

Living and Learning Develop Children

By Miguela Solis

UNIFYING DEVELOPMENT

Right Living in a Democracy:

DEMOCRACY is life — a way of living that is moral, useful, happy, socio-economically contributive, and spiritual. It is living that is both individually and socially more effective, more satisfying and more responsible. It gives tremendous reverence for life and respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings. It operates in a framework of unity through the fully shared reflective and cooperative action to achieve common goals to better living in a community that develops in an expanding and concentric movement from the smallest community unit (barrio) to the world community. It aims to achieve and maintain the greatest good for the greatest number. This is **RIGHT** Living in a Democracy. This is the essence or undulying principle of human behavior and relationship in democracies.

Chief Concerns of Educators in Child Development:

With the above operational concept of democracy in view, it becomes the chief concern of educators to determine the basic considerations in the development of democratic behavior in the children, youth and adults under their charge. The big question that confronts the educators and those involved in the desir-

able development of children and youth is: What are the basic considerations in helping children and youth develop democratic behavior? This question points to the governing principles and stimuli of behavior, the working knowledge of which is the basic foundation in the preparation of teachers. To gain competence in helping children and youth attain all-round development in democratic behavior within their limitations and cultural setup, the teachers should consider the following:

1. Major principles underlying individual development.
2. Motivations of behavior or causes of behavior.

The three major underlying principles of human development that are commonly accepted by educators, theologians, psychologists, sociologists, physiologists, pediatricists, anthropologists, and all other scientists picture the human organism as:

1. Unifying — develops as a whole.
 2. Interacting — interacts continuously with its environment.
 3. Individualizing—develops uniqueness or "self".
- These three major principles governing individual de-

velopment are interrelated, interdependent and complementary. They are equally important.

For this issue the first principle: The *organism as a unifying whole* will be discussed briefly and exemplified.

WHY of Unifying Development:

In common parlance, unifying means being one or acting as a whole or as a unit. In term of the organism, it means that the organism acts as a whole; so it should be conceived as a whole. We notice that when one prays; when one writes; when one talks; when one sings; when one gets ready to swim; when one fits a dress; that one acts as a whole. All parts of the organism are participating in accordance with their respective roles in the execution of a particular behavior or a purposeful action. The glandular, the respiratory, the circulatory, and the visceral systems, and the autonomic and central nervous systems are in readiness to cooperate and contribute, each in its natural way, in the functional operation of the organism. Physiologists reveal that a change in one part of the organism is accompanied by a compensatory change in all of the others. Likewise, psychologists reveal that thinking, feeling and acting are interrelated, inseparable parts of every conscious action or behavior. It is universally accepted that any explanation of behavior today must be consistent with the principle of *unifying action of the organism*. This is the picture of the basis of the child's need for wholeness and integrity, in the all-round development of the organism in the various phases of growth — physical, mental, emotional, creativeness, aesthetic and spiritual within her biological and psychogenic endowments and limitations which have to be correctly conceived and accepted by the child. These conception and acceptance of the child are fundamental in helping him achieve wholeness and integrity.

In short, wholeness of the child is seeing him and helping him develop not in piecemeal but as a whole — spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. For instance, when we try to understand why a certain child does not pay attention in the class, we have to perceive simultaneously her physical, mental, emotional, creative, aesthetic and spiritual endowment and limitations in the light of her cultural and environmental setup.

Child wholeness needs to be achieved. It is one of the major objectives of child development in which education plays a significant role. The development of wholeness, like education, is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. It is reflected by the manifestation of a well-oriented wholesome personality which is achieved in a life-long process. It is never com-

pleted in a particular age level. It should be integrating so that it can make adjustments to the dynamics of society; for change is the dynamic of society.

HOW of Developing Wholeness:

In helping the child develop wholeness and integrity, first he should accept his physical endowment and limitations. These include his physical strengths and disabilities and his appearance. Moving, perspiring, defecating, breathing, digesting, assimilating, feeling, and countless other body processes enable the organism to restore balance, to grow and to maintain its organization and integrity.

If a child does not accept his attributes and limitations, he not only creates adjustment problems but also blocks his achievement of unifying development. For example, Jose may insist to be a basketball player because he has the desired height yet he limps because of a left leg; and Anita isolates herself because of her homely looks. On the other hand, a child who accepts his "self" facilitates the development of wholeness more readily. For instance, Anita's homely appearance may be compensated by good posture, good taste in dresses and friendliness. Jose's leg disability may be overcome by his ability in music, fine arts, and/or craftwork and other areas of development. The child has to conceive and accept that deficiency in one or more aspects of life is compensable by excellencies in other aspects. This attitude is an asset to desirable development.

Second, adequate opportunities should be provided for meeting needs and solving problems by socially approved patterns. The child is part and parcel of the community. As such, he has to learn the socially approved patterns of behavior in order to attain appropriate adjustment to himself and with his fellows. The socially approved patterns of behavior are the desirable cultural patterns that are vital parts of the basic universal needs of the child. For example, through appropriate and cooperatively evolved teaching-learning experiences and situation, the desirable cultural patterns in: the quality and quantity of food, the preparation of the dishes, the way of dressing, the relationship between parents and child, the relationship to our Almighty God, etc., should be understood and appreciated by the child so that he will accept them as satisfactory ways of life in meeting his needs accordingly.

This is the process of attaining wholeness through the child's cultural setup. When the child is adequately founded in the desirable cultural patterns, the "self" or "ego" as Freud calls it, emerges readily to mediate

between the innate drives and cultural pressures. When the mediation is successful, the child achieves unifying development—a feeling of increased wholeness of himself and with his environment. In short, he achieves personal and societal integration or adjustment; the *personal* gives him uniqueness and the *societal* gives him wholesome group relations.

It has to be considered that *culture*, like any aspect of the universe, is subject to change. It is dynamic. The desirable new behavior patterns should be provided in the teaching-learning experiences designed to meet the child's needs satisfactorily.

Children should not be made to follow blindly or to conform too strictly to cultural demands, but should be stimulated to reflect on them in order to effect intelligent adoption. Blind adherence to social demands, more often than not, blocks unifying development on integrity of self. Either of the extremes, a child that is too sociable or one who is too independent makes the child lose his attractiveness to group acceptance. Wholeness demands for a balance of sociability and independence.

Third, wholeness in the education of the child should constitute all the aspects of growth — physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, aesthetic, creativeness, etc. Learning-teaching experiences and situations designed to achieve all these aspects of growth according to the child's natural endowments and limitations, needs, experiences and capacities should result into four major outcomes: (1) knowledges and ideas, (2) attitudes, appreciations, aspirations and ambitions, (3) skills and habits, (4) wholesome human relationships, such as courtesy, truthfulness, kindness, acceptance and execution of responsibility, cooperation, industry, and all other desirable behavior patterns. All learning experiences and situations in all units of work should purposely and meaningfully achieve all these major outcomes for all of them are equally important to the attainment and insurance of wholeness and integrity. For example, teaching *thrift*, demands for the basic knowledge and ideas on the *why, what* and *how* of *living thrift* which will serve as the basis of appreciation of *thrift practices*. The appreciation of thrift will stimulate the practice of thrift in school, at home and in the community. This work experience in thrift will be the working ground of skills and habits in thrift. *Living thrift* results from thrift habits and this becomes a sound ground for wholesome human relation.

Helping the child achieve wholesome human relation becomes the most fundamental responsibility of the school system, for the ultimate goal of education

is the achievement of a unifying self or wholesome living. The community schools are, to my mind, best fitted of the social agencies to provide the integrating or unifying experiences that are essential for the development of wholeness in children. An interested, alert, and prepared teacher in the development of child wholeness, accepts that child integrity and wholeness are reflected in his learning and behavior, in the way he perceives and meets living-learning situations, in his aspirations and hopes, and his associations with his peers and adults in making his "self".

Fourth, the child's unifying development is the privilege and responsibility of all — the home, the school and the community. All agencies in active cooperation with the home and the school pool their resources in providing the desired environment conducive to the growth of child wholeness. The child should be given every chance to grow up in socioeconomic security in the care of his parents whenever possible in an affectionate and understanding atmosphere in order to foster the full and harmonious development of his personality.

Fifth, basic to the attainment of wholeness in children is the *whole teacher*. Wholesome teacher-pupil relationship is of singular importance. Certainly, teachers lacking in wholeness will produce children of the same sort. The teacher is a key factor to the education of the child. We need WHOLE teacher to help the child develop wholeness. The wholeness of the teacher is translated into the living-learning situations knowingly and unknowingly by the teacher. The children are the keenest and most alert individuals that readily catch the teacher's revealing behavior patterns. What the teacher plans and does so do the children become. These teachers and all those helping in the development of the wholesome man in the child should remember what Earl Kelly said: "If we want to produce whole man, we will have to abandon our efforts to train or educate them in parts."

Resume:

The development of child wholeness is the essence of the total goal of community education. In the attainment of this goal, the following may be used for our guide:

1. The child is an integrating unit. He possesses functions, power, and controls which tend to operate to continue the desired wholeness of the child unless interfered with. To insure the unifying development, integrating living-learning experiences and situations evolved from the personal and societal needs, experiences, capacities, and goals of the child should be ade-



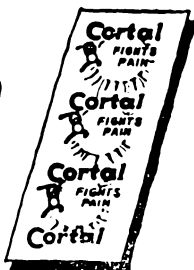
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quately provided. When the child comes to school, he comes as a whole child; he learns and lives as a whole child. When learning, he interacts in a unifying manner with the whole unifying teaching-learning situations.

2. The child possesses purposes and interests. He is an active organism. When his activity fills a need, interest is present. He naturally reacts with interest in four major fields: the first is physical activity wherein he uses the body as a whole with the hands most particularly prominently acting. The second is the use of tools in connection with some need of his own which may perhaps be only that of manipulating the tools. The third is mental reaction dominating the situation in thinking about things and solving problems that are meaningful to him are outstanding. The fourth is the associative activities of people around him — of his peers and the adults. Through his gradually and broadening contacts with people, he becomes concerned and enthused in all the vital aspects of human life and the total environment.

3. The individual is indivisible. In all his tasks at home, in school or in the community, all his facets of growth play a part, for all of them are interrelated and interdependent, — one facet or aspect influencing the other.

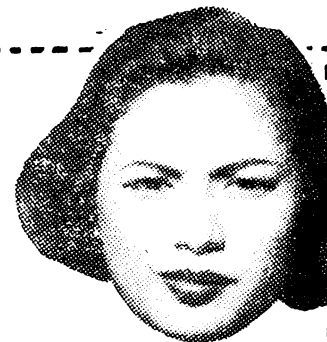
4. Adequate opportunities should be provided for meeting needs and solving problems by socially approved behavior patterns in order to achieve the expected adjustment and social security.

5. All learning-living experiences and situations should be meaningfully and purposefully designed to achieve the four basic outcomes — knowledges, attitudes-aspirations, skill-habits, and human relations which are fundamental in the achievement of all the areas of living constituting wholeness.

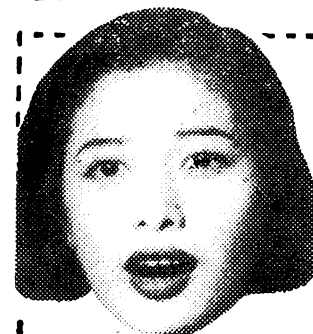
6. Child unifying development is the responsibility and privilege of all individuals and institutions. They should pool all their resources in systematic, continuous and cooperative processes to help the child achieve his need for wholeness.

7. Basic to the attainment of wholeness in children is the *whole* teacher. The teacher as a person and as a teacher should be competently prepared to help the child develop wholesome personality.

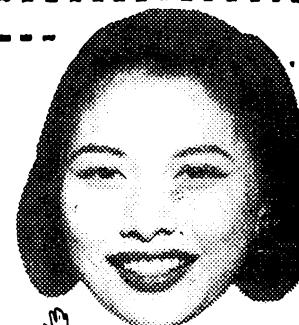
The emphasis in child wholeness can never be overdone if we recall what Rizal said, "The future of the nation depends immeasurably on the uprightness and whole development of its youth and children." On top of what is said, God reminds us— "These children deserve all our love and attention for they are created in the image of our FATHER.



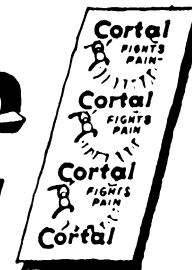
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