

A Review on Humanistic Psychology and Its Application to Education

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Abstract: The emergence of humanistic psychology took place during the 1950s and 1960s within the United States. The school of psychology referred to as the "third force," distinct from the behavioural school and psychoanalysis, was established by Abraham Maslow and championed by Carl Rogers. The emergence of the humanistic learning theory coincided with the ascent of humanistic psychology. Humanism places emphasis on the inherent positivity and worth of human beings, as opposed to directing attention towards the examination of problematic behaviour. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of human growth and development, commonly referred to as self-actualization. The humanistic learning theory offers a comprehensive understanding of the developmental journey of individuals, emphasising the need of holistic education in nurturing and cultivating human nature. It is imperative to prioritise the cultivation of learners' inspiration and creative potential, while also providing guidance on integrating cognition and experience. This approach facilitates the affirmation of their abilities and ultimately leads to the attainment of self-realization. The humanistic learning theory places emphasis on the establishment of a conducive learning environment that enables individuals to experience the world through their own unique lens, foster comprehension of it, and attain the utmost level of self-actualization. This article uses the review method and combines humanistic learning theory to explore the application of humanistic theory in education and concludes that humanism has problems. Only by applying it to practice and continuously developing and improving it can its value be realized. The paper focuses on applying humanism in a few countries or regions, failing to explore fully and ignoring the lack of conditions for comprehensive popularization of primary education in some regions. Therefore, the issues of concern and suggestions given are not universally applicable and feasible on a global scale, and it also attempts to explain why humanistic education has not been widely implemented in China.

Keywords: humanism, education, Carl Rogers

1. Introduction

The emergence of humanism in the United States may be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, with significant advancements occurring throughout the subsequent decades of the 1970s and 1980s. This critique encompasses two main aspects. Firstly, it challenges behaviorism's tendency to equate humans with animals and its limited focus on researching human behaviour without delving into the inherent character of humans. Secondly, it raises concerns regarding Freud's exclusive examination

of neuroses and psychiatric patients, neglecting the exploration of normal human psychology. Hence, it is referred to be the third phase of psychology. The humanistic school of thought places significant emphasis on the inherent dignity, value, creativity, and self-actualization of individuals. It posits that the fulfilment of human potential, akin to instinctual behaviour, is integral to the realisation of human nature. One of the most notable contributions of humanism lies in its recognition of the congruity between human psychology and human nature, hence arguing for the study of psychology to be approached through the lens of human nature. This article examines the use of humanistic theory in the field of education, with a focus on enhancing students' mental health and learning outcomes. It aims to present practical methods for fostering sustained talent development.

2. Introduction to Humanistic Psychology

The emergence of humanistic psychology took place during the 1950s and 1960s within the United States. The school of psychology, commonly referred to as the "third force," was established by Abraham Maslow and is associated with the work of Carl Rogers. This approach distinguishes itself from the behavioural school and psychoanalysis. The emergence of the humanistic learning theory coincided with the ascent of humanistic psychology. Humanism places emphasis on the inherent positivity and worth of human beings, as opposed to directing attention towards the examination of problematic behaviour. It prioritises the promotion of human growth and development, a concept referred to as self-actualization. The humanistic learning theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the developmental journey of individuals, emphasising the need of holistic education in nurturing human nature. It is imperative to emphasise the significance of fostering a stimulating learning environment that nurtures learners' inspiration and creative capacity. This can be achieved by guiding them to integrate their cognitive abilities with their experiential knowledge, allowing them to affirm their own capabilities and ultimately attain self-realization. The humanistic learning theory places emphasis on establishing a conducive learning environment that enables individuals to experience the world through their own lens, cultivate comprehension, and attain the utmost level of self-actualization [1].

2.1. Representative figure of humanism: Maslow

Maslow studied and researched at the City University of New York, Cornell University, University of Wisconsin, and Columbia University. Maslow's psychological training at the University of Wisconsin was entirely experimental behaviorism. He mainly engages in a series of dominant and sexual behaviors related to primates. Maslow's early behaviorist experiments brought him a strong positivist mindset. During his time at Columbia University, the horror of war instead gave him a vision of peace and led him to develop a groundbreaking psychological theory called self-actualization. These studies began with two mentors, anthropologist Ruth Benedict and gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer. Out of admiration for his mentors, Maslow observed these two individuals daily, laying the ideological foundation for his research on mental health and human potential. Subsequently, he proposed two critical theories that laid the foundation for humanistic psychology: self-actualization and hierarchy of needs theory (published in the journal *Psychological Review* in 1943 in a paper titled "The Theory of Human Motivation"). In 1967, Maslow was diagnosed with severe heart disease. In order to make his research more valuable, he established a framework that allowed other psychologists to add more information in the future.

The theory of hierarchy of needs delineates the various developmental phases experienced by individuals and serves as a framework for investigating the innate human engagement in behavioural motivation. According to the hierarchy of needs hypothesis, an individual exhibits a sense of unity and organisation, whereby their many desires and impulses are interconnected. The driving forces

behind humans encompass a multitude of enduring, genetic, and instinctual needs that extend beyond mere physiological requirements to encompass psychological aspects as well. Intrinsic to the essence of human beings, these characteristics remain impervious to the constraints imposed by civilisation. It has the capacity to solely inhibit their expression. The concept of human needs exhibits a hierarchical structure, wherein lower-level needs are initially satisfied before higher-level demands come into play. Once a set of demands has been fulfilled, it ceases to serve as a driving force for motivation. Maslow's original stage model encompassed the following components: physiological needs, security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Subsequently, individuals incorporated three additional components into the hierarchy of wants, namely knowledge and understanding, aesthetic demands, and transcendence. Self-actualization pertains to the progression by which an individual's innate abilities and capacities are maximally employed within a fitting societal context, thereby attaining personal objectives and desires. It also pertains to the condition in which an individual's physical and mental capacities are fully actualized. Once an individual's fundamental wants, such as the desire for security, are fulfilled, they will endeavour to fulfil more advanced needs, such as self-actualization, resulting in an enhanced sense of life satisfaction. Nevertheless, the impeded manifestation of these inclinations, particularly in the presence of aloof or dismissive parental behaviour during early stages of life, can have detrimental consequences on an individual's formation of self-perception and understanding of the external environment. Individuals have a propensity for self-preservation, and the process of achieving self-actualization becomes increasingly arduous when they experience detachment from their authentic emotions [2].

2.2. Representative figure of humanism: Carl Rogers

Rogers grew up in a harsh religious environment. He studied agriculture, history, and religion at the University of Wisconsin. In 1922, he was elected as one of the student representatives of ten universities in the United States. He went to Beijing, China, to participate in the World Congress of the Centennial Christian Union. From then on, he began to doubt his religious beliefs. After attending a seminar on "Why I Am a Pastor," I decided to change my career direction. In 1925, Rogers entered Columbia Normal School to take an elective course in psychology, with the most significant impact being the courses related to children's issues in clinical psychology. Afterward, he taught and interned at Ohio State University (1940), the University of Chicago (1945), and the University of Wisconsin Madison (1957). From 1935 to 1940, he taught and wrote books at the University of Rochester. Based on the author's own experience in working with problem children, The author has written 'Clinical Treatment for Problem Children'. Between the years 1940 and 1945, Rogers assumed the position of a professor of clinical psychology at Ohio State University. During his tenure, he undertook the task of authoring his second book, titled "Counselling and Psychotherapy." During the period spanning from 1957 to 1963, the individual in question served as a psychology instructor at the esteemed University of Wisconsin Madison, situated inside the United States. It was during this time that the individual authored one of their most renowned literary works, thus attaining a notable level of recognition and influence within their field in the year 1961. According to Rogers, there exists an inherent inclination and capacity for learning in human beings, which is a reliable psychological inclination that can be actualized given suitable circumstances. The stimulation of students' enthusiasm for learning is most readily achieved when they perceive a direct relevance between the learning content and their individual needs. The acquisition of knowledge and skills is enhanced in an educational setting characterised by a prevailing sense of psychological safety. According to Rogers, it is imperative for educators to have the freedom to authentically express their own identities while also cultivating a comprehensive understanding of their students and demonstrating unconditional acceptance towards them. The primary responsibility of an educator is not solely to impart knowledge to pupils or instruct them on how to acquire knowledge, but rather to furnish them

with the tools and resources necessary for effective learning. The determination of the learning approach should be entrusted to the students themselves. The role of a teacher should be that of a facilitator in the learning process of students. Simultaneously, Rogers (year) also addressed in his publication titled "Personal Formation Theory: My View on Psychotherapy" the pragmatic challenge that this concept will encounter: Should we permit pupils to encounter genuine problems? Is it permissible for students to independently generate knowledge within themselves? Is it advisable to resist the extensive influx of factual information training and similar approaches in contemporary education [3]?

2.3. The Initial Application of Humanism in China

Humanism emerged in the United States in the 20th century and later spread to China, considered an advanced teaching theory then. In the social atmosphere of advocating innovation and development, humanism was recognized by many parents and educators, and many private schools were fully Westernized, fully accepting the so-called advanced humanistic teaching philosophy. However, due to the short formation time of humanism, most educated groups and educators have not entirely shaken off the idea of "controlling education." Educators are prone to wavering between independent innovation and obedience. Educators habitually allow them to innovate within their teaching framework, which significantly limits students' innovation ability and creates a "sense of fragmentation" in education. Even today, we still cannot fully affirm all the contents of humanistic teaching concepts. The complete westernization of some private schools has separated some students from the educational atmosphere of excellent traditional Chinese culture, which may also erase black humanism and make the public unwilling to understand further and improve its application. [4]

2.4. The combination of humanism and project-based learning

With the development of education and further exploration of humanism, humanism can now be combined with various educational methods to try to adapt to the education situation in China.

Rogers' humanistic education view is based on his "visitor centered" psychotherapy view. After a long educational practice in the United States, it has gradually transformed into a "student centered" education view. This educational perspective trusts students' self-development abilities. It emphasizes the gradual transformation of the teacher's role from being a teacher to a facilitator - providing learning materials to promote students' learning. Teachers can promote students' active participation and learning by transferring their responsibilities during the learning process. At the same time, Rogers advocates for the "non guiding principle" and encourages students to freely choose their learning content and methods. Project-based learning emphasizes student-centered learning, encourages students to learn in practice, and provides sufficient social resources to face specific problems and cultivate their ability to solve practical problems. This not only conforms to the humanistic teaching theory but also effectively solves the question raised by Rogers about whether we are willing to let students face real problems directly. Students can cultivate the ability to solve practical problems by solving specific problems to better adapt to society. However, there are still differences between project-based learning and the humanistic teaching theory advocated by Rogers:

1. Project chemistry learning positions teachers as supporters, designers rather than facilitators of learning
2. Project-based learning places more emphasis on cultivating students' ability to apply core knowledge rather than acquiring knowledge and problem-solving methods
3. Project-based learning advocates "conservative progress," while humanism advocates "thorough reform."

Meanwhile, project-based learning and humanism are both teaching concepts introduced from abroad due to the lack of the core and conceptual transformation of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Long and extensive research and practice are needed to support its effectiveness. [5]

2.5. Application of Humanism in Smart Teaching

With the development of technology, innovative teaching has become a new trend in education. Since 2011, the country has elevated the construction of educational informatization to the level of development strategy, which is an important measure to improve the quality of the people. "In the" Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan "of the Ministry of Education, the educational principle of the plan is mentioned: facing the needs of talent cultivation in the new era and information society, using informatization to lead the construction of a new education ecosystem centered on learners, achieving fair and high-quality education, and promoting comprehensive human development, The educational ideology of educational informatization originates from the humanistic learning theory. Innovative teaching provides students rich educational resources and diverse assessment methods, guiding them to actively explore. Teachers have also become assistants rather than guides in the learning process of students. Currently, the development of intelligent teaching is mainly supported by information technologies such as the Internet, cloud computing, big data, and human intelligence. A smart teaching platform that integrates the advantages of traditional classroom teaching, online teaching, flipped classroom, MOOC, and other teaching forms is used as the closed-loop connection point for teaching, Building a smart learning environment that transcends time and space through forms such as smart classrooms, ubiquitous networks, and mobile terminals; continuously accumulate massive teaching resources and promote them to students in a targeted manner to meet the personalized teaching needs of students. At the same time, the evaluation principle of innovative teaching for teachers follows the student-centered principle, output-oriented, combined with data analysis, to comprehensively evaluate the entire teaching process for teachers. This is conducive to teachers' moderate supervision of students and the establishment of teaching plans more in line with student development. At the same time, the construction of the intelligent teaching evaluation model also follows the principle of sustainable development, which is conducive to teachers adjusting their teaching plans promptly, following up in real-time, and making continuous progress. Innovative teaching meets the self-development needs of students, and the construction of evaluation models for innovative teaching also helps to carry out teacher education better. This is a good combination of humanism and modern technology in educational applications, which fully reflects the progress of education in China in exploring humanistic theory. [6]

3. Conclusion

It can be seen that the implementation of humanistic theory has improved in different historical backgrounds in China, mainly due to insufficient research conducted in the early stages of humanistic development. With further research, China has made progress in applying humanistic theory in education. At the same time, the humanistic theory has flaws, and only by applying it to practice and continuously developing and improving it can its value be realized. Regarding the limitations, this paper focuses on the application of humanism in China. It fails to explore it comprehensively from an international perspective, neglecting that some regions do not have the conditions for universal primary education. Therefore, the issues and suggestions addressed in this article do not exist and have operability on a global scale.

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