
Title	Self-actualization: The focus for the guidance of secondary students
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SELF-ACTUALIZATION: THE FOCUS
FOR THE GUIDANCE OF SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Paper 2

**SELF-ACTUALIZATION:
THE FOCUS FOR THE GUIDANCE OF
SECONDARY STUDENTS**

"Men are born good"
-- Mencius

Person and Personality

Carl Rogers believes everyone has value and dignity and therefore has the right to think in his own way and to decide his own future. At the same time, everyone has his private phenomenological view of the world he lives in. Even more important is a person's effort to actualize his potential. When a person's basic needs are not met, frustration causes unpleasant emotional experience. Since men are born good, it is important to satisfy his basic needs.

Rogers also believes that when a person's subjective experience is not congruent to his phenomenological world he will feel tense, threatened, and disturbed. Such incongruence is a threat to the person's self-concept; the person will deny or distort facts in order to maintain the integrity of his self-concept. This leads to psychological difficulties.

Basic Needs

A.H. Maslow posits a hierarchy of basic human needs:

1. Physiological needs
2. Security needs
3. Belonging need
4. Self-esteem need
5. Self-actualization need

Unsatisfied lower needs give rise to frustration and anger whereas unsatisfied higher needs anxiety. Only when the lower needs have been adequately satisfied can the higher ones emerge. Moreover, the lower needs will be dormant when adequately satisfied. It is therefore important to help the adolescent satisfy his lower needs in the process of guidance.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is a person's perception and evaluation of himself. An adolescent's behaviour always reflects his self-concept. Students with a positive self-concept are in a psychologically safe environment and can therefore actualize themselves, evidenced by their academic achievement, social relationships, confidence, curiosity, creativity, openness, and expressiveness. Self-concept is also reflected in an adolescent's career orientation. A person with negative self-concept tends to choose careers which under-utilize his potential.

The adolescent's self-concept results from constant interaction with parents, teachers, friends and significant others. It is rather stable and resists changes because any change will bring about psychological incongruence. To improve secondary students self-concept, the following may be attempted:

- * Consider individual differences among students and individualize instruction
- * Maximize encouragement and psychological safety, and minimize punishment and threats
- * Treat examinations and tests as diagnosis of learning
- * Make students responsible for their own learning and do not learn on their behalves
- * Value persons more than things and events in the classroom

Changing self-concepts is not an easy task though not impossible. Through individual or group counselling focussing on the self, students can gain better understanding of themselves. An open and caring classroom provides a conducive environment for development of positive self-concept and hence self-actuzation

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

1. Secondary students have strong belonging and self-esteem needs. Does teaching them as a class help or hinder the gratification of such needs. What can be done to help?
2. Have you come across students with strong self-actualization need? What are their characteristics? As a teacher, how would you help them to actualize their potentials?

3. To help students improve their self-concepts, the teacher needs to take into consideration individual differences.
What are some of the problems in doing this class teaching?
What can be tried?
4. What does an "open and caring classroom" mean to you?
What would you do to create such a classroom?

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