of approaches to it. Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker (1978) and Rodgers (1980) also discuss measures of student development.

Collaboration Between Professionals. if we are to be successful in integrating developmental theory into the college curriculum, more collaboration is necessary between student affairs professionals and college faculty. The study by Straub and Rodgers (1978) serves as a good example of collaboration. An interdisciplinary English-Psychology course was designed and taught by student personnel workers with backgrounds in psychology and literature. Hintz and Stamatakos (1978) have recognized the need to integrate the efforts of student affairs workers and college faculty. They studied the importance both groups place on student development goals and the degree of desired and actual cooperation between the groups. They found that student affairs staff were more positive toward joint efforts than were faculty. Many faculty were concerned about student development but were not sure that student affairs staff were equally concerned. By the same token, the student affairs staff were unsure of the faculty concerns for student development. Neither group felt that there was a climate of readiness for cooperation.

We would end on the note with which this discussion began. Sprinthall, Bertin, and Whiteley (1982) have focused on fostering college student development and have raised the question: "Where is the reality in all this rhetoric: In the hard, cold world of adulthood, after the last entrance test, multiple choice exam, final term paper and honor's essay has been completed, what are the lasting products of a college experience for a young person with aspirations for accomplishment?" (p. 45). The authors reviewed a large number of studies dealing with success after college and concluded that college courses, grades, and amount of education are not closely related to success in life. Instead, they found that indices of

psychological maturity and stage development were the best predictors of success after college.

Thus the task - to foster development and maturity in the students who enter our colleges and universities - is a vital one. Through developmental education, as well as academic preparation, we can turn out mature lawyers with a sense of justice, physicians with compassion, teachers who have learned to think, and parents who can transmit to the next generation a love of learning and a commitment to values.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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The next theme edition of the *NASPA Journal* will be the summer issue of 1988. The topic is the relationship and interaction between student affairs and academic affairs. Dr. Suzanne Brown, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for the State System of Higher Education in Pennsylvania, has accepted the responsibilities of guest editor for this special edition. It is hoped that a series of manuscripts on this critical and contemporary topic will soon be submitted for publication consideration.

Interested readers are encouraged to submit manuscripts on specific programs, organizational models research, **or** philosophical approaches on the topic of interaction, communication, and collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. Please prepare manuscripts according to the *NASPA Journal* Guidelines for Manuscript Publication and submit them to the editor at the address listed inside the front cover of this edition.