

# The Essence of the Curriculum Revolution: Emancipatory Teaching

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Teaching is a political activity. Embedded in teaching are the hidden messages about what is valued, what learning is about, and who is in power, in control, and on top. In the conventional curriculum, the teacher relies heavily upon the lecture format and accepts the role of information provider, arbitrator of right and wrong, and benign dictator of content. These teaching roles subtly teach more than nursing. They teach an attitude toward self and authority that perhaps goes a long way toward sabotaging the very characteristics nurses must have to enhance nursing's ability to serve the public in ways that improve quality, ameliorate injustice, and promote uniform accessibility of health care.

The philosophical basis of the traditional curriculum that supports authoritarianism is the same philosophical root that supports behaviorism. This becomes very significant when one defines curriculum, as do Bevis and Watson (1989), as interactions and transactions between and

among teachers and students with the intent that learning take place. This definition removes the usual means-ends split that marks much of conventional nursing curriculum. The means-ends split makes curriculum or student behavioral objectives the ends and teaching the means for obtaining those ends. When what actually occurs between and among teachers and students becomes curriculum, then the emphasis shifts from the objectives (which become part of the curriculum plan if they are listed at all) to teaching/learning, which is the living curriculum. This shift requires that faculties take a look at teaching through a different lens. Teaching, then, must be congruent with a philosophy of emancipation. The usual authoritarianism of traditional teaching roles requires displacement, and some means of selecting liberating teaching strategies must be devised. This article addresses these issues.

## **Narrative Teaching**

At the heart of the conventional curriculum is narrative teaching. Narrative teaching is lecture. As long as lecture prevails as the customary and accepted approach to teaching, little progress can be made toward emancipation. Emancipation requires schooling practices that are

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liberating—those that foster a direct relationship between the issues and the student and that place the teacher in meta-strategist, dialogical, and consultative roles. The position in this work is that lecture is, by its very nature, oppressive and counter-emancipatory.

Examining this proposition requires first that the nature of oppression be examined. That which overpowers, overwhelms, or overcomes is oppressive. That which exerts authority over another's mind or will, even while the victim does not perceive it as oppressive, is so. That which, through subtle or blatant means, reduces options, prescribes thoughts and behaviors, diminishes critical consciousness of prevailing political and economic hegemony, or decreases opportunities to construct knowledge (or its corollary: increases received knowledge) is oppressive. That which encourages one to accept the authority of another rather than encourages the scholarship that is the basis for investigating the assumptions and information through which one arrives at both questions and conclusions is oppressive.

All lecture is oppressive, but all teacher talk is not lecture. When students are working on a project, an idea, a position, or a problem and become interested in dialogue and answers to questions, become in need of information and of some scholarly "secret," seek the benefits of experience, or desire some guidance through the jungle of the structure of the field of study—then it is not oppressive for the teacher to supply that need, to respond to that desire. Such tendering of information, guidance, resources, experience, or "secrets" becomes supportive of emancipation. This is true if help is asked for and given in the spirit of co-scholarship, not in the spirit of authoritarian purveying of received knowledge.

## Lecture's Dialectical Tensions

There are many dialectical tensions inherent in lecture; two are critical to discuss here. First, there is the tension between the need to learn to think critically, the need for consciousness of the political hegemony\* in our environments, and the contravening need for the information or content upon which critical thinking can operate. Information, by its nature, is usually packaged by someone else. The normal learner is, for the most part, an information consumer. If one is not a generator of information, not a researcher, and not one who collects, collates, and organizes data, then one must gain it by secondary means. It is acquired by consumer modalities such as reading, watching movies, following learning guides and programmed instruction, and lis-

\*Hegemony is a word that is used to express the way in which ideological control is diffused throughout society; the subtle shaping of the individual through ideological control and socialization in every area of daily life. It is unconscious social conditioning until brought into critical awareness.

tening to lectures. All of these modes are more passive than active. The tension exists because information is often the precursor to knowledge, is necessary to it, and is the content upon which scholarly skills and education rest. It is also easily obtained via lecture. Even though lecture is oppressive and the lecturer can exert control by controlling the type, quality, and nature of the information, it remains an effective way to disseminate information—thus the tension.

Second, there is a tension between the goal of individual autonomy and personal power and the contravening obligation to relatedness to community and the sense of connectedness to and responsibility for others that compels the educated person. Autonomy is held by many to be the achievement of maturity, the highest state in development (Kohlberg, 1971; Piaget, 1977). Gilligan (1982), however, working from within a framework of cognitive psychology, challenged this point of view. She investigated the distinctiveness of women's moral development and proposed that women think more in terms of responsibility. She spoke of choices being made within a sense of mutuality and concern, of ongoing dialogue and discussion, and of cooperation rather than competition. Since women's maturity is manifested in social responsibility, women in our society must have within them some tension between the autonomy (read independence or non-group-oriented learning) fostered by lecture and the social/group responsibility fostered by problem-posing, dialogical, group-centered education. These tensions, these conflicting "goods," have no easy solution nor any ready answers. It is enough at this point that one considers their points of view, their place of reference, and their contextual necessities.

## Lecture as Oppression

Lecture makes students consumers of information made private (sometimes misconstrued as knowledge). Gowin (1988) says in the forward to Greene's (1988) book entitled *The Dialectic of Freedom* that "learning, and learning how to learn, give us freedom from oppression. Meaning, and controlling meaning, is the key to oppression." He added that "like E.B. White, who wrote that he just wanted to keep the minutes of his own meeting, we must learn to compose our own scripts of meaning." Lecturing does not teach how to learn, how to critique, nor how to come to our own meanings. It can provide information that can be used to raise consciousness, to alter perceptions, to shape criticism, and to feed meanings. It is not the lecture or the lecturer, however, that does that: it is what the learner does with the information derived from a lecture that can do that.

The lecturer provides information that has already been digested: information that has been gathered, analyzed, sorted, shriven (absolved of its sins), washed, tested, put in some desired order, and made to support

some position. This is its very nature and by that nature it is oppressive: perhaps not in intent but in fact. Few teachers intend to be oppressive and those of us who lecture feel discounted and defensive when named as oppressors. Lecture continues to exist and maintain its position of primacy because it is a pedagogical tradition. We lecture because we were taught by lecture and we seldom question its universal use or its efficacy. It is efficacious for achieving certain predetermined ends but problematical for educational ones. Freire (1970) approached the problem directly:

A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness (p. 57).

It is only in the best of arguments, the most intelligent of dialogues, that the same information can be made to support incompatible positions. It is through such arguments, such dialogue, such discussion, that the subtle meanings emerge and truth is approached.

Freire (1970) suggested that teachers and students are co-responsible for education. He proposed that students cannot go from "oppressed" states of being, from being listening objects, inheritors of received and predigested knowledge, to being subjects who are responsible for their own lives and for shaping society. Schooling is not preparation for life: it is life.

Self-depreciation is characteristic of the oppressed. Freire said that self-depreciation "derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. . . . They call themselves ignorant and say the 'professor' is the one who has knowledge and to whom they should listen. The criteria of knowledge imposed upon them are the conventional ones. . . . They have a diffuse, magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor" (pp. 49-50).

Freire (1970) described the current mode of teaching as the "banking concept" of education. "Knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as process of inquiry" (p. 58).

Freire's banking concept of education is a description of teaching as lecturing, as narration. The points he made may be related to the lecture format of educating. He maintained that the teacher teaches, knows everything, thinks, talks, disciplines, chooses, acts, selects the content, has the authority, and is the subject of the learning process. Students, on the other hand, are taught, know nothing, accept the teacher's thoughts, listen, are disciplined, comply, have the illusion of acting, adapt, and are objects in the enterprise.

Freire, commenting on the banking concept of education, said that in traditional education students are the depositories

and the teacher is the depositor; that communicating consists of the teacher issuing communiques and making deposits that the students receive, memorize, and repeat. He maintained that in this "banking" concept of education, the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They can have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store, but in the last analysis, it is students who are filed away through lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system.

## Emancipatory Teaching

Freire (1970) maintained that, "apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p.58). Freire recommended problem-posing education as an antidote to the oppressive "banking" education that is traditional today. Problem-posing education has dialogue as its vehicle, and dialogue requires direct involvement. Dialogue, argument, position papers, investigation, and other active strategies have liberating and educating attributes. It makes people more fully human and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality. Freire (1970) proposed that, "because dialogue is an encounter among men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some men name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one man by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of men" (p. 76).

There are complex dynamics involved in decisions about the lecture as a teaching strategy. On the one hand there is the behaviorist tradition in curriculum. Though it has proved the rationale for many active and participatory learning strategies, it is, when all is weighed in the balance, solidly an authoritarian philosophy. It is a philosophy that provides that specific behaviors be predetermined (usually by the teacher) and that content and teaching strategies be selected that have a high probability of achieving those objectives. It further provides that evaluation strategies be devised that determine the extent and degree the student has achieved the specified behaviors. Narrative teaching (lecture) is not the only teaching strategy used to achieve these ends, but it is, in the traditional curriculum, the most popular one and is congruent with the philosophy inherent in behaviorism.

On the other hand is emancipatory curriculum. It is solidly egalitarian. It is from a philosophical context that provides that general directions be conjointly determined and that content and teaching strategies must be selected that conform to criteria that support critical consciousness, liberation, responsibility to and for community, counter-hegemony, and critical-thinking scholarship. It



further provides that evaluation strategies be devised that rely on connoisseurship, criticism, and scholar collaboration. Many teaching strategies may be used to achieve these ends, but lecture is seldom one of them.

### Distinctions Regarding What Teachers Do

The philosophical foundations of the behavioral and emancipatory curricula models are quite different and express these differences in the way they influence the selection of teaching strategies and learning experiences. Defining teaching and understanding the philosophical underpinnings require one to think about the intentions in which teaching begins, the values that are espoused, and the ends that are to be accomplished (Greene, 1986). Philosophical beliefs affect how one thinks about what is being done in the act of teaching. Philosophical discussions with respect to differences between teaching, learning, indoctrination, training, and education can be found throughout the literature. Most contemporary philosophers view teaching as intentional activities or complexes of activities aimed at moving others to take cognitive and perhaps imaginative or creative action on their own initiatives (Greene, 1986).

Too often, faculty describe class preparation as "writing or putting a lecture together." Exploring the literature for definitions of teaching reveals that teaching as lecturing is minimalist. Among the other ways of perceiving teaching is that it is an art. Wissot (1979) suggested that teaching is an art form based on the natural compulsion in teaching to control the qualitative features in the classroom. He stated that the driving force of art is particularization, and the aim is to make statements about the specific subjective response to the physical world.

Gage (1984) described teaching as an instrumental or practical art, rather than a fine art. Being an instrumental art means that teaching departs from recipes, formulas and algorithms. It requires improvisation, spontaneity, and the handling of a vast array of considerations of form, style, rhythm, and appropriateness in very complex ways.

Klein (1969) enumerated propositions upon which he believed teaching is based. These were: teaching is a goal-oriented activity; teaching is only one of several activities with a goal of learning; teaching is a pattern of action that must be repeatable, public, and intelligible; teaching involves interaction between human beings; and teaching presupposes treating human beings as persons, as free and rational agents. He perceived the last two presuppositions as the most important in differentiating teaching from other activities, such as indoctrination and conditioning. Accepting the premise that lecture is oppressive, it would not be acceptable as a teaching strategy in emancipatory-educational-caring models. Bevis and Watson (1989) distinguish between

teaching and instruction, each requiring entirely different role sets. They propose teaching to be emancipatory education and instruction to be training and indoctrination. Teaching and instruction then require different role sets. Bevis and Watson propose that emancipatory education requires teachers to be meta-strategists, problem-posers, consultants, and nurturers of curiosity, criticism, inquiry, caring, and meaning making. They propose that training requires teachers to be information providers, demonstrators, monitors of return demonstration, discussion conductors, and validators that the school's version of "truth" has been learned.

Surfacing awareness of a personal philosophy of teaching will assist nurse educators to reflect upon their definition of teaching, their values, and the ends desired.

### Teaching and Curricular Models

Greene (1986) stated, "to examine philosophy with respect to teaching is to be concerned with clarifying the language used in describing or explaining the practice of teaching, to penetrate the arguments used in justifying what is done, and to make visible what is presumed in the formulation of purposes and aims" (p. 479). From all of this it might be concluded that one's definition of teaching and philosophical beliefs will influence the choice of curricular models. Teachers will choose curricular models that focus upon the aspects of teaching that are perceived as most important. Choosing lecture as the strategy by which to achieve the goals of learning supports training, not education, and reflects the authoritarian philosophy of the behavioral curriculum. Different strategies are needed for emancipatory-educative-caring curricular models. Emancipatory-educative-caring curricular models have, among their major characteristics, two major components that bear on the subject under examination. These are teacher-student interactions and learning experiences. It follows that these two components both reflect and shape the nature of the curriculum.

### Looking Behind Models to Purposes

The purposes of the new "curriculum revolution" models — or, if you like, the emancipatory-educative-caring models — support the importance of focusing on teacher-student interactions and learning experiences desired. For instance, Doll's structural model is based on three assumptions:

- Knowledge is created by the individual from actions, especially reflections on actions taken.
- There are structures underlying both the human mind and academic disciplines.
- The task of teaching is bridging the gap between the structures of the field and structures of the learner (Doll, 1979, p. 343).

The purpose of the structuralist model is to develop the

individual into an autonomous and reflective thinker: that is, one who can formulate his or her own goals and possess the means with which to do so. There are five procedural principles in the model that aim at accomplishing the purpose of the model. These are action, skills and structure, diversity, play and mastery, and experience. The success of the model is dependent upon the ability of the teacher to interact with the student and the environment as the procedural principles are followed in the learning experiences created.

Another example is Diekelmann's Curriculum as Dialogue and Meaning Model (1986) that proposes that curriculum is the dialogue among teachers, practitioners, and students of what will constitute the knowledge of the nursing curriculum and role of experience. This dialogue is more than a conversation. Being in the world with each other through language and experience allows decisions to be made in the context in which faculty, students, and practitioners experience them. The success of this model is dependent upon what occurs between faculty, students, and practitioners and, according to Bevis and Watson (1989), requires a new alliance to be established.

Along with all education today, nursing education has been criticized as being ineffective and inadequate in preparing nurses. Watson (1988) states that nursing education has failed in two significant ways: Nurse educators have failed to address the issue of how to educate and continue to prepare a first level "product" for institutions; and nurse educators have failed to address the issue of how to prepare educated nurses as full health-care-giving professionals. In what ways does the choice of teaching strategies contribute to these issues? As stated earlier in this article, lecture does not teach how to learn, how to critique, how to conduct counter-hegemony campaigns, how to come to one's own meanings, how to develop a sense of community and responsibility for fellow humans. Nor do our graduate programs in education teach students what teaching strategies and learning experiences will support critical consciousness, liberation, responsibility to and for community, counter-hegemony, critical-thinking scholarship, and focus on the philosophical, moral context of health and human caring. These are the true purposes behind the new curricular models and these are the endeavors that will change health care.

### **A Different Approach to Curriculum Development**

Developing curriculum in the revolutionary models requires first a re-thinking of what is learning. The behavioral curriculum models view changes in behavior as the measure of learning, while the emancipatory-educative-caring models view learning in a much broader sense. Learning in the educative-caring curriculum models is defined in terms of not merely acquiring knowledge or gathering and correlating facts, but in seeing the significance of life as a whole, discovering lasting values,

relating learning to personal reality experience, and being aware of social injustice. Bevis and Watson (1989) define learning as educative learning:

a process in which an individual cultivates the disciplined scholarship and experiences necessary for expertise. This includes the following: acquiring insights, seeing patterns, finding meanings and significance, seeing balance and wholeness, making compassionate and wise judgments while acquiring foresight, generating creative flexible strategies, developing informed, skilled intentionality, identifying with the ethical and cultural traditions of the field, grasping the deeper structures of the knowledge base, enlarging the ability to think critically and creatively, and finding pathways to new knowledge (p. 265).

These characteristics of learning require a whole new role set for teachers and new curricular approaches.

Traditional curricular models in nursing focus on building curriculum around behavioral objectives. Rather than this objectives model, several authors propose the use of criteria for identifying activities with inherent worth (Rath, 1971), determining different types of procedures to implement the aims of education (Peters, 1973), and focusing the aim of education which calls for the creation of meaning for the individual (MacDonald, 1974).

Meaningful learning experiences shape a student's learning and education. The structuring of learning experiences is at the heart of teaching and creating an educational process for the student. Regarding this, Burton (1962) posed the idea that integration and the effect of the learner's perception are basic characteristics of learning. Chickering (1969) hypothesized that lecture, frequent evaluation, and focusing on texts lead to competition and memorization. Conversely, his research supported the hypothesis that choice and flexibility, direct experiences, discussion, and evaluation that involves frequent communication related to behavior and performance lead to the ability to analyze and synthesize, a sense of competence, freeing of interpersonal relationships, autonomy, identity, and purpose.

Structuring curriculum around sets of criteria for teacher-student interactions that support emancipation, education, caring, and criteria for devising or selecting learning activities that are reality-based and lead to insights, engagement, dialogue, inquiry, and meaning-making shifts nurse educators from the surety of the formula-driven behaviorist curricula currently in vogue to one of turgid ambiguity. But it is one that holds promise of a graduate more likely to be able to provide nursing care needed today.

Giving up the security and structure of the behaviorist models and accepting new curricula models leads nurse educators to search for ways of maintaining quality in the educational process. The development of criteria that reflect the types of teacher-student interactions and learning experiences desired is one approach to providing quality without prescriptions.

The theme of this article is emancipatory teaching, and it rests on the premise that emancipatory education

requires a new look at teaching roles and the curricular models those roles support. Teachers in nursing schools today are better prepared than ever before; they hold more master's degrees, more doctoral degrees, and are more clinically expert than ever before. The "teacher proof" curricula attempted by the exhaustive lists of objectives and the content necessary to achieve those objectives are as oppressive to these educated scholar-teachers as they are to the students in the program. Nurse educators are ready for these changes and are applauding the current paradigm shift in curriculum. What must not be lost is caring for the teacher while this shift is occurring. This means providing support in faculty development and developing curricular agenda in which they are the planners and power persons with the opportunity to plan, practice, and perfect new teaching roles. It is not an exaggeration to point out that the success of the paradigm shift in nursing education is dependent upon faculty development for new teaching roles and new alliances with students and with practice persons.

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