

Imaginal Education #3 The Comprehensive Design

This week we have talked about the need for image change in a workplace in order to create effective behavior and to ensure quality living in the workplace. The first two lectures here were on Image Change and the Life Method. Today we want to talk about the Comprehensive Design or how you go about creating the environment of a workplace through a comprehensive scheme of training. This afternoon, we will talk about teamhood in the workplace and the last session is on the practical implications of interchange within your workplace.

First I want to read you a story. It is about images in a crisis, I think. "There had to be one person who said yes."
(From Antigone)

Most of you have said that you do not have training opportunities in your office except for orientation and anything that can be done in a meeting format. I think I will start with our organizational model then. This is what we call our BUG model. How do you organize your group so they are receptive to whatever amount of training you can do. In the last session we will talk about more indirect methods of teaching. The four legs of this bug are the symbolic life, the study life, the role of declaration (by the group) and the role of the missional task. In the centre is discipline or the formal or informal way the group understands itself to be accountable.

We have discovered that any team or group in a work situation, if they are to see themselves as more than drones, need to have some way of increasing their individual and social skills. What would a study program be in your office? What are the ways you intend to encourage your team to keep on top of their professional field—a subscription to magazines, a mini library in the lounge, a bulletin board, study assignments, papers that must be written? What would it be?

And the symbolic life. What does your office see everyday when it comes in the door. Look at this room. The decor on the wall informs us that we live in a global world with a lot of local people at work. The arrangement of tables and chairs inform us that we intend to do group rather than individual study or discussion. The quotes we have been using is a gimmick to get us to participate in a corporate statement of our foundational and common understanding of education. This may belong over here on the declaration mode. At any rate, the symbolic life of your team has to do with the images that inform them of the meaning of their work. Often this is decor and space arrangement. It could also be a company song, symbol, and motto. The Japanese are great on this.

Declaration--How do people talk about their work in terms of their creativity and the significance of their work. We have found that unless people have a chance to talk through the meaning of what they are doing; perhaps, even write a paragraph on it, they lose sight of their vision. So we program in times for "talk-thrus."

The missional task is taught in various ways. In training, you always start with the vision of what you intend to accomplish. Perhaps you put up these social process triangles that are on the wall here and point to your company's task in the midst of them. At any rate, people have to be reminded of the applicability of their work to the world's situation.

However you organize yourself, we have discovered that these four components have to be in them. If for no other reason than motivity, we have found that the constant reminder of symbol(vitality in your work); study(intentionality in your work); declaration(meaning of your work); and missional task(significance in your work) all contribute to the team's understanding of even the most tedious task having a point to it.

Let's say, however, that some of you can do more than this kind of indirect training. How do you create a comprehensive curriculum that encourages all aspects of a persons' development? I have here on the board what we call the LIFE TRIANGLES. They were originally created to plan a curriculum for womb to tomb education. We have an experimental curriculum that we used on our own children and those of a Chicago's ghetto neighborhood. It started with 6 weeks old infants through preschools, afterschool elementary and highschool programs, and adult education. The 3 poles are the Practical, the Theoretical, and the Unsynonymous dimensions. The practical dimensions are your skills in your workplace. The theoretical dimensions are your foundational contexts or principles. The Unsynonymous dimensions is on selfhood or how to deal with the awe, the unexpected and the meaning aspect of life.

I was at a fast food place once where I was buying a meal for someone else to take back. I ordered for myself first to eat there and then I ordered for the other person and asked for a receipt. It was obvious that this person knew the skills for her job. She took my order and served it perfectly. And she knew the importance of what she was doing. She had the right smile, wanted to help me and understood the need for fast service and to keep the line moving. But she fell down on the Unsynonymous pole. She was so shocked that I had asked for the unexpected-a receipt- that she fell apart. First, she said they don't give such things. Then she said she couldn't take the time to do it. Then she said I didn't have the right

to ask for one. Then she burst into tears. Finally, I wrote out the receipt myself and had her sign it. She could not deal with the unexpected.

In a course like this we did for a bank, one of the people said that the two crisis they couldn't handle was what to do with a shortage of pennies and how you handle drunks and crazys. They could handle robbery with the standard operating procedures but what to do with someone who was a bit strange. Well, that is all in the unsynonymous.

What about the skills? I have been reading where US companys do not want to bother training anyone because the mobility of our workers is such that there is no guarantee that they will stay in the company for any designated length of time. Or we can't get quality control because our workers are only interested in doing the minimum of what they can get by with. Or a person has the skill of a particular job but can't adapt it to changing situations. What does it mean to have a curriculum that teaches functional skills that can be adapted rather than isolated one to one narrow range skill?

Or the theoretical learning. What is the context out of which he makes a decision in his work. How does he see the alternatives or the choices he can make(in short, how does he adapt) unless he has an overview of what and why he is doing whatever? What is the screen through which he sees his work?

Let me take you through something easy. Did any of you have difficulty in math like I did and still do? When I was first taught math, it was taught as pure skill. Please memorize everything. I still have trouble remembering my times tables in the 6's,7's, 8's, and 9's. It wasn't until I had to take algebra for the second time that someone finally connected the theoretical with the practical and I could see reason behind math. And I was 15 before I learned that. And it wasn't until college when I took logic that I discovered that math was the basis for logical thinking and that I could reason out my(as I thought then,) overwhelming problems.

In the workshop we are going to ask you to write a curriculum design for your workplace. It could be an orientation session, a year's training model, a context format for weekly meetings or whatever. The first question is going to be on listing 5 practical skills your team need to learn. Let me give you our internal triangle on this. In practical skills, they need to first give the individual a way to perform a function (like count money). This aspect of the skill will give him confidence that he can do whatever it is he is being paid to do. The second aspect here on the right side is that the skill is related to the larger social task. (It is not just counting money that is important; what we are doing is making sure we can balance the books at the end of the day). And the practical skill also has the aspect of self-conscious decision or action in the midst of it (Be warned that if you think you can day dream during this counting that we hold you accountable for). Or when you create a curriculum on skills you are looking at the larger picture and not some isolated action to be taught.

Now the unsynonymous triangle. (We will do the theoretical last because we have the most detail on this one.) You are going to be asked for the 5 places you have to deal with the unexpected and where creative selfhood is called for. This side of the triangle deals with the courage to deal with whatever you dread in your work. We call it awe for lack of a better name. What do you dread in your work? How do you teach someone that? Do you say, "Do the work you hate first so you get it over with." Or "Grin and Bear it." The right side of the triangle deals with the self image of confidence you have when you meet opposition or the "yin-yang" in a situation. How many people quit because they can't deal with the "other" in the office? Do you train people how to work with the obnoxious? You better. They are always there. And the top triangle is on creativity in dealing with the unknown, the unexpected, the incomprehensible. When do you run into the incomprehensible?

Now the Theoretical triangle. The three parts to this are the sciences, the humanities, and the existential. In each of the bottom two triangles, the underlying rationale is this triangle of the individual, the social, and the rational. Now the sciences have to do with the process of analysis and the humanities have to do with taking that analysis and acting creatively in the midst of it.

In the sciences, psychology is the analysis of the individual. In the humanities, art is the creative expression of the individual. So we teach the individual pole of psychology and art as one curriculum. In the sciences, sociology is the analysis of society and in the humanities, history is the creative expression of society. Sociology and History. In the sciences, natural science is the analysis of the rational

nature of things. And philosophy is the creative expression of rational thinking. So Natural Science and Philosophy go together.

Now you may wonder what this has to do with your workplace. When you are giving a context for anything you do, to be comprehensive it needs not only to relate to the analytical and creative aspect, it also needs to relate to the individual, the social, and the rational screen. Let me give you an example.

We have a new word processor in our office and everyone needs to use it and learn how to use it. On the scientific pole, we give everyone the book to find out the basic data. But people have found that they can do part of their job by reading only isolated parts. And then have to call someone who has read more of the manual. It is very hard to get them to really apply some method to this learning. On the humanities pole or the creativity aspect, how do you teach someone to experiment with the use of this very flexible machine? It is a challenge. Having the screen before you means you can play around with the format and the text in a way you can't do on the typewriter. However, we have had a few fights on the useage as everyone wants to use it. We have a sign up sheet but we found that people were just signing up for the whole day just to reserve it whether or not it was needed all that time. So we had to do some training on this level of the triangle. On the individual aspect: what is the level of training that this person can do or should be pushed to do? On the social aspect, how do you train this person to take responsibility for the use of this machine in light of the needs of the whole office? And on the rational pole: how do you get this person to prioritize her needs and to keep her values straight on the most effective use of this machine?

Now the top part of the triangle has to do with the existential. Or the life questions that are raised in what you do. What are the limits, the boundaries of the situation that you need to work within. If I know that I have to sell my product than I will work on through that screen. But if I am given a task and am then told after it is done that I have to defend it to someone, I get angry because the boundaries of the situation were not outlined. Has this happened to you? The left side here is on the possibilities of the situation. What door does this open? What is the challenge that is presented here? And the right triangle is on the life style or how to take responsibility in the midst of the task.

Now I know we have thrown a lot at you here but it is a context for creating a curriculum when you need it. I think the key to using this is in what we call the Spiral Curriculum. It is not necessary to teach everything in one session. Structure is the key. And consistency. You teach as

a whole rather than pieces of data. Let me use this course as an example.

The first night you came in we began by teaching you about images in selfhood. We told you everything you needed to know about selfhood and changing images but we didn't stop the course. We did a workshop in which you worked through your own situation with this data and you came up with more questions. The next morning we taught you all about images and selfhood. We went through an exercise in which you learned how to go through levels of reflection to articulate the one image. And although we taught you all we knew, this exercise raised questions in your mind and opened another door or maybe you could say a deeper level of understanding. Or spiral curriculum gives you the whole picture but it gives you enough at your level of understanding that allows you to raise questions and move to the next level. These may be questions of meaning or applicability or just adventuring into a different direction.

The alternative to a spiral curriculum is to give pieces of data each time you teach and the student is to put it all together someday. What we have learned in education is that memorization of data is a skill that can be learned but it does not in itself help someone to apply that data or understand the rationale behind it.

Now, so far I have only been talking about the structure of the content. You give a context, have some kind of exercise that allows the content to be used, and provide a way for fresh questions to be raised. We have discovered that the spiral curriculum also works when the format of teaching is consistent. We have four categories for this. The first is impingement or the initial impact of the curriculum. This could be a dramatization of some sort. You notice that we use a story or a reading. The second is awareness or the beginning of rational understanding of the content. We usually put up our lecture structure or a chart or a triangle. The third is involvement or having some exercise or way for the student to participate. The fourth is responsibility or getting the student to ask questions or begin to apply the content. In a talk, this may just be the questions we ask at the end.

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One last thing on the spiral curriculum. If you wrote the content for each short course or context or short speech you give your trainees in the same dramatic form, you would be giving them the whole picture again without repeating yourself. The initial context sets the stage for new images. We have said this before but we do not start with definitions which everyone mentally fights for or against. We begin our context with a universal experience or a story that everyone can identify with and then we define or begin suggesting the name or title. Remember the story: "There had to be someone who said yes. Someone had to agree to captain the ship. It was sinking...." This is a story about raw decision. Now if I had started with "I'm going to talk about raw decision...." I don't know but some of you might have fallen asleep on me. All right, you start with the context.

Next is the plunge. You involve your group in your activity, what ever it is. Next is the depth breakthrough. Everyone goes to the deeps in the significance of what you are saying. You have them on the edge of their seats. Last you take them through the veil. They have struggled through the issues and have come out the other side. Victory. We have come to a consensus. Something like what happened to us at the first workshop. This is your imaginal format for making an event out of whatever you are doing.

Let's go on to actual writing of the curriculum. Let's say that some of you will have to write a curriculum on orientation to your office. Others want to write a curriculum on the 12 context you will give before your monthly meeting on the significance of being in this company. Here are the steps:

1. Look at the life triangles and brood over your subject matter. List the theoretical principles, the practical skills and the unsynonomous creative abilities that someone must have to be in your workplace.
2. What are the images that must be changed if people are to learn these things. What are the new images that are going to replace the old ones.
3. Looking at all this data, brainstorm your categories.(Yes, I will illustrate this in a moment.)
4. Now gestalt or group them together.
5. Prioritize them into importance.
6. Put them in the sequence they need to be taught.
7. Decide your timeline(let us say 5 months for this one) and further gestalt your data into five sequential sections.

8. Go back through your data and see if you have left out any data or if you have not honoured your own insights about the priorities. Check to see if these 5 categories will shift the images you have listed.

Let's do this one corporately. We are going to do an orientation program for the Word Processors. Anyone-what are the practical skills that need to be learned? O.K. Let's go down the rest of the list.....good. Now will these five session do what you said? Will it shift images? How?

The next step is to decide the rational objective and the existential aim of each section. What is the rational objective here? That means, what do you intend for them to learn. What is the existential aim here? That means, what do you intend to have happen to them(think of images, involvement, excitement, whatever here).

Now we will not be doing the next step here but what you would do next is to create a lesson plan for each session depending on if this is a lecture, field work or whatever. For each session you would include the four following things: 1) the context; 2) a demonstration or example of the subject; 3) the method to apply it; 4) and a product or declarative statement at the end. This last is a hook for their memory.

Now I'm sorry that took so long. Some of you may not use this except in writing context but we have found it helpful to know how to look at the comprehensive so you don't end up teaching bits and pieces of a subject or end up not knowing why you should be teaching this rather than that.

If you are ready, we will move into our workshops.