



School Life-Style, Social Interest, and Educational Reform

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Throughout the past decade, numerous calls and proposals have been made for bringing about substantive reforms in our educational system. Beginning in 1983 with the national report, "A Nation at Risk," we have witnessed a myriad of commissions, national coalition movements, research studies, and professional books all offering various suggestions for reform in school organization, curriculum, and teacher training programs. However, despite all the activity and rhetoric, little substantive change or reform has occurred in education. Most schools continue to function much as they have for the better part of this century. As stated by Futrell (1989), the past decade has consisted more of educational posturing and rhetoric than it has educational reform and change.

Throughout this period of education debate, Adlerian Psychology has remained relatively silent. While continuing to offer training programs in classroom management, little attention has been given to the larger, systemic issues involved in bringing about more comprehensive educational reform. This is a rather remarkable situation given that Alfred Adler was actively involved and concerned with the issue of bringing about changes in the educational system during the reform movement of the early twentieth century (Hoffman, 1994).

The educational reform movements in Europe and the United States at the beginning of this century were largely brought about by the rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions due to movement from an agrarian to an industrial society. Today's education reform movement is similarly a result of rapid socioeconomic changes as we move from the industrial era to a technological society within a global economy.

It seems appropriate then for Adlerian Psychology to once again address the larger, more complex issues of educational reform and institutional change. This manuscript is, therefore, an initial attempt to go beyond the practice of teaching specific skills to teachers and, instead, to look at the school system itself as the client. The fundamental Individual Psychology concepts of Life-style and Social Interest are applied to the existing problems or dysfunction in our educational system. These concepts are also used to outline an Adlerian view on bringing about change toward a healthier, more productive educational system.

Systemic Change and Educational Reform

All systems, whether they be individuals, families, organizations, institutions, or cultures, function in a very similar manner. Periodically, acute stress will be experienced due to changes in either the system's internal or external environment. These periods of stress result in systemic disequilibrium, disorders, dysfunction, or disease. In regard to cognitive development, Piaget (1970, 1981) suggested that individuals respond to such disequilibrium by employing processes of either assimilation or accommodation to return the system to equilibration. A similar process has been suggested in regard to system dynamics in the fields of physics and biochemistry (Prigogine, 1981; Prigogine & Nicolis, 1977; Jantsch, 1981) using the terms equilibrium and dissipative change. Turbulent environmental stresses or internal conflicts impacting a system require unique change processes if the system is to return to a functional equilibrium. Failure to implement such a unique change results in systemic dysfunction.

Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch (1974) have described systems as responding in either of two ways to the stress of environmental change. They suggest that when confronted with a state of disequilibrium, a system will respond by means of employing either first-order or second-order change processes. First-order changes are those which involve new behaviors but without producing any change in the underlying meta-rule systems or rules of interaction upon which the system's structures and methods are based (i.e., change without change). Second-order change, in contrast, involves a fundamental or morphogenic change in the underlying rule structures upon which the system functions. This is the paradox governing all systems; to remain stable and functional, a system must periodically undergo fundamental change and transformation.

This view of systemic functioning describes precisely the situation currently confronting our public education system. We have experienced unprecedented social, political, and economic changes. The end of the cold war and rapid transitions to a technological economy within an emerging

global economy confronts us with distinctly different world and social conditions than we've experienced in the past. Economic changes have, in turn, brought about significant social changes including high family mobility, weakening the sense of community; rapid access to communication and information via technology; and changes in social structures and institutions. Such rapid and profound change requires that we again address the issue of what type of person are our schools and families attempting to prepare for this new society and how effective are these two institutions in achieving this task.

Our educational systems are faced with the task of adapting to these changing social, political, and economic environmental circumstances to remain (or become) functional, healthy systems for developing capable youth. Unfortunately, like all systems, education has a powerful capacity to resist and avoid substantive change. Educational reforms fail due to the natural tendency of all systems to maintain homeostasis, to avoid substantive change. First-order change processes are most often offered such as the implementation of new curriculum and teaching methodologies, new school organizational structures; testing programs; graduation requirements; or educational technologies. By emphasizing the mechanics of education, schools avoid the more complex and fundamental issues involved in true reform and second-order change processes. That is, schools avoid the crucial reform questions of, "What is the actual purpose or goal of education?," "What are the guiding assumptions underlying current educational practices?," "How do these practices, in turn, affect those who inhabit the school?," and finally, "Are these accepted practices consistent with the development of the 'product' which education seeks to produce?"

Understanding the Goal of Education

From the perspective of Adlerian Psychology, the product, goal, or purpose of education in today's world could be described as developing capable, responsible, and productive youth possessing not only the academic but also the social skills necessary for active participation in a democratic society, international community, and technology-based global economy. The ability of schools to develop capable youth depends upon the relative health of the educational system itself. Both systems theory and Individual Psychology have emphasized the importance of the social context, the interrelatedness of systems, in human behavior. As Gray (1972) stated,

The human being is an organized system, suspended in multiple systems, large and small, of physical, social, economic, and cultural type, and his [or her] mental health depends upon the effectiveness of the systems operations that

govern his [or her] relationships with the larger system in which he [or she] exists (p. 126).

The effectiveness of a system's operations is, in turn, determined by the relative health of that system's rules of interaction. All systems function on the basis of a relatively small, yet highly salient, set of rules which govern the operation or behaviors of that system (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991; Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). These rules of interaction, referred to in Individual Psychology as Life-style (Shulman & Mosak, 1988), are discernable through the observation of the characteristic, repetitive, interactional behaviors occurring within the system. All systems, in other words, develop a characteristic "Life-style," an organizational personality or culture, characterized by this small, yet highly salient set of rules, beliefs, and apperceptions operating at a preconscious level. The relative health of an educational system's life-style determines the effectiveness of the school in developing capable youth for society.

School Life-style

When an individual functions on the basis of dysfunctional beliefs or rules of interaction (i.e., mistaken life-style), we find pathology to some degree in his or her behavior. A therapist seeks not merely to change the behavior (i.e., first-order change) but to effect positive change in the cognitive structures, the mistaken beliefs and ideas which maintain the problematic behavior; that is, to effect second-order change in the client's life-style.

Such is also the case when working with schools. Traditional educational practices are based on underlying beliefs, apperceptions, and values shared, at a level of unawareness, by the majority of teachers in the school (Weissglass, 1992). We can only improve schools by addressing the "school" as client; a client with mistaken beliefs in its organizational culture, its school life-style. We must assist schools to develop healthier life-styles based on the democratic principles of community, involvement, equality, mutual respect, caring, cooperation, and responsibility for self and to others, i.e., social interest. As Alfred Adler stated more than 60 years ago,

the honest psychologist cannot shut his [or her] eyes to social conditions which prevent the child from becoming a part of the community and from feeling at home in the world and which allow him [or her] to grow up as though he [or she] lived in enemy country. Thus the psychologist must work against . . . unemployment which plunges people into hopelessness; and against all other obstacles which interfere with the spreading of social interest in the family, the school, and society at large (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 454).

Using the terms "school ethos" and "school climate" for what I am calling the

school life-style, a number of researchers investigating effective schools and teachers have addressed this same issue. Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith (1979) found a strong association between overall school process variables and achievement outcome measures concluding, "this suggests that the cumulative effect of these various social factors may be the creation of a school ethos, or set of values, attitudes and behaviors which characterize the school" (p. 580). Research by Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker (1979) found that school climate variables explain as much variation in achievement, self-reliance, and self-concept as do input variables (composition of student body, school structure, instructional methods).

Studies by Goodlad (1983), Finn (1983), and Little (1982) have each indicated the importance of addressing the school life-style to understand effectiveness and to initiate change. Goodlad (1983) cautioned that while most schools appear to be quite similar, this is in respect to superficial matters only (e.g., organizational structures, curriculum, etc.). Successful schools vary in often subtle qualitative ways. Goodlad continued to caution that effecting change in ineffective schools is difficult as they are not healthy organisms. The first step, he suggested, is for schools to become more satisfying places for those associated with them, teachers and students alike.

Schools, as clients, need to be confronted with data about their present condition, i.e., with their life-styles. The change process requires the providing of support and encouragement in the process of reexamining underlying assumptions, life-style themes, about the nature of learning, the learner, and the educational process. It is when school personnel have addressed the mistaken beliefs and assumptions governing school practices that they can then move on to learning and implementing new, more constructive skills and techniques of education and classroom management. As noted by Eisner (1991), the school staff must reconsider the true mission and purpose of the system and then begin to create conditions consistent with that mission. Indeed, unless the school life-style is relatively healthy (i.e., consistent with the principles of social interest), it is likely that any attempts to introduce more positive and encouraging skills for working with students will meet with limited success. Behavioral skills incongruent with the "client's" life-style are unlikely to be incorporated into regular teaching practice. Change processes must first take into consideration the school's life-style and facilitating change at this level before going on to the teaching of practical behavioral skills.

School Life-style Assessment

We can assess the life-style of a school in several ways. Similar to assessing an individual's life-style, we can look at the stories told and the informal sharing of school history among faculty to understand a school's life-

style. What are the underlying themes present in these stories; what view of children and education is shared? Do the themes suggest a common view of curriculum as the primary concern of teachers, or that, there's nothing we can do, kids/parents are our adversaries, or control of behavior and compliance with authority as the most important classroom objective? Healthier school life-styles are reflected in stories of times the staff made a difference, success stories, and the sharing of positive, constructive ideas for fostering respect, equality, cooperation, and responsibility between and among students and staff?

A second technique for assessing the school life-style is to look at the rituals and traditions within the system. Rituals are actions that become part of the cultural routine. Rituals refer to the regular, consistent, repeated activities that serve the purpose of denoting for and reinforcing in members what is important and valued in the system. There are many examples of dysfunctional, counter-productive rituals commonly found in our current educational system: grouping students by ability; competitive grading practices; emphasis on rote learning; segregated classes for special needs students; extrinsic reward and coercive classroom management strategies to control behavior; diagnosing and labeling problem students by focusing on disability rather than ability; marking only the mistakes on a student's papers; posting only the best or perfect papers; or instruction based on teachers talking while students passively listen.

These consistent, repeated behaviors, the rituals and traditions of education, suggest some common themes in the underlying belief systems which constitute many school life-styles. They suggest a shared perception of learning as a passive process requiring obedience and compliance with authority. Children as a separate class of lower-status humans in need of autocratic measures to keep them under the control of authority and who must be forced (via bribery or threat) to learn. A system in which children are to be sorted and graded on a competitive basis in an effort to identify the best and brightest for some larger societal objective.

Too many of our schools, in other words, have become unhealthy systems with mistaken, counterproductive life-styles. These school life-styles lack sufficient social interest and become less effective in addressing "Life Tasks." In turn, the behaviors of those who inhabit the system become increasingly useless or destructive.

Affects of School Life-style on Students. Both Hart (1987) and Garbarino (1979) have noted that, when a broad definition of maltreatment is used, many schools are directly culpable of the psychological maltreatment of children. Due to mistaken/destructive beliefs regarding children, school staff often utilize destructive actions and behaviors which adversely

influence the perspective students hold in regard to themselves, human relationships, and the process of living. That is, they adversely impact the development of social interest in the students with whom they work. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognized this by noting that children need more than protection of their physical development. They also have a right to be provided environments which foster their psychological development into a productive and mentally healthy adulthood (Cohen & Naimark, 1991; Melton, 1991).

Unfortunately, another common, mistaken belief in the life-style of most schools safeguards the system from confronting the affects of the school's environment on children. This mistaken belief is that problems in the academic and behavioral adjustment of students lies solely or primarily within the child. Students experiencing difficulties in school are routinely observed, tested, and diagnosed and labeled for "their problem" and special education needs. The emphasis is then placed on developing individualized, special education programs to which children who are labeled "disabled" or "at risk" are assigned. Little consideration is given to possible environmental, interactional processes which may play a significant role in the etiology and/or maintenance of the problem. Linear, rather than circular, causality is assumed which serves the function of protecting the system from second-order, morphogenic change processes.

Research has documented the adverse impact of many traditional rituals of schooling. Grouping and tracking practices based on perceived student ability have, for example, been found to adversely affect achievement, motivation and social development of students (Eder, 1981, 1983; Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1988). Levine (1983) and Nichols (1979) have documented the adverse impact of competitive classroom environments on achievement, motivation and interpersonal relationships among all students. Finally, schools which employ extrinsic reward systems and emphasize control through threats of punishment, close surveillance of activity, and comparative evaluations have been shown to adversely affect motivation to learn, effort, and achievement (Matthews, 1991; Clifford, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Lepper & Hodell, 1989; Kruglanski, Stein, & Ritter, 1977; Zbrzezny, 1989).

Rutter (1988), on the other hand, found that the most effective schools were those which created environments and practices emphasizing positive, affiliative relationships among students and between students and staff. Such schools paid greater attention to students' individual needs, democratic governance structures with teachers sharing in decision making and providing a climate of innovation and risk taking. Classrooms high in student involvement, affiliation, and cohesion and which are perceived by students as satisfying and enjoyable places to be have been correlated with higher student achievement, better attending behavior by students, and increased interest in

learning (Anderson, 1970; Crocker, 1986; Moos & Moos, 1978, 1979; Walberg, 1971; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1990; Walberg & Anderson, 1972).

School Life-style Effects on Teachers. Equally important is the question of what effects mistaken or pathological school life-styles have upon teachers working within negative environments. Rosenholtz' (1989) research identified workplace dissatisfaction as the major sources of teacher absenteeism, low work investment, and ineffectiveness in helping students gain academically. Dissatisfied teachers with low morale and low motivation were found to unconsciously redefine their situations attributing success to having the luck of a "good" class this year rather than upon anything they did. Such teachers converse more with colleagues about nonteaching-related matters and poor working conditions. Negative teacher talk creates a circular causality pattern whereby frequent reference to how difficult and hopeless work is and problems with parents, students, and administration serve only to further discourage staff and to reinforce the shared mistaken belief that the odds are overwhelming and no one can reasonably expect to succeed.

Research has indicated a second common self-esteem safeguarding strategy used by teachers in schools with mistaken life-styles. When their instructional success is in doubt, many teachers will substitute alternative definitions to student learning as measures of professional fulfillment (Rosenholtz, 1989). For example, they will focus more on friendships than professional relationships with colleagues or, attend more to adversarial relationships with the administration through union activism instead of teaching. Indeed, in such schools, status and influence often lies with those in powerful union positions rather than with the best teachers. Dysfunctional, unhealthy schools are most often characterized by the redefining of the major objective of teaching as one of maintaining control of students (i.e., compliance with their positional authority) rather than educating and motivating children.

Stressful, nonsupportive school environments have been shown to adversely impact teachers' interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues thereby decreasing their effectiveness (Alschuler, 1984). Jameson (1980) has pointed out that teachers in high stress, low support work environments experience reduced effectiveness in the classroom, increased interpersonal difficulties and develop a self-protective "blaming-others" orientation to problems. However, teachers have been found to deal more effectively with stress and to experience less burn-out problems when working in supportive, encouraging school environments (Farber & Miller, 1981; Fimian, 1986).

For a school to be effective, its school life-style must be congruent with

the principles of Social Interest. This involves not only teaching practices but school organization and management practices as well. Schools must provide, for teachers and students alike, opportunities for developing a sense of competence and self-worth. Autonomy and responsibility rather than dependency and compliance must be facilitated and encouraged within schools by giving students and teachers opportunities to make meaningful decisions on those issues of consequence to them. Too often students are taught to depend upon adults and teachers who, in turn, depend upon administrators for decision making; an external locus of control and irresponsibility are thereby fostered in such autocratic educational environments.

Social Interest and Empowerment. The challenge of developing youth capable of functioning effectively in a democratic, international society requires schools to undergo fundamental, second-order change. This will involve moving to educational practices designed to empower rather than to overpower students. To empower is to enable another. Such is the essence of the democratic process. The autocratic system seeks to overpower and control while the democratic system seeks to empower its citizens for equality, mutual understanding, cooperation, and responsibility.

The term, empowerment, has much in common with Adler's concept of Social Interest or *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*. An empowered individual feels connected to others, a sense of belonging, acceptance, and value as an equal and competent individual. The empowered person feels confident in his or her abilities; that one's abilities and talents are recognized and appreciated by others. Mutual respect and comfort in both seeking assistance and working cooperatively enable one to take responsibility for his or her own life and fosters a sense of personal courage for undertaking the solution of life's tasks in a socially useful manner.

Clearly, if we consider the goal or purpose of our schools as being to empower students for responsible contribution in a democratic, participatory society and global economy, they cannot receive such training in the overpowering, autocratic bureaucracies of traditional schools (Futrell, 1989). Teachers cannot be expected to prepare students for life in a rapidly changing society if they themselves are condemned to teach in a system of static, externally imposed standards, structures, and curricular requirements. All children and teachers must experience school as a dynamic, caring community focused on encouraging and empowering all who inhabit it to reach their maximum human potential.

Adler's concept of *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, social interest, is at the very heart of the second-order change process required for true educational reform to occur. Schools need to move away from their focus on curricular

reforms and move to the issue of developing school life-styles, organizational cultures, consistent with the principles of Social Interest. Schools will need to embrace as a primary function or objective of education the development of Social Interest in the students they serve and whom they are to prepare for productive, responsible lives in society.

Our youth are today confronted with the task of becoming effective, capable, and contributing citizens within an environment of rapidly changing social, economic, and political structures. The dramatic increases we have witnessed over the past few decades in the United States in regard to such problems among our youth such as drug and alcohol abuse, violence, suicide, truancy, school failures, drop-outs, and vandalism speak to the potential hazards and problems inherent in times of rapid social change.

Most of the problems manifested by children and youth, Adler suggested, could be traced back to insufficient development of their Social Interest. That is, they lack a sufficiently developed sense of self-esteem as a result of insufficient training in the social skills of empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Research has, in recent years, provided empirical confirmation of Adler's observations. Each of the social problems noted above which adversely affect our youth have been found to share one important etiological factor, insufficient social skills development in problem youth (Barnes & Welte, 1986; Combs & Slaby, 1977; Gardner & Cole, 1987; Halebsky, 1987; Hanson, Myers, & Ginsburg, 1987; Helsel & Matson, 1984; Hymel & Asher, 1977; Tishler, McKenry, & Morgan, 1981; Oetting & Beauvais, 1987; Teicher & Jacobs, 1966; Topol & Reznikoff, 1982; Ullman, 1975). Johnson and Johnson (1989) have further summarized the research on social skills by concluding that social skills may well be the most important set of skills influencing one's future employability, productiveness, and career success.

A California Task Force on Self-Esteem (1990) recently called for developing a "Social Vaccine" for youth in these times of social, political, and economic change. They called for developing programs and practices in our schools that create a positive school environment fostering mental health in students and thereby immunizing them from the myriad of social problems which they will encounter. Such a call is reminiscent of the anthropologist, Ashley Montagu, who once stated that Human Relations training must become the fourth "R" and be placed,

. . . first, foremost and always in the order of importance as a principle reason for the existence of the school . . . We must train for humanity, and training in reading, writing and arithmetic must be given in a manner calculated to serve the ends of that humanity. For all the knowledge in the world is worse than useless if it is not humanely understood and humanely used. An intelligence that is not humane is the most dangerous thing in the world (Montagu, 1951, p. 111).

Ashley Montagu's words were recently echoed by Vaclav Havel, speaking as president of the Czech Republic regarding the task of moving from a communist to a democratic nation. He stated that the process will require his country's schools to be fully reformed, and

The most important thing is a new concept of education. At all levels schools must cultivate a spirit of free and independent thinking in the students . . . schools will have to be humanized . . . schools must lead young people to become self-confident, participating citizens (1993, p. 92).

These observations once again echo the words of Alfred Adler (almost three-quarters of a century earlier): "We should be concerned to create and foster those environmental influences which make it difficult for a child to get a mistaken notion of the meaning of life and to form a faulty style of life" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 454).

This "social vaccine," training in human relations, can be realized through a combination of methods. First, we need to actively develop positive school cultures (i.e., school life-styles high in social interest). Teachers and administrators can be assisted in developing environmental conditions which foster *gemeinschaftsgefühl* while avoiding those practices that destroy or are contrary to it. Second, we will need to implement programs designed to directly teach the objective skills of Social Interest to youth.

Developing Social Interest in the School Environment. Improving the school life-style involves the same process as with an individual client. The school community (administrators, teachers, parents, students) must be gently confronted with the mistaken beliefs and practices of traditional schools and the adverse consequences of such practices. Second, the total school community will need to be assisted and encouraged to work cooperatively in developing and implementing new, positive educational rituals consistent with the concept of social interest; empowering rituals for teachers, parents, and students. Every school might begin by transforming their school improvement team or parent advisory council into a School Life-Style Committee, a committee consisting of parents, teachers, and students working together in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. The mission of this educational committee or "total quality management" team, to use the jargon of business and industry today, would be to transform the culture and climate and make it consistent with the principles of social interest.

Each and every routine and daily practice, the institutionalized rituals of teaching, will need to be examined carefully and evaluated as to its relative impact on developing a sense of community, equality, capability, and responsibility. Do the school's practices emphasize the inherent dignity and

value of each person, foster courage, mutual understanding and acceptance, self-confidence, cooperation, motivation, individual responsibility, and contribution to others? The task of the School Life-Style Committee would be to suggest new, positive rituals and practices for fostering the development of *gemeinschaftsgefühl* among all those who inhabit the school: teachers, students, parents, and administrators alike.

School administrators will need to become more aware of the affects school policies and practices have upon teachers' morale and psychological well-being. School administrators will need assistance in learning to first establish a vision or goal and then give responsibility, freedom, independence, and individual discretion to teachers in carrying out their assigned tasks toward achieving that goal. Reforming our schools, in other words, must become a democratic, bottom-up process of empowerment rather than an autocratic, top-down process of controlling. Research by deCharms and Muir (1978) demonstrated that as teachers come to perceive themselves as having choices, opportunities, and autonomy, their work investment, satisfaction, and academic success with students increased dramatically. Teachers need to experience a school environment in which they feel valued, respected, and are empowered by being provided maximum opportunities for cooperative decision making and to take responsibility for developing a curriculum most appropriate to their particular student population.

Developing Social Interest in Youth. We need also to implement methods of developing social interest in students. Adler (1979) originally suggested the German term "*gemeinschaftsgefühl*" (Social Interest) to describe mental health. This concept suggests the mentally healthy individual as being other, or community, oriented and feeling connected to, accepted by, and on an equal footing with all humankind. Ansbacher (1968) summarized Adler's concept for mental health by describing it as a life process, an interest in the interests of humankind, a sense of security and feeling at home on this earth through feeling oneself to be connected to others on an equal and cooperative basis. The mentally healthy individual, Adler (1979) suggested, is able to understand and appreciate the subjective experiences and opinions of others and behaves in a responsible, cooperative, and contributive manner. Such an individual is other-centered and constructively interested in the whole of life.

In reviewing Adler's writings on social interest, Ansbacher (1968) noted that he appeared to suggest a three-stage model for development of social interest. This conceptual framework for the developing social interest, or mental health, consists of:

Stage One: Mental health, or social interest, is an innate aptitude for cooperative, responsible social living. We are all born with this

aptitude but it must be developed through training in the home, school, and community.

Stage Two: The individual is taught the objective skills of mentally healthy living. In other words, the innate aptitude is developed through social skills training. The basic, objective social skills implied in Adler's writings are those of: (a) understanding self and others, (b) empathy skills, (c) communication skills, (d) cooperation skills, and (e) the skills of responsibility or, responsible contribution.

Stage Three: Subjective attitudes, consistent with the basic objective skills, develop as the skills are learned and mastered. That is, as children develop the objective social skills of mental health, a subjective, evaluative attitude emerges by which they evaluate the behavioral choices of both themselves and others based upon the degree to which the five objective skills are reflected.

In regard to mental health, Adler essentially operationalized Aristotle's idea that one becomes virtuous by performing virtuous acts; kind by doing kind acts; brave by doing brave acts. That is, one develops social interest by performing acts of social interest.

This developmental model for social interest provides a conceptual framework for implementing programs in our schools intended to develop the essential social skills necessary for effective living in a democratic society, the skills of *gemeinschaftsgefühl*. Educators can teach the objective social skills (i.e., stage two) of social interest much like a classroom teacher strives to develop innate mathematical aptitudes by teaching the basic skills of mathematics. A more complete discussion of building programs for teaching the skills of social interest has been previously described (Nicoll, 1994).

Such a program would promote not only positive individual social development but also positively affect classroom group development. A prevention-based program would be established preparing youth for living effectively and productively in a democratic society. As Adler (1931) consistently emphasized, teachers who take time to work on students' social development will find their job simultaneously amplified and simplified. It is unquestionably far simpler and more efficient to teach the socially well-adjusted, cooperative, responsible child than it is to nag, prod, and threaten along the poorly adjusted, irresponsible, uncooperative child. Educational research has since provided considerable objective evidence supporting Adler's observation regarding the positive relationship between students' social-emotional adjustment and their academic achievement (Feldhusen, Thurston, & Benning, 1970; Kim, Anderson, & Bashaw, 1968; Schaps, Solomon, & Watson, 1985).

By emphasizing community, understanding, positive communication, cooperation, and responsibility, we can create healthier school life-styles. By

so doing we would enhance the social climate of classrooms and schools. Educational research has clearly documented that improving a classroom's social climate has a direct, positive impact upon students' academic performance (Humphrey, 1984; Jennings, 1951; Matthews, 1991; Moos, 1979; Stanford, 1977; Toro, et al., 1985; Wright & Cowen, 1982; Wright, Cowen, & Kaplan, 1982).

The educational field is, in effect, faced with the same paradox as that first described by Peters and Waterman (1982) for effective business practice. The more schools become number focused (i.e., improved test scores, increased credit requirements, and so forth), the less effective they will become on these same quantitative dimensions. Optimally effective schools on the other hand, like optimally effective businesses, are found to focus on the needs of their customer, the student, and upon empowering and motivating their professional staff. The Adlerian concepts of life-style and social interest therefore seem particularly applicable to the task of bringing about true educational reform. They focus our attention on the school as client and the need to examine the underlying belief system inherent in the practices of education and the need to make fundamental, second-order changes at the level of the school culture and classroom climate, the school's life-style.

Summary

Educational reforms have mistakenly looked to develop new instructional methods and curriculum designed to produce more high achieving students. Many educators and educational consultants have often mistakenly tried to introduce new classroom management methods to improve schools only to experience the frustration of seeing the methods rejected, distorted, or soon forgotten. Initiating true educational change and reform will require that we make a fundamental shift, a second-order change, in education and focus efforts first upon creating healthier, more effective, school life-styles. Schools which strive to create a positive, encouraging working environment for staff and a positive, encouraging learning environment for students. School life-styles are high in social interests where all who inhabit the school feel valued, respected and encouraged, and where the focus is on individual interests, abilities, and improvement, rather than on deficiencies. Schools that encourage confidence and optimism in both teachers and students. Schools in which the shared goal, the number one priority of the school's life-style, is to foster an interest and love of both learning and of cooperative, responsible life with one's fellow humankind.

Real educational reform, so much needed in our rapidly changing societies, will occur only when we address ourselves to creating educators who create learning environments high in caring, high in social interest.

Educators, psychologists, and counselors must work not only to teach more positive behavior management skills and instructional methodologies but, most importantly, to nurture and develop a positive school life-style. Such systems would place the highest value on facilitating among students a sense of self-worth and a deep respect for the value and dignity of all persons. A positive, constructive school life-style would value most the imparting of hope and confidence to students that they can be successful. Such schools would encourage and model understanding, empathy, cooperation, and responsible contribution. The healthy "school life-style" would seek to foster interest, involvement, cooperation, and responsibility in students such that they seek to contribute to the total world around them.

School improvement or reform will only occur when the task of initiating second-order change in the life-style of the school itself is addressed. We must strive to create mentally healthy school environments. Schools will need help in recognizing the adverse impact, for students and teachers alike, of many of its mistaken, shared beliefs. Schools will need to understand the interrelationship between social and academic development and directly involve themselves in teaching students the social, as well as academic, skills for life in a democratic society and global economy. Social Interest, *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, must become the foundational principle upon which educational reforms and improvements are based if schools are to successfully prepare youth for healthy, productive lives in a democratic, interdependent, international society.

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