Theory and Practice in Health Education


Ross and Mico have produced a basic text for the student entering a baccalaureate health education program. Overall, it contains a wide range of behavioral theories of individuals and organizations in relation to health education and a variety of models for program development, as well as concepts, principles, and guidelines.

The book's introductory chapter provides the reader with a descriptive overview of ways in which health education takes place, including a number of vignettes to illustrate some common features to be found in the educational process. Drawing on various definitions, the authors state that health education is "an educationally oriented process of planned change which focuses on those behaviors or problems that directly or indirectly affect people's health." In discussing the functions of a health educator, the authors note several changes in these functions over the years and cite current trends that account, in part, for the increased interest in health education as a profession. Today, the "health education specialist" is seen as someone who "has the sole function of planning, conducting, and evaluating health-education programs."

The first three parts of Theory and Practice in Health Education focus on individuals, organizations, and social behavior. Each part is further divided into three chapters dealing with content relevant to problems, theories, and programs. Part 1 offers a brief digest of some of the problems individuals encounter in relation to health and examines why health education is needed. An extensive discussion of theories of individual behavior follows, with an emphasis on the need to apply behavioral and social sciences to health care problems. Some of the more characteristic programs now in operation are described, along with specific criteria for health education programs designed for various groups, such as inpatients, outpatients, and self-help groups. In Part 2, "Health Education and Organizations," the authors identify several problems affecting administration, control, and service delivery within organizations. The primary focus is on change, and a variety of behavioral theories followed by different disciplines and professions are used illustratively.

Part 3 examines "Social Health Behavior." The authors include some important information in this section as they attempt to show problems, theories, and programs in relation to the larger community. In this reviewer's opinion, however, this section's content could have been incorporated into the book's previous parts. The reason for separating social behavior from individual behavior remains unclear, and the separation makes for what appears to be an unrealistic approach to effective health education programs.

In Part 4 and the remaining chapters, the authors discuss some general ap-
approaches to planning, guidelines that can be modified for use in appropriate situations, and steps that can be taken in evaluating health education programs. Each chapter includes selected models developed or used by professionals in the field. This section of the book can be viewed as a manual to help the health educator integrate knowledge and develop skills.

In summary, besides being useful for the student in health education, this volume should be helpful as a reference for others in the health field. However, this writer was surprised that the authors recognized hospitals and health care organizations as the appropriate settings for intervention by health educators yet devoted little attention to the need for communication between health educators and others involved in health care delivery.

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Unloving Care: The Nursing Home Tragedy


Revenues for nursing home care in the United States now exceed $12 billion annually—a tenfold increase since 1965. Two-thirds of this amount represents governmental expenditure. Of the more than 1,700 nursing homes receiving this massive outlay of public and private funds, over half are believed to be substandard, thus affecting the lives of a substantial number of the 1.25 million men and women residing there. Vladeck contends that public policy is largely responsible for this state of affairs. His book, which is an outgrowth of a study sponsored by the Twentieth Century Fund, presents material on the subject that illuminates and supports this contention.

Drawing on material from personal interviews and visits to nursing homes and government agencies, Vladeck describes the impact of public policy on the growth and development of the nursing home industry, as well as the industry's response to the regulatory processes to which it is subject. To round out the picture, Vladeck examines the way in which these interactions filter down and are ultimately translated into patient care. This results in both a multidimensional and an in-depth view of what nursing home life is like and a fuller understanding of the forces that have shaped it. Vladeck's goals in undertaking this study were, broadly speaking, (1) to examine the factors that have contributed to the failure of nursing homes in terms of cost as well as quality of care, (2) to learn from the failures and successes of this experience lessons that could guide future long-term care policies, and (3) to focus on measures that could improve the quality of life for those in need of institutionalization.

The first three chapters deal with public policy toward nursing homes and nursing homes as seen from the inside. Health professionals who rely heavily on nursing homes as a resource for long-term care will gain appreciation of the operational problems to be found in nursing homes as well as the problems encountered by patients from the material presented in this section. The third chapter, which traces the history of public policy, provides a look at the deliberation and compromises that affect a piece of legislation and transform it as it moves from introduction to enactment. In this instance, the Medicare-Medicaid Act of 1965 is used as an example. Separate chapters focus on reimbursement policies and governmental concerns with cost, interrelationships of public policies, capital financing, and the growth of the nursing home industry; levels of care, regulations of quality of care, and fraud and abuse; and politics and nursing home policy. The last three chapters are devoted to a discussion of nursing home reform.

Because Vladeck's proposals for reform reflect less familiarity with the complex needs of the frail elderly and the myriad problems confronting acute hospitals than with the other subjects he has focused on, this reviewer had some difficulty with the strategies he outlines. Basically, his first