

INTROVERSION-EXTROVERSION

“In an attempt to try to personalize education, to fit curriculum to suit the individual and natural needs and interests of each child, to take advantage of the child's strengths, to develop his weak area, in an attempt to allow the child to be a happy, functioning, independent learner,” Carolyn N. Mamchur “turned to the typology theories of Jung and their implications for education.”¹ Mamchur developed “an observation instrument, ACTION ORIENTATED, REFLECTION ORIENTED (AORO).”² “The main point behind the instrument,” Mamchur continues, “is that we can expect children to develop and learn better in classrooms that take account of their natural bent toward action or reflection.”³ She intends the instrument “to be a practical means of making the personality factors defined by Jung a regular part of planning for teaching.”⁴

Mamchur developed AORO in 1978 to “determine preferred patterns of learning in middle school children.”⁵ Teachers employed the instrument to determine “how each student prefers to perceive the world, either objectively or subjectively, and thereby understand the learning preferences of each student.”⁶ Such “understanding could become the basis on which to develop curriculum according to those preferences.”⁷ Mamchur found that AORO’s “use sensitized the teacher to students' perceptions, making the teacher more aware, developing a new frame of reference which would become a natural part of his thinking and behavior.”⁸

Mamchur reports that correlational data “support the hypothesis that student teachers with no prior teaching experience and no familiarity with the students being observed can recognize students' preferences for action or reflection orientation by using AORO.”⁹ Apparently AORO “allows both novice and experienced teachers to determine preferred patterns of learning in students,” knowledge from which “teachers can design curriculum in such a way as to guide children into adolescence in such a manner that they have a clear concept of their own strengths and weaknesses.”¹⁰ Such “individualized guidance” results, Mamchur concludes, “in greater independence for the child.”¹¹

Mamchur provides “practical examples of curriculum planning according to theoretical and clinical description of action-orientation: 1. Group students so that they may discuss issues of importance, as extroverts learn as they interact talking about a topic; 2. Create an atmosphere in which it is safe to make mistakes, as extroverts learn by trial and error; 3. Set up learning centres in which students can move about from project to project, as extroverts have a short attention span, enjoy variety, and need to be able to physically move about in the classroom; 4. Provide opportunities for students to be evaluated orally or in a practical way, as extroverts do well in verbal transactions and are very practical in orientation; 5. Be patient and encouraging when giving directions, providing guidelines, and in allowing students to study one another's work,

as extroverts prefer an external source of motivation and derive great pleasure from pleasing others; 6. Give precise, patient guidance in having students work alone on completing a long or complex project, as this is especially difficult for an extrovert.”¹² While these tendencies may prove true – across class, cultural, racial and gendered differences? – treating students first and foremost as “types” is – by definition – deindividualizing.

“In planning for reflective-oriented students,” Mamchur continues, “the teacher could: 1. Take precautions in questioning the class, extending wait time after a question is asked, writing questions on the board before questioning begins, having students write down their answers to questions before giving them orally, as introverts need time to reflect before answering. (Because extroverts don't, they usually tend to dominate the question-answer phase of learning). 2. Have a space (such as carrels) available in the classroom in which students can isolate themselves when they feel a need, as introverts hate interruptions when working, need to be private in their own territory to complete tasks or to ‘charge up their batteries’ before they enjoy interaction; 3. Team students who have similar interests, as introverts work well in pairs or very small groups, especially with people whom they trust and/or with whom they share a common interest; 4. Be patient when some students tend not to open up emotionally, appear difficult to understand, or have little regard for external sources of motivation, for these patterns are natural to the introvert; 5. Allow plenty of preparation time and choice in making oral presentations, as only under these circumstances does the introvert comfortably perform such tasks; 6. Provide opportunity for students to read for pleasure or escape to complete library projects and to complete written assignments, as the introvert excels in these areas.”¹³ Again: according such definitive status to personality types is depersonalizing.

Just when segregation seemed assured, Mamchur mixes the two types. “A safe rule,” she advises, “is to match or mis-match learning style according to the degree of confidence or skill demonstrated by the students,” as “once they feel comfortable or knowledgeable in an area, it is more likely they will have more desire to try and success in trying patterns of learning that do not come naturally.”¹⁴ She concludes that “it is essential that students be allowed to develop their strengths to such a degree that they will ultimately feel confident enough to use either extroversion or introversion as the situation demands,” as “this is a sign of maturity and independence and totally balanced development.”¹⁵

COMMENTARY

Anton Birioukov-Brant (who served as research assistant for this article) points out that “the discussion appears to be more focused on instructional or pedagogical

style/approach rather than curricular decision-making,” as “the content of what is to be taught receives no mention.” Indeed, “the sole focus is on how content is to be delivered.” “Moreover,” he continues, “Mamchur appears to ignore the difficulties of teaching in two quite contrasting, if not outright opposite, pedagogical styles simultaneously (i.e., allowing extroverts to move about the classroom whilst having cubicles for introverts to have private study time).” Anton found that “logic of this paper is questionable,” a conclusion I share, if focused on that last line quoted above. If these patterns of personality are so ingrained as to dictate teaching and learning, how reasonable is it to expect students to cultivate confidence to exhibit the contrary pattern, to demonstrate “balanced development”? Perhaps these patterns are not entirely determinative?

REFERENCES

- Doll, Mary Aswell. 2017. *The Mythopoetics of Currere. Memories, Dreams, and Literary Texts as Teaching Avenues to Self-Study*. New York: Routledge.
- Jung, C.G. 1965. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. [Trans. By Aniela Jaffé.] New York: Vintage.
- Mamchur, Carolyn M. 1981. Determining Cognitive Style by Systematic Observation. *Canadian Journal of Education* 6 (4), 92-104.
- Williamson, Ben. 2017. *Big Data in Education. The Digital Future of Learning, Policy and Practice*. London: Sage.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Mamchur 1981, 93.
- ² Mamchur 1981, 93.
- ³ Mamchur 1981, 93. Once again the curriculum question – what knowledge is of most worth – goes missing.
- ⁴ Mamchur 1981, 93. Carl Jung’s influence in curriculum theory is too extensive to summarize here: one might begin with Doll 2017. If you are unfamiliar with Jung altogether, you might start with Jung 1965.
- ⁵ Mamchur 1981, 93.
- ⁶ Mamchur 1981, 93.
- ⁷ Mamchur 1981, 93. In an era, not only nurture but nature is targeted, as Williamson, (2017, 155) reports: “educational genomics” draws on data “about the human genome to identify particular traits that are understood to correspond with learning,” so that

corporate employees – not academic specialists - can develop curriculum according to each child's "DNA profile."

⁸ Mamchur 1981, 93; see also 97.

⁹ Mamchur 1981, 100.

¹⁰ Mamchur 1981, 100.

¹¹ Mamchur 1981, 100. Such broad categories – introversion/extroversion – seem not so "individual." Having to choose obscures that a child may be a combination of these tendencies and that they may change over time. Determining that a child is an "introvert" may recommend to caretakers that exercises in "extroversion" are provided to help develop a more balanced or well-rounded personality, itself a possible prerequisite to "greater independence," a point Mamchur makes too.

¹² Mamchur 1981, 101.

¹³ Mamchur 1981, 101-102.

¹⁴ Mamchur 1981, 102.

¹⁵ Mamchur 1981, 102.