



oping a support system

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Explicit Statement of Purpose

Since purpose dictates functions and suggests goals, specifying what the purpose of something is directs and channels human energies to achieve goals. Whenever we find integrity in a system, at least three conditions exist:

1. The purpose is clear.
2. The purpose is considered of great worth and is embraced enthusiastically by the participants.
3. The means for achieving the initial steps are made known and set forth clearly.

The purpose of the educational program in each child care center will indicate the kind of support system required, and a support system justifies itself to the extent that it facilitates the achievement of the purposes and goals of the center.

Now what is the most fundamental purpose we can imagine for human institutions? A review of research literature suggests that the purpose of human institutions is to facilitate the release of human potentialities. This means that each human being has latent, unactualized powers. Education in all its forms is one of the most fundamental means by which we help children to actualize their potential. As children grow and develop they acquire new powers. Every acquisition of new powers becomes a lure or incentive to carry the process forward. In other words, when children actualize their potential, they gain new powers that allow the process of growth and development to be sustained.

As we refer to development here, think of it in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. Qualitative measures focus on degrees of excellence, whereas quantitative measures focus on the accumulation of amounts of something. For example, many pre-primary programs involve children in finger painting. With few exceptions, those finger paintings may look almost the same at the end of the year as they did at the beginning. And yet the children will have painted an enormous number. Should not the quality of those paintings improve along with the quantity? Is it too much to expect the quality of children's interactions with people, materials, and unknowns to improve over time? If you accept and value the notion of qualitative development, then you will have a brand new outlook on how to diagnose and assess a child's progress.

When you concern yourselves with releasing potentialities in children, you zero in on the *process of their becoming*. That is the reality we all must strive to relate to. Let us look at a few implications of the principle of process as it relates to your center program.

First, no child can be adequately described in static terms. Every description must be given in dynamic terms that reflect the reality of the

child's becoming—the rapid changes taking place almost daily. The notion will grow in importance as you have to integrate more and more children into your program who have been labeled and classified as handicapped, learning-disabled, developmentally disabled, and so on. At any given moment, limitations of many kinds may appear to be present in any group of children, but at the same time there are also many possibilities for improvement. You will want to be sensitive to the possibilities for their further development.

Second, the principle of process helps to avoid labeling and locking children into fixed, immutable categories. To say, for example, that a child is visually handicapped can make you unappreciative of how well the child can see and how he or she can be helped to see even better.

Third, the principle of process forces you to learn more about the distinctive development of each child, where the child is at any stage of becoming, and what magnet lures the child forward. To understand what urges a child onward or what impedes a child's progress, we must look at what Hobbs (1975) refers to as an ecological approach to assessment and intervention. This means that a child is an integral part of a system consisting of the child, the settings, and all the individuals in those settings that interact with the child daily. Complex relationships exist within these settings. You need to know how a child manages or fails to manage those relationships.

If process "is in itself unfinished and inexhaustable," as Hartshorne (1972) claims, your attitudes about a child's development can reflect itself in action that unequivocally states, "I am interested in what you can become." In essence, the reality of anything inheres in the process of its becoming.

Although we have focused our discussion primarily on children, the same ideas apply to adults as well. You as administrators must see to it that the potentialities of the staff are released to further their own development. The staff in turn strives to release the potentialities of the children. When this process is effective, you have an institution that recognizes its mission and aims at finding ways to achieve that mission.

In summary, the purpose of human institutions is to make it easy for human beings to actualize their potentialities. This represents at the present time the most fundamental and comprehensive purpose we can imagine.

Farson (1969) captures the essence of this concept when he says, "The great frontier today is the exploration of the human potential, man's seemingly limitless ability to adapt, to grow, to invent his own destiny." Adopted as a purpose, it gives stability and permanence in a world characterized by instability and flux. It keeps alive a sense of wonderment and adventure. The difficulty here is to find ways to assist all the institutions and agencies that service children to adopt and to carry forward the same purpose.

Suggested Applications: Using

1. *Clarify the purpose of you (you?).* For a start, why not stated thus:

The purpose of my life is to town Day Care Center, my potential of the staff, parents

If for any reason you can potential, or if you have never imagine the most basic, fundamental existence. If no luck with the philosophers. Examine the work of philosophers, speculative philosophers yourself a purpose worthy of purpose is organized, your own personal identity. The pattern self-ideal. A self-ideal is the guide to present behavior before

2. *Clarify the purpose of the comes in contact with your center can make the public aware of*

1. by designing advertisements
2. by speaking to citizens' groups
3. by informing the local health
4. by informing the public
5. by posting a descriptive
6. by sending an introductory their children in the program
7. by putting up posters in strategic places;
8. by utilizing public service
9. by listing and describing and state service director

3. *Coordinate community resources* purpose of your center, by determining staff needs as a basis for resources. Those needs may be different categories of potentialities (Streets, 1973). While nurturing biological potentialities, it is

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Suggested Applications: Using the Concept of Purpose to Guide Practice

1. *Clarify the purpose of your own existence (Who are you and why are you?).* For a start, why not try the purpose sketched here. It might be stated thus:

The purpose of my life is to actualize my potential. As an administrator of *Anytown Day Care Center*, my purpose is to release the individual and collective potential of the staff, parents, and children.

If for any reason you cannot adopt this purpose of releasing human potential, or if you have never grappled with such a broad concern, try to imagine the most basic, fundamental answer to the question about human existence. If no luck with this, sample the thoughts of the world's great philosophers. Examine the works of political philosophers, social philosophers, speculative philosophers, and philosophers of science. Discover for yourself a purpose worthy of embracing with zeal and enthusiasm. Once purpose is organized, your energies get patterned in ways that shape your personal identity. The patterning of energy use may be influenced by a self-ideal. A self-ideal is the embodiment of purpose, and it functions as a guide to present behavior before you pursue further possibilities.

2. *Clarify the purpose of the institution you administer.* Everyone who comes in contact with your center needs to know what its purpose is. You can make the public aware of the center's purpose in a number of ways:

1. by designing advertisements for all forms of media;
2. by speaking to citizens' groups;
3. by informing the local human service agencies;
4. by informing the public school systems;
5. by posting a descriptive sign at the center that states its purpose;
6. by sending an introductory brochure to all parents before they enroll their children in the program;
7. by putting up posters that describe the center and its purposes in strategic places;
8. by utilizing public service spots on radio and TV,
9. by listing and describing your center and its program in local, regional, and state service directories.

3. *Coordinate community resources in ways that serve your purpose.* The purpose of your center, by definition, has to identify both children's needs and staff needs as a basis for coordinating community services and resources. Those needs may be organized around two broad and interdependent categories of potentialities—biological and psychological (Jordan and Streets, 1973). While nutrition may be a main focus of efforts to develop biological potentialities, it is by no means the only one that should con-

cern you. Everything that makes for health and physical well-being can be classified under biological needs. Learning—the key factor in the development of psychological potentialities—may be organized to correspond to the array of abilities and talents that humans possess: psychomotor, perceptual, cognitive, affective, and volitional. These categories are inter-related and must be so regarded when organizing curricula (Jordan and Streets, 1973; see also Chapters I and II of this volume).

More than ever, early educational programs are called on to identify impairments in biological and psychological functioning and to suggest intervention procedures. Screening has become the main mechanism for identifying children at risk of being or becoming developmentally disabled. You will, no doubt, have to continue to use this device until our nation provides a comprehensive health maintenance program for its children and their families.

Hobbs (1975) cites some of the problems and concerns with current screening and assessment practices:

1. Since a screening test cannot stand alone as the sole determinant of a youngster's level of functioning, it cannot be used alone as a basis for intervention, placement, or treatment. It can lead to referrals for a full assessment or diagnostic evaluation. If the test is administered by technician-level personnel instead of professional-level personnel, are we not wasting both resources?
2. Screening devices are not uniformly effective. Therefore, expect varying degrees of validity for the various functions measured. Screening tests of sensory function (e.g., hearing and vision) are adequate for older children but difficult to use with younger children. More importantly, screening tests are not developmentally based, nor do they account for cultural variability.
3. The currently available screening procedures do not identify a significant number of children whose difficulties are not already known. Might it not be a better practice to ask mothers who suspect that their children are having problems to bring them in for diagnosis and treatment?
4. In a given screening we cannot tell how many children are falsely identified as having some disease or disorder and never get a further examination, nor what the physiological and psychological consequences are. We need further research studies to determine the extent to which there are discrepancies between screening recommendations and diagnostic examinations.
5. There is a high degree of wastage in screening programs if treatment is not available or when screening is done by one agency and treatment done by another.
6. Our continued investment in massive screening programs may actually impede the development of comprehensive health services that would be available to all children without regard to socioeconomic status.

However you use the ment, a developmental framework guide.

Developmental diagnosis: factory progress in children's If the staff is already involved their knowledge about diagnosis professionals who work with the forces each member of difference in a holistic rather than in a

It may be extremely difficult sionals you need for your c not share a common vocabulary to help them communicate with your staff. Secondly, consensus on the diagnostic assisting child care services. per se for this dilemma because training almost guarantees th associate primarily with others to value their own perspective. Boundary markers are drawn increasingly difficult, and almost impossible.

Successful coordination degree to which you can get each other. The people involved: ogists, social workers, nurses physical therapists, health o

If you are fortunate enough level personnel who come to nostic work, set the stage for dren these people will be to relax. Certain kinds of screening many children and particularly You can demonstrate sensitivity favorable atmosphere for the

After you and your staff you can proceed to coordinate efficient manner. Here are some

1. List all the community program.
 - a. Find out what their
 - b. Read carefully the may give or lend you

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screening programs may actually nsive health services that would gard to socioeconomic status.

However you use the results of traditional screening and assessment, a developmental framework of some sort will be a reasonable guide.

Developmental diagnosis emphasizes the detection of signs of unsatisfactory progress in children's overall development, not just the academic. If the staff is already involved in providing services, they may increase their knowledge about diagnosis by regular collaboration with other professionals who work with the same children. Interdisciplinary collaboration forces each member of different child care professions to look at children in a holistic rather than in a fragmented way.

It may be extremely difficult to coordinate the services of the professionals you need for your center. First of all, professional personnel do not share a common vocabulary or have a shared background of experiences to help them communicate effectively with each other, let alone with your staff. Secondly, they have not, at the present time, reached a consensus on the diagnostic categories and intervention procedures for assisting child care services. To be fair, you cannot blame the professionals per se for this dilemma because the system used to organize professional training almost guarantees that the members of a particular profession will associate primarily with others like themselves. Thus, they naturally learn to value their own perspectives far above those of other professions. Boundary markers are drawn, listening to people from the outside becomes increasingly difficult, and understanding the meaning of what they say almost impossible.

Successful coordination of professional services will depend on the degree to which you can get the people in these services to cooperate with each other. The people concerned include teachers, physicians, psychologists, social workers, nurses, speech therapists, lawyers, audiologists, physical therapists, health officers, and others.

If you are fortunate enough to have professional or even technician-level personnel who come to your center to do screening and other diagnostic work, set the stage for them and for the children. For many children these people will be total strangers. Warm introductions help both to relax. Certain kinds of screening processes may be very frightening for many children and particularly those from different cultural backgrounds. You can demonstrate sensitivity to this problem by creating a warm, favorable atmosphere for the assessment procedures to take place.

After you and your staff have assessed the needs of your children, you can proceed to coordinate services for them in a more coherent and efficient manner. Here are some specific ways to go about this task.

1. List all the community agencies that might be of assistance to your program.
 - a. Find out what their purposes, goals, and policies are.
 - b. Read carefully their brochures or other handout materials they may give or lend you.

- c. Find out what their administrative structure and staffing pattern are like.
- d. Look for overlaps among the agencies in their offerings and services.
- e. Keep a newspaper file on each agency (this is one way to find out how the public regards it).
- 2. Make an appointment to interview a key staff person in the agency.
 - a. Have your "laundry list" of questions ready.
 - b. Establish a warm, open, trusting relationship.
 - c. Explain briefly your own program and goals and provide them with a copy of your brochure.
 - d. Indicate how their services meet your needs.
 - e. Find out what steps need to be taken to obtain their services.
 - f. Ascertain the manner in which the services are delivered.
 - g. Find out whether or not there are great time lags between referrals and initial follow-up.
 - h. Inquire about the length of time lag between initial follow-up and receipt of service.
 - i. Find out what you can do to shorten time lags if they are anticipated.
 - j. Invite key agency personnel to visit your center.
 - k. Let the agency know that its cooperation and collaboration are valued and appreciated.
 - l. Find out the extent to which there is interagency collaboration.
- 3. Give the agency periodic feedback. Without it, the agency cannot measure adequately the quality of its service. Feedback can assist the agency to modify its policies, procedures, and practices in ways that correspond to the needs it attempts to serve.

Beyond the home, you have now contacted health, social, welfare, psychological, and perhaps legal service agencies. You have established the kind of relationships that elicit their best endeavors in your behalf. You know their purpose and they know yours.

A determination of purpose gives meaning and direction to educational pursuits. That is why purpose must be *explicit*. "We must formulate purposes," Burgers (1965) says, "stretching to the utmost what we can understand and mutually adjusting the various expressions of these purposes; we must restate again and again what we consider to be the most valuable goals." In keeping with the logic of purpose as Burgers proposes, we have indeed stretched our purpose for human institutions to the limit. As society and institutions evolve, we can adjust the expression of the purpose. Burgers goes on to say that "purpose sets a goal toward which all relevant elements are directed." Experience shows that when educational systems and institutions fail to articulate their purposes, valuable resources are inevitably misdirected and "relevant elements" squandered.

After a declaration of purpose, you need to find ways to assure that

the full impact of the clearly stated purpose is felt by all of us to the next feature of our mission.

Explicit Philosophical Base

I like the way Robert C. Solomon edges its importance and relevance, "is the art of living, the shaping and developing of live our lives." In this sense, Solomon continues, "is nothing to gear our inescapable expectations to our everyday world."

"Why are we doing this worth?" "Who am I?" "Why are we in nature, and most of us wrestle with philosophy makes explicit that which value problems of personal and empirical aspects of it. Thus, schooling, community, and family such illumination.

Philosophy, like people, or first principles about the world is, that knowledge helps us to subject and object of our education energies in getting to know the world and develop. This knowing helps

To get to the heart of the world of man?" The answer to this is to do. It affects the choices of beings; it influences public life, political, religious, and social of each other.

The answer we posit helps principles to act on. We have said release the collective potential, assume, then, that humans build. This means that we are concerned creating further potential through culture. Thus, we can transcend environment and transform it. We can formulate goals consistent with our goals, and create new ones. This makes us dissatisfied with the

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the full impact of the clearly stated purpose can be actualized. This brings us to the next feature of our model.

Explicit Philosophical Base

I like the way Robert C. Solomon (1977) defines philosophy and acknowledges its importance and relevance to our daily lives. "Philosophy," he says, "is the art of living, the search for wisdom, conceptual sculpture—the shaping and developing of the intellectual structures within which we live our lives." In this sense, each of us is a philosopher. "Philosophy," Solomon continues, "is nothing else than thinking about life, the attempt to gear our inescapable expectations and conceptions to the material of our everyday world."

"Why are we doing this?" "Why did this happen?" "What is this worth?" "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" These questions are philosophical in nature, and most of us wrestle with such questions daily. Because philosophy makes explicit that which is presupposed and implicit, it illuminates value problems of personal and social life, the nonempirical as well as the empirical aspects of it. Thus, all that we do in the name of education, schooling, community, and family life development stands to benefit from such illumination.

Philosophy, like people, must begin with certain acceptances, axioms, or first principles about the nature of things. If we know what something is, that knowledge helps us to relate to its reality. Since children are the subject and object of our educational endeavors, we need to invest our energies in getting to know their realities—their nature and how they grow and develop. This knowing helps us to facilitate their development.

To get to the heart of the matter, we must ask, "What is the nature of man?" The answer to this question has implications for everything we do. It affects the choices of action we take in relating to other human beings; it influences public policy and practices—economic, educational, political, religious, and social; and it determines in part what we expect of each other.

The answer we posit here gives us a brief but basic set of first principles to act on. We have said that the purpose of human institutions is to release the collective potential of those functioning within them. We assume, then, that humans by nature are endowed with infinite potential. This means that we are conscious, purposeful creatures fully capable of creating further potential through the cumulative effects of learning and culture. Thus, we can transcend the molding influence of our sociocultural environment and transform ourselves in accordance with our ideals. We can formulate goals consistent with our ideals, pursue and attain those goals, and create new ones. We also seek novelty, for our basic nature makes us dissatisfied with things as they are. This particular view of the

nature of human beings is consistent with and connects logically with the purpose of human institutions as we view them.

Given the first principles cited above, we have to be interested in managing the direction of human development. "Human nature is changed in every individual," Herrick (1956) says, "according to the experiences he has and what he does with them. That is what education is for," he continues. "If you can't change human nature, then our entire educational program is an unconscionable fraud, all wasted effort."

Far from being a study that begins and ends in words, philosophy properly understood and correctly practiced always remains related to action. Let us now illustrate how you can make your philosophical base explicit, and by doing so, use it to strengthen support systems for young children.

Suggested Applications: Using Philosophy to Guide Practice

In many cases the greatest source of support for many young children may be the early education center itself. For this reason you should be encouraged to make sure that the philosophy you espouse is adequate to give direction to your practice.

Jean MacCormack (1976) has developed a guide to help administrators and faculty groups to "surface" their operational philosophies. She insists that everyone has an operational philosophy that undergirds all of his or her actions on a daily basis. It deals with *what is* and *why it is that way*. She recommends that faculty groups hold brainstorming sessions with the assistance of a facilitator to see first whether they indeed have an operational philosophy.

One such session is called "Here to There." There are three categories of questions to facilitate the session. The first category, "Here We Are," attempts to surface what your center is like (see Fig. VII-2). For example, if someone who had never been to your center were to read your philosophical statement, that person would have a good idea of what the center is about. The statement would also reflect what someone would see if he or she visited the center. The second category, "Let's Go There," describes the dreams, visions, and aspirations about what the center could be like (see Fig. VII-3). All the views of the group should be listed. After all, the center is a reflection of their collective views. A third category, "How Do We Get There?," forces the group to describe ways to go from *what is* to *what they hope for* (see Fig. VII-4).

If each staff member answers all of the questions above, it is a good sign that the person's philosophy is operational. Collectively, it means that the center staff is probably engaged in systematic steps to accomplish their hopes and that they can readily identify those steps. Furthermore, they can also measure to some degree their success or failure in realizing their aims.

The value of MacCormack's plan lies in the usefulness of having groups begin with their experiences, attitudes, and values as a way of surfacing

Here We Are

- Why are we here?
- Did we choose this?
- Do we *all* want this?
- What do we expect?
- Is there anything new?
- How does it fit?
- Are we proud of it?
- Can we explain it?

FIGURE VII-2. Surface

Let's Go There

- Why do we want this?
- Why is it better?
- Does everyone want this?
- Are there any alternatives?
- Are there alternative ways?
- How will we get there?

FIGURE VII-3. Surface

How Shall We Get There?

- Which way is best?
- If we don't know, how do we find out?
- Who decides?
- All together?
- How do we do it?
- Easiest? Latest? Best?
- Plans?

FIGURE VII-4. Surface

their philosophy. She notes that many centers may not be familiar with the questions that have been made by great thinkers. However, this book comes a real guide when it is a question of its operational philosophy.

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Here We Are

- Why are we here?
- Did we choose to be here?
- Do we *all want* to be here?
- What do we especially like here?
- Is there anything we dislike here?
- How does it feel to be here?
- Are we proud of *what is*?
- Can we explain what is here?

FIGURE VII-2. Surfacing operational philosophy: Category one

Let's Go There

- Why do we want to go there?
- Why is it better than *what is*?
- Does everyone want to go in the same direction? Why? Why not?
- Are there any contradictory directions?
- Are there alternative directions?
- How will we determine which direction to take?

FIGURE VII-3. Surfacing operational philosophy: Category two

How Shall We Get There?

- Which way is the *best* way?
- If we don't know the best way, which way is better for us?
- Who decides? Director? Teachers? Children, parents, lay public? All together?
- How do we decide on a way? Trial and error? Best suggestion? Easiest? Latest innovation? Tradition? Issue and circumstance? Plans?

FIGURE VII-4. Surfacing operational philosophy: Category three

their philosophy. She notes that many faculties and staffs of early learning centers may not be familiar with the philosophical integrations that have been made by great thinkers. The brainstorming and discussion process becomes a real guide when a group is trying to arrive at an agreed-on expression of its operational philosophy. Her entire approach has wide appeal

because it helps groups to make the match between what they believe and what they actually do. The statement of philosophy that is on paper becomes real; thus, it is operational.

Another useful device is to review the current philosophy of the center. See what kind and how many "humans are . . ." statements you can derive from it. Where did these statements originate? Do you agree with them? Do your actions reflect those statements?

You have had experiences that shape how you look at children. On a sheet of paper you might list those things you feel are true about them. MacCormack calls such a record "Kids are . . . Kids are not . . . because. . . ." Like numerous other projects in her guide, this one also helps you to clarify your operational philosophy. You might also do one on "Parents are . . . Parents are not . . . because. . . ."

After your group philosophy is surfaced and agreed on, you can easily channel your energies to achieve the purposes and goals that flow from it.

In what ways will a philosophy based on the nature of human beings, as suggested elsewhere in this chapter, serve to support young children in the center setting? The very notion that human beings are endowed with infinite potential will:

1. cause you to realize that no child is uneducable;
2. inspire you to offer variety of opportunities that encourage children to move beyond the limits of their present states of being;
3. help you to kindle sparks of intrinsic motivation;
4. guide you to connect with a child's past so that the child is neither bored nor frustrated in attempts to learn;
5. cause you to regard learning itself as a process to be learned;
6. give you the incentive to generate an institutional ethos where the staff, the children, and volunteers feel their potentialities are being released at an optimum rate;
7. encourage you to work with people from all walks of life and thereby increase your estimate of human potential;
8. make you realize that tests may tell something about achievement but very little about potential.

In summary, our philosophical speculations about the nature of humanity help to guide our decisions about how to organize educational programs and support systems for those programs. We have concluded that human nature is one of perpetual becoming. Humans are not perfect, but perfectible. This is the essential reality that our educational system and its supports in subsystems have to deal with. Once a philosophy is put forth, its usefulness increases when general principles are derived from it to make it operational. This brings us to the third feature of our model, namely, Generation of Theory.

Generation of Theory

In some ways, theory works like a deal of information has been scaled to find our way around a landscape. A simplified way some of the basic landscape. For example, we can see the areas and transportation networks before, we can—by examining a map.

We construct theory, then, to set of relationships. Human development a theory to explain it. From a set of theories about everything that pertains to curriculum, teaching, administrative teaching related to learning? How are day care programs related to services related to day care and children's physical well-being related? What is the relationship between human development in day care program planning? The nature of these relationships give us some indication that these relationships would be useful in guiding practice.

A map does not portray everything, but it does not diminish in the least our ability to clarify things for us so that we do not get lost.

Sometimes as practitioners we use theory because we have been led to believe it is practical. Furthermore, we are often broad-based and general, and to try to apply it to all situations and circumstances all at once. We give specific examples of the theory in practice because we know there are many ways to do it, but we are not always sure about the best practice by "practicing" with it. When we do this we become generalizing theory and use it in many different ways and on personal as well as institutional levels. Successful practice.

Those persons who think that theory is too difficult for practical prescriptive theories. The narrowness of their application. And the practicality does not apply.

Practitioners should become more important reason. They can then