Personal Model

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# Introduction

Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2009) outline several purposes for the personal family of models. The use of these models can lead students towards greater emotional and mental health as they develop self-confidence and evaluate their personality against the backdrop of realistic mirror. The personal models help students engage in their own learning based on their understanding of how they learn as well as on their aspirations and goals for learning. These models also tap into student creativity and personal expression focusing on their qualitative thinking.

Depending on their comprehensive focus on not only academics but also the metacognition and emotional health of students, personal models can be used in different ways. They can act as standalone approaches or enhance other learning and teaching strategies to help students build ownership of their own learning and become self-sufficient and healthy human beings. Some of the aspects of the curriculum can serve as the basis for student counseling for the purpose of their self-actualization. Roebuck, Buhler, and Aspy (1976, as cited in Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun) note that personal models increase learning by building supports for students’ psyche. Thus, personal model provides nurturing environment conducive to the development of long term learning styles and well-directed individuals (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009).

# Delimitations

General research on personal models was reviewed. The study focused on the contributions of the theorists to the development of the model, the structure of the instructional delivery, and weaknesses and strengths of each model. Within the framework of personal model, nondirective teaching and the positive self-concepts development model were evaluated. Specific classroom examples were provided in this paper to illustrate the application of this model in the classroom.

# Methods

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the personal model role and its applicability in the classroom, various databases and journals were reviewed in regards to the research leading the development of the personal model and its focus on the development of more affirmative, self-actualizing learners to aid the learning process. The syntax and conceptual framework were evaluated in regard to nondirective teaching and positive self-concept development model. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of each model were identified.

# Review of the Literature

The review of literature will focus on the general outline of the personal model and related conceptual framework. Following the general introduction to the model, each instructional strategy will be discussed in detail.

# Personal Model

Personal models of teaching focus on the development of individual self-worth and self-awareness through thought process (Cherif & Adams, 1993). Besides the nondirective teaching and the development of positive self-concepts models, personal family of models also includes awareness training, synectics, and conceptual systems. Personal model is grounded in humanistic psychology, with Abraham Maslow serving as one of the most influential contributors to the field. In his work, Maslow focused on the study of the whole individual who is creative, healthy, and self-actualizing (Moss, 1999). Self-actualizing individual, according to Maslow, utilized his or her capacities and talents to the fullest. Maslow (1968) developed several assumptions grounded in the humanistic view, applicable to the personal models discussed in the paper. He focused on the concept of the inner nature, stating that it was partly common to all human beings while being partly unique to each person. The teachers were encouraged to help students actualize their inner nature in order to promote their psychological health and productivity. Education, according to Maslow (1971), would ideally lead to the discovery of identity and, consequently, the discovery of one’s vocation.

Carl Rogers (1980) outlined three conditions necessary to that discovery of one’s vocation. These conditions consist of creating congruence with the teacher to facilitate personal growth in a climate of honest and open communication; developing unconditional positive regard and genuine care towards a student; and expressing empathic understanding. Thus, the atmosphere of such support will yield opportunities for the development of long-term, comprehensive academic and social goals through nurturing and open communication between students and teachers.

## Nondirective Teaching

Carl Rogers was one of the most influential contributors to the nondirective teaching model. He viewed therapy as a mode of learning where instruction is based on the concepts of positive human relations that enable people to grow (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009). Within the framework of the nondirective teaching model, the teacher is viewed as a facilitator who bases his relationships with students on the counseling premises, helping them explore new ideas about not only their learning but also their relationships with peers. Within the nondirective teaching model, the sequence of learning is not rigidly followed by the teacher. The teacher, acting as a facilitator of learning, respects student ability to identify their learning problems and come up with their own solutions. The students are provided with the resources to guide their own learning while teacher makes an effort to see the world through his or her students’ eyes. Rogers believed that positive relationships enable people to grow and should form the basis of instruction. Teacher and students should be able to share ideas about learning openly and honestly (Siddiqui, 2013) with teacher acting as a facilitator and reflector.

Nondirective teaching process forms the basis for the open classroom concept (Siddiqui, 2013). Within this concept, teaching methods are based on the student flexibility to learn and emphasize group work. The students determine what is important to learn and rely on self-evaluation rather than on teacher evaluation, measuring their progress qualitatively.

Nondirective teaching takes on a form of nondirective interview where students and teachers go through various phases to develop a variety of social and academic goals (Siddiqui, 2013). During this process, the teachers help students define the helping situation and explore the problem. Students develop insights and develop a course of action to integrate into their academic or social behavior outside the interview. As the students and teachers engage in nondirective interview, the students are encouraged to explore their feelings. This exploration leads to a clearer perception of student goals and the subsequent development of delayed goals and a more comprehensive view of the situation (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009).

Samuel Tenenbaum (1959) describes his experiences of being a student in Carl Rogers’s classroom filled with frustration of the students who were forced to become self-directed learners throughout the semester of nondirective teaching. Tenenbaum called the classroom atmosphere an environment of non-structured freedom. The process described by Tenenbaum was full of struggle, frustration, and a growing sense of learning community that brought students together in becoming self-directed learners. Rogers operated on the belief that no one can teach anything to anyone else. The learning was seen as a result of the student‘s examination of the situation before following a path at the fork of the road of learning. Just like Dewey and Kilpatrick, Rogers valued original thinking that led to problem solving. However, rather than posing problems for students to examine, as Kilpatrick did, Rogers did not respond to students’ contributions unless a question was specifically directed to him. Rogers followed student contributions intelligently and sympathetically believing that if a person is accepted without any judgment on the teacher’s part but only with compassion and understanding, the individual is able to face his or her true self and reconstruct his or her learning experiences.

In the light of evaluating personal model, Kilpatrick’s views of project method and his worry that reliance on regurgitating textbook material would produce selfish individuals should be noted (Pinar et al., 2008, p. 115). Kilpatrick advocated the project method as a way to emphasize the factor of action, a “wholehearted vigorous activity” (Kilpatrick, 1918) contending that the activity itself was not new in education. Kilpatrick’s project method in the curriculum is as a purposeful activity, the unit that should become a typical unit of the school procedures preparing them best for life while at the same time constituting the present worthy life itself (Kilpatrick, 1918).

Kilpatrick emphasizes the significance of the bond created by the interactions with the world. These bonds constitute child’s learning of certain individual attitudes in regards to the social situations and exercising those in a certain manner. The teacher should plan child’s experiences in order to help exercise readiness in dealing with certain situations (for example, when one is angry, it is difficult to express the feelings of joy, even though in a social situation, the latter is more desirable than the open expression of anger). Through projects and teacher guidance (even though Kilpatrick prefers the child’s involvement in the four steps of a project: purposing, planning, executing, and judging), the child builds bonds that contribute to the ethical quality of conduct and learns how to appropriately respond to situations. Learning consists of acquiring and changing bonds as the child progresses through school curriculum. Kilpatrick contends that project method exhibits through the following interconnected stages: set, readiness, determined action, success, satisfaction, and learning. Project as a purposeful activity helps students, working under the guidance of well-prepared teachers; build the ideals necessary for social functioning. These carefully structured social experiences utilize the child’s native capacities that are too frequently wasted (Kilpatrick, 1918).

Nondirective teaching may be used to solve personal, social, or academic problems (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009). Teacher’s focus remains on the student’s thoughts and feelings, casting aside his or her own personal thoughts and feelings. Within the framework of this model, students become active, self-directed participants, engaging in qualitatively holistic learning process (Cherif & Adams, 1993).

## Positive Self-Concept Development Model

Positive self-concept development model is built on the principle that all students can engage in metacognition about their learning and can respond to a great variety of teaching and learning situations (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009). As the students develop a greater variety of skills and dispositions, their ability to further acquire a greater range of skills and strategies becomes even more comprehensive. The self-concept development model focuses not only the student growth as learners but also on teacher behavior as instructors and students. Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun (2009) discuss a framework developed from their study of professional and personal lives of teaching in California Staff Development Study. The findings of the study can be used to frame school improvement efforts and facilitate staff development practices. Within the study, the dynamics of individual interaction with the environment was studied, with the focus on building opportunities for growth.

One of the assumptions underlying the study was based on a conceptual system theory developed by Harvey, Hunt, and Schroder (1961). They defined a conceptual system as a schema that provides framework for individual development of relation to the environmental events he or she experiences. Various theories were derived based on this premise. Harvey’s four systems (1966) describe concrete and abstract dimensions of human behavior and correlate to teacher behaviors described by Murphy and Brown (1970). Murphy and Brown outlined four systems of teacher behaviors. System 1 teachers viewed authority as the ultimate good and discouraged divergent thinking on the part of the learners. System 2 teachers function similarly to the aforementioned group. However, their behavior is characterized by high inconsistency and uncertainty. System 3 teachers base their need for affiliation based on the group accountability and consensus rather than on the extraneously imposed rules. System 4 teachers encouraged divergent thinking, as they themselves viewed knowledge as tentative rather than absolute. In the study conducted by Murphy and Brown, half of teachers expressed System 1 thinking while only 4 percent evidenced System 4 thinking.

Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun (2009) determined in their study that the differences in teacher levels of activity were produced by their orientations toward environment and facilitated by social influence. The participants differed in regard to their active or passive stance toward the environment. The active individuals viewed their environment as a set of different possibilities that they could exploit. Passive individuals spend most of their time protecting themselves from the environment and fending off the initiatives imposed by others. Within the school improvement initiatives, the school sites where the principal and the majority of teachers could be characterized as active individuals most frequently served as the trial sites for innovative approaches. Social influence was also conducive to the development of active, receptive to the innovation environment at school, as the more active peers contributed to the growing positive attitude towards growth and change.

Individual attitude towards growth and change is also addressed in the framework of conceptual systems (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009). Individuals at higher levels of development accept alternative views and integrate new information easier. They have the ability to view gray shades of information and have the ability to modify their existing schema and discard old concepts as they develop deeper understanding of the new ones. People on the lower development levels, on the other hand, reject information that does not fit into their existing framework of perceptions and use limited view to frame their world. Hunt (1971, as cited in Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun) correlates the conceptual development levels to the flexibility in teaching approach and the openness to new ideas. Thus, teacher flexibility to reflect student thinking and emotions during nondirective teaching reflects a more productive orientation and adaptability to the structural changes, which, in turn, facilitates a positive attitude towards change process.

Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun (2009) focus more on the evaluation of teacher disposition and their levels of growth. Their work is grounded on the premise that teachers who are more open and active towards their environment model this behavior to the students who also become active consumers of their surroundings leading to the formation of rich culture conductive to learning. Therefore, active consumers-teachers are able to help students become self-actualizing, independent learners. Within the framework of preparing students for the jobs and careers of tomorrow, teachers need to embrace the approach of nondirective teaching and student development of positive self-concepts in order to facilitate the growth of creative, driven, and open-minded citizens.

# Applicability of the Model to Preferred Teaching Style

When I started teaching, I believed that my job entailed addressing academic achievement only. However, working as a teacher in one of the poorest counties in West Virginia made me re-evaluate my perceptions of teaching very fast. Most of the students growing up in culture of generational poverty struggle with the development of positive self-concept and self-actualization as life-long learners. Therefore, it is vital for a teacher to engage in nondirective teaching and nondirective interviews to help students explore their attitudes towards various social, personal, or academic issues and come to new understandings by identifying issues and forming solutions on their own rather than relying on the teacher to enforce strict sequence of learning.

This model of teaching is the most challenging approach for me as a professional. I have to consciously offer informal therapy to help the students reflect on their learning styles, discuss the issues they face that prevent them from thriving socially and academically; and guide them in reaching solutions. I have to make an effort to view the world through the students’ eyes and view their issues using the generational poverty framework. As I get more experienced as a teacher, I engage in nondirective interviews with students more frequently while pushing them to graduate high school and establish long term graduation goals.

Research on positive self-concept development helped me evaluate my own interactions with the environment and reflect on my modeling of the active, information-seeking behaviors for my students. I am more conscious about emulating my actions to help students become self-actualizing individuals, open to change, and embracing life-long learning.

# Conclusions

Personal model focuses on the creation of the sustainable, nurturing, positive relationships between a teacher and a student. This nonjudgmental approach places teacher in the facilitator role helping students reflect on their personal, social, and academic goals without the fear of reprisal. Joyce, Weil, & Calhounr (2009) outline different teaching behaviors that add to the learning environment that form the basic repertoire of teaching. These models of teaching are best used to enhance each other and serve best depending on the particular situation, subject, age of students, and teacher instructional goals. Personal models add a nurturing dimension to the child’s schooling experiences and add to the development of metacognition while helping students solve a variety of issues and come to new understanding through nonjudgmental, supportive sessions with teachers. Students are complex human beings who come from a variety of backgrounds and use a tremendous amount of coping, learning, or adjustment techniques to make sense of their environments. Teachers using personal models help them develop positive self-concepts and become fulfilled individuals who are flexible, creative, and tolerant towards their peers or coworkers.

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