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Personality and Learning Styles: Some Issues Concerning Curriculum and Instruction

DENNIS C. BUSS

In the United States, educational policy makers are acting to standardize school curriculum requirements. Through state mandated testing programs and increased academic course requirements for high school graduation, students are experiencing more uniform, if not more demanding, school programs. As John Goodlad (1983) observed, one outcome of this trend toward curriculum standardization has been the inability of the curriculum to respond to individual student differences. While time on common curricular experiences has increased, there has been a corresponding decrease in exploratory, specialized and enrichment elective programs. On the middle and high school level, extensive course offerings and opportunities for choice are diminishing. The student finds the curriculum increasingly unresponsive to realizing personal interests and goals.[1]

The problem of curriculum uniformity is exacerbated by the uniformity of teaching methods used in schools. Again, Goodlad (1984, 1985) has observed that students are exposed to an increasingly narrow set of instructional practice as they proceed through elementary, middle and high schools. Teachers use a didactic teaching style that place students are expected to listen, absorb the prescribed subject matter and regurgitate the essential facts on tests. This transmission model of curriculum and instruction denies student individuality and limits active involvement in a variety of learning activities.

Given these trends toward uniformity of teaching methods and a prescribed curriculum, many educators are concerned about the inability of teachers and school programs to react to the individual differences among students. If curricular choices are limited and instructional variety is practically nonexistent, how can the learning experience become responsive to the differences and preferences of students? Some may argue that this question is of no consequence since it is understood that the student must learn to adapt to the learning environment as defined by his or her teacher. Most educators do not accept this view though most agree that educational standards must be raised in American schools. Despite the inability to provide more responsive programs, many educators retain a strong commitment to individual development that reflects the values of a democratic and pluralistic society.

[1] This article is a condensed version of a paper presented at the 6th Prague International Conference on Psychological Development and Personality Formative Processes, University Campus in Prague–Suchdol, August 29, 1991.

The problem is, of course, one of a discrepancy between the values we espouse and the actual practices we engage in. The value of Goodlad's study is that he points out the inconsistencies between belief and practice.

This problem is not peculiar to American practice. Educators from other countries would surely acknowledge a tension existing between pressures for curricular and instructional uniformity and the desire to accommodate individual student needs. Historically, humanistic educational reformers such as Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Tolstoy, Dewey and others have called attention to the sometimes barbaric practices that squash the child's personality and natural propensity to be actively involved in learning. Most educators warm to the impulse to create more humane school environments that allow each child to reach his or her potential. It is not unusual or outrageous, therefore, for educators to find ways to correct an imbalance between the forces for curricular and instructional uniformity and the need to make the school more responsive to the individual characteristics of the learners themselves.

Given present conditions in American education, it is unlikely that increasing **curriculum** options will become the most feasible means to respond to student needs. If so, the only other way to respond to individual differences is through varying **instructional** practices. Is there a way, then, to increase instructional flexibility and variety at a time when the curriculum is becoming more rigid and standardized? On what basis can we justify more flexible instructional practices? In the last twenty years, an approach to these questions has emerged that will be the focus of this article. Known as the learning styles model, this approach argues that instructional variety is required given the different learning styles students possess. In this approach, student differences are defined by the way or style in which they learn as opposed to differences in intelligence, ability or interest. Learning style is defined as "the characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment (Keefe, 1990, p. 6)." Guild and Garger (1985) also see learning styles in a similar multidimensional perspective that encompasses differences in (1) cognition, how people perceive and gain knowledge; (2) conceptualization, how people form ideas and think; (3) affect, how people feel and form values; and (4) behavior, how people act.

Advocates of the model assert that effective instruction requires the teacher to be aware of the diverse learning styles that exist among students. This information can then be used to individualize instructional activities so that maximum learning for each child can occur. For example, if a student's learning style shows a preference for working with others on academic tasks, then the teacher should accommodate this preference to enhance achievement and motivation to learn. Once the teacher diagnoses the learning style preferences of each student, then the teacher could become more responsive to the differences that exist in a class. In this way the teacher possesses a seemingly intelligent basis for introducing a variety of instructional practices into the classroom. In addition, the teacher should be able to modify instruction to achieve a better match with student learning style preferences. As Guild and Garger put it, "accepting the diversity of style can help us to create the atmosphere and experiences that encourage each individual to reach his or her full potential" (Guild & Garger, 1985, p. 5).

Many instruments have been created to identify student learning style preferences. The learning styles approach that I am going to emphasize for this article is derived from personality theory. Based on the ideas of Carl Gustav Jung (1971), this approach stresses basic personality functions. The first function entails our preferred way of perceiving, that is, how we become aware of the world of events, people, things and ideas that surround us. Two categories of perceiving define the limits of our preferences in this category:

sensing and intuition. In the sensing mode we prefer to use the five senses to see the world as it actually is: we prefer the real, the observable, the factual and the practical. The intuitive mode is less direct and relies on the indirect ideas or associations that come to us from our unconscious experience. We prefer possibilities, imagination, creativity, the meaning of things below surface reality.

The second personality function entails judging. Judging describes how we make decisions and come to conclusions. Again, two modes define our preferences: thinking and feeling. In the thinking mode we trust logic, evidence, rationality, and objective means to come to our decisions. In the feeling mode we are more easily persuaded by the subjective, personal and affective aspects of a situation that is never completely clear or unambiguous. With both the perceiving and judging functions, Jung insisted that no value should be attached to the four modes where one preference might be seen as better than its opposite.

Another difference among human personalities entails how we react to the outer and inner world of experience. Jung identified two basic orientations: introversion and extraversion. Introverts are more interested in the internal world of their own thoughts, ideas, feelings and self reflections. Extraverts prefer to interact with the outer world of things, people and actions. Jung believed one can be mentally healthy as either an introvert or as an extravert. Briggs Myers (1980) added another preference category to those identified by Jung. She believed that people shift back and forth between their preference for perceiving and judging. Judging people want order to their lives and want closure; perceiving people tolerate ambiguity and will put off making decisions to avoid anything irrevocable. Again both preferences have merit and can lead to satisfying lives.

Briggs Myers combined these four preference categories, extraversion–introversion, sensing–intuition, thinking–feeling, and judging–perceiving, into a typology of sixteen personality types. It should be noted that these preferences and the personality types derived from them are not fixed, that they can change over time and that they are held as matters of degree. Briggs Meyers provided descriptions of each type and explored implications for marriage, education and work. In 1962 the first version of the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator appeared. This test has since become a standard way of identifying personality types according to Jung's theories. Several other books (Keirsey and Bates, 1978; Lawrence, 1982; Silver and Hanson, 1982) have appeared that describe further research in this area and address the educational implications of Jung's theory on learning styles.

At this point, it is important to elaborate upon what Hyman and Rosoff (1984) call the "learning style paradigm" that was alluded to previously. This is the notion that learning activities should match the learning style preferences of each student. Hyman and Rosoff describe the process in this way. First, the teacher must examine each student's learning style. Second, the teacher must understand and categorize those styles using some classification system such as the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator or the Keirsey Temperament Sorter. Third, we then must match the individual student's style with the style of a compatible teacher or failing that, request the teacher to adjust his or her teaching activities to match the student's learning style. Fourth, teachers must learn how to perform each step in their preservice and inservice professional education programs (Hyman & Rosoff, 1984, p. 35).

Given this model or paradigm, the learning styles advocate paints a positive picture of the attributes to this approach for individualizing instruction. For example, Keefe asserts that learning style is much more than just another innovation. It is a fundamental new tool with which to work. It is a new way of looking at learning and instruction, a deeper and more profound view of the learner than known previously. It is a basic framework upon which a theory and practice of instruction can be built (Keefe, 1979, p. 131).

Dunn and Dunn claim "that, when taught through methods that complemented their learning characteristics, students at all levels became increasingly motivated and achieved better academically" (Dunn & Dunn, 1979, p. 239). Smith and Renzulli reaffirm this claim saying "research has shown that learning style matching can and does have a positive impact on student achievement, interest, and/or motivation" (Smith & Renzulli, 1984, p. 49). Henson and Borthwick argue that "it is highly probable that many of the so-called behavior problems that label students could be alleviated or at least minimized by the matching of styles" (Henson & Borthwick, 1984, p. 7).

Despite these glowing claims from learning theorists who support the learning styles approach to teaching and instruction, it is important to point out some significant pitfalls and caveats. As a curriculum specialist, I offer these criticisms from the perspective of one who recognizes the potential this line of research and theory has for making a positive impact on classroom practice. However, it is necessary to identify the flaws that exist in the learning styles argument as well as the more cautious findings that recent research has produced. Too often promising ideas in education lose their impact because over-zealous advocates assert more than can be justified.

The first line of criticism derives from the concept of teaching as a triadic relationship between teacher, student and curriculum (Anderson, 1967; Hyman, 1974). It is a comon misconception to think of teaching as a dyadic relationship. For example, the primary teacher asserts that she is a teacher of six-year olds or the secondary teacher claims she is a mathematics teacher. In fact, the primary teacher typically teaches a variety of subjects to her six-year olds and the secondary teacher teaches mathematics to adolescents. That is, the teacher teaches some content to some one or group of students; all three elements are present — teacher, subject matter and students. Hyman and Rosoff perceptively point out that the "learning style paradigm suffers because it omits consideration of subject matter", (Hyman & Rosoff, 1984, p. 38).

The significance of this point requires some explanation. The learning styles advocate believes that the teacher should choose learning activities that are compatible with, and match the styles of, the learners in the classroom. In other words, consideration of learner characteristics becomes the sole basis for instructional decision making. For example, the teacher might choose a small group activity because some students in the class would find the student-to-student interaction more compatible with their learning style. Missing from this dyadic strategy is, of course, an examination of the content to be taught. In the learning styles mode, the teacher is only concerned with whom is to be taught as opposed to **what** is to be taught. As Hyman and Rosoff put it, a teacher must first consider "what he/she must do in order to teach the facts, concepts, principles, skills, and values which we commonly associate with such subjects as social studies, language arts, science, mathematics, fine arts, and a physical education" (Hyman & Rosoff, 1984, p. 38). Thus, our teacher should choose a small group activity because it would accomplish the content objective more effectively than another method.

How does the teacher know whether content considerations should take priority over learner characteristics when making instructional decisions? Curriculum theorists have studied this question in their efforts to establish defensible criteria for selecting appropriate learning experiences. Taba offers as her first criterion the significance and validity of the content (Taba, 1962, p. 267–272). Zais asserts that "... the primary standard for judging the merit of proposed learning activities is how well they contribute to the attainment of curriculum aims, goals, and objectives" (Zais, 1974, p. 355). Fraenkel argues that "every learning activity should serve a justifiable function related to specific objectives... In other words, each learning activity should serve a distinct purpose. Otherwise, it is mere busy

work" (Fraenkel, 1980, p. 129). Last, Brophy and Alleman (1991, p. 15), who provide a synthesis of thinking on this question, clearly assert that the primary principle for selecting worthwhile learning activities must be goal relevance.

Each of these theorists is coming to the same inescapable point: it is in the fulfillment of some defensible objective that gives *educational* value and meaning to a learning activity. In practical terms this means that when a teacher goes about the process of selecting a learning activity, the teacher should *first* keep in mind the curriculum objective that the activity will accomplish as opposed to considering student learning styles as the primary basis for activity selection. It is interesting, however, that curriculum theorists do not neglect the learner as a factor in making these decisions. For example, Tyler also argued that teachers should make sure that the experience provides the student with "an opportunity to practice the kind of behavior implied by the objective", that the student should derive "satisfactions from carrying on the kind of behavior implied by the objectives" and that the experiences "are within the range of possibility for the students involved" (Tyler, 1950, p. 42–43). Zais (1974, p. 359–364) also argues that learning activities should be related to the learner's experiences in terms of ability, culture and interests.

On the surface it appears as if these theorists are offering contradictory advice. On the one hand, they say learning activities must be chosen in fulfillment of an educational goal and, on the other, they say that learner's needs must be considered. This advice, however, is not contradictory or inconsistent because, as Tyler recognizes, "there are many particular experiences that can be used to attain the same educational objectives" (Tyler, 1950, p. 43). For example, if the teacher has as a curriculum goal student understanding of an important subject concept, the teacher can choose from a variety of learning activities to teach that concept. These might include an inductive discovery exercise, a visual presentation of concept hierarchies, a lecture, or programmed instruction (Joyce, 1978). If each of these activities can be legitimately used to accomplish the curriculum objective, then the teacher can consider learning styles as a basis for choosing.

At this point, it should be clear that a curriculum solution to our problem of providing for intructional variety is a more viable one than the psychological approach as represented by the learning styles model. If the teacher keeps in mind the diverse number and kinds of curriculum objectives he or she is responsible for, then it becomes necessary to provide a wide range of learning activities to reach those objectives. The mistake many teachers make is one of curriculum reductionism. They see the goals of schooling reduced to one fundamental function: the absortpion of prescribed subject matter. Is it any wonder then that didactic, teacher-centered methods have prevailed over attempts to make learning more active, learner-centered and varied? The remedy to this problem is not to take an equally narrow dyadic student centered approach as advocated by many learning style theorists and researchers. The teacher must understand that teaching is a triadic relationship encompassing teacher, student **and** curriculum and that curriculum goals provide the *primary* basis for selecting learning activities.

The next problem we need to consider is a practical one. If we are to take the learning styles approach to instruction seriously, to what extent is the teacher obligated to match student learning style preferences with compatible learning activities? As Keirsey and Bates put it, what happens when the teacher realizes,

> that many of the children are incredibly different from her and from each other. ... What then? Is she to approach these children differently? Is she to give up her otherwise unquestioned perspectives on the very purpose of school? Must instructional **tactics** differ for different temperaments? Must instructional **content** differ for different temperaments? Is she, for instance, wise or foolish if she poses the same assignments, explanati-

ons, and questions for those five ESFJs [extraverted, sensing, feeling, judging] in the front rows as she does for that lonely INTP [introverted, intuitive, thinking, perceiving] in the back row? (Keirsey & Bates, 1978, p. 99).

Surprisingly, Keirsey and Bates do not provide a satisfactory solution to the practical dilemma these questions raise for the teacher. Imagine a classroom of twenty to thirty children, each possessing one of sixteen distinct personality based learning styles (thirty-two if one uses the Keirsey Temperance Sorter!). Should the teacher devise appropriate learning activities for each child concurrently? Or perhaps, more reasonably, should she be sure that enough different activities are planned during the day so that each child might find one that is compatible with his or her learning style? Should the teacher choose the former approach, the demands on her capacity to plan for each child would quickly overwhelm her. If she chooses the latter approach, many children are going to find some activities distinctly incompatible with their learning style. The best advice Keirsey and Bates can offer is this: "facing the problem, even without solutions, is infinitely better than, for lack of a solution, pretending the problem doesn't exist and consequently disqualifying almost all the children's messages, to their detriment" (Keirsei & Bates, 1978, p. 100). Although awareness of the problem of student diversity is a positive first step, it nevertheless must be accompanied by practical and feasible strategies for implementation. Lacking these, it is only natural for teachers, out of frustration, to retreat to their previous whole-class didactic approaches.

Related to this problem of individualizing instruction according to learning style, is the question of compatibility. Should the teacher try to find a learning activity that exatly matches the learning style preference of the student? As a corrective to the problem of using the same teaching approach for all children, learning styles advocates argue that more children will learn if they encounter activities compatible with their respective styles of learning. Instead of being alienated from the classroom, more students will become eager participants in the learning process because teachers have provided an appropriate match. This attempt at providing compatible activitie to increase the comfort level of the student raises two issues. First, is the issue of the real world. Few, if any of us, can expert to find a learning environment that is perfectly compatible with our dispositions over an extended period. Should we not expect the student to be flexible and adjust to changing teaching styles and classroom environments? On the one hand, learning styles advocates rightly complain that most classrooms are inflexible where the students must adjust to the uniform style of the teacher. On the other hand, their proposed solution is to make the teacher almost infinitely flexible so that each child has a compatible activity where little or no adjustment is required on his or her par. As we have seen, both extremes are inappropriate. Realistically and logically, some balance must be sought. Children must adapt to the real world and learn how to adjust to different learning environments. Teachers have the professional obligation to consider student temperament in choosing learning activities to realize a curriculum objective.

The second issue deals with the nature of learning itself. In trying to find comfortable matches between activity and style, the learning styles advocate forgets that learning entails a measure of discomfort. Joyce (1984) claims learning theorists such as Rogers, Maslow, Piaget and Hunt believe that intellectual growth can be arrested unless the learner is confronted by challenging and unfamiliar learning tasks and environments. Thus, if the environment is too comfortable we may no promote the outcome we expect from more compatible matches. As Joyce suggests, "to stimulate development, we deliberately mismatch student and environement so that the student cannot easily maintain the familiar patterns but must move on toward greater complexity" (Joyce, 1984, p. 27). Of course, the

optimal mismatch is one that challenges the learner as opposed to overwhelming him or her. Not every activity is going to be greeted in the same way by learners. Some will respond positively to an activity and others will have a negative reaction to that activity.

Other cautions should be kept in mind as we consider the validity of the learning styles model. First, there is the problem of research. Despite what some advocates claim, the research evidence does not support the assertion that matching activities to learning styles will yield significant advantages over traditional forms of instruction (Doyle and Rutherford, 1984, p. 22; O'Neil, 1990, p. 7). Good and Brophy assert that there is evidence that "matching may actually reduce achievement progress even if it succeeds in improving students' attitudes toward their learning" (Good & Brophy, 1991, p. 348).

In trying to account for these negative outcomes, Good and Stipek argue that learning styles advocates have overemphasized this variable in instructional planning. There is "other important information abut students that is relevant to the design of instruction", they claim (Good & Stipek, 1983, p. 35). For example, Doyle and Rutheford say that such factors as "the nature of the learning task, the relationship between teacher and student, the time of year" as well as learning style could all have an impact on instructional effectiveness (Doyle & Rutherford, 1984, p. 22). Teachers ought to be sensitized to learning style differences among students; however, rather than designing elaborate instructional activities to match those styles, teachers would be better off developing high quality activities and materials that are more closely aligned to the diverse curriculum objectives they are responsible for teaching.

What concluding advice can be given to educators interested in learning styles research on teaching? First, they should avoid being influenced by inflated claims about the real or desired impact of the learning styles concept on teaching and learning. They should look upon learning style matching as one of many important factors having an influence on student achievement and attitude toward learning.

Second, they should place the learning styles model within the larger context of curriculum and instruction. Learner personality is not the only source of information to be examined when making decisions about what and how something is to be taught. Learning activities are chosen first to accomplish a legitimate educational purpose or goal. This does not mean that instructional uniformity is the product of such thinking. A defensible basis for instructional variety can be made by taking the curricular perspective.

Third, when thinking about the many activities that might be used to accomplish a curriculum objective, the educator should consider the diverse style preferences of the learners. In a given day, as with an elementary teacher, or over a week, as with a secondary level teacher, a variety of activities can be planned that most learners at some time will find compatible with their style.

Last, they should remember that some discomfort is necessary for cognitive development to occur. Teachers should be prepared to adjust an activity to make it more satisfying to the learner as well as to teach students strategies to adjust to, and learn from, and activities that are outside their comfort zone.

The judicious application of the learning styles model holds much promise for the educator. If used with the cautions noted above, some real benefits can accrue. With the contemporary pressures toward educational standardization, uniformity and impersonalization, the teacher has a means to recognize his or her students as individuals and for the student themselves to understand and accept their own unique learning styles. Both can use this knowledge to create a tolerant and harmonious classroom environment. The rapport developed between teacher and learner can provide a context for the engagement of students in stimulating and challenging learning, an outcome that both learning theorist and curriculum specialist can support.

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DENNIS C. BUSS

OSOBNOST A STYLY UČENÍ: NĚKTERÉ TRENDY V KURIKULU A VE VÝUCE

V USA lze vystopovat tendence, které vedou ke sjednocování obsahové stránky výuky. Přispívají k tomu např. státní didaktické testovací programy, přispívá k tomu sbližování učebních programů a osnov, sjednocování požadavků na kvalitu absolventů středních škol atd. Tyto jednotící tlaky však přinášejí i vážná nebezpečí: shodné kurikulum navozuje uniformitu vyučování, ignorují se rozdíly mezi žáky, nerespektuje se individualita žáků, bohatost jejich zájmů a odlišnosti jejich osobních cílů.

Zmíněná situace se zdaleka netýká jen amerického školství. Navozuje obecnější problém: jak vytvořit ve škole humánnější prostředí, v němž by každé dítě mohlo rozvíjet své potenciality. Jedno z možných řešení nabízí přístup, který přihlíží k rozmanitosti žákovských stylů učení.

Styl učení je nová proměnná, jež se liší od inteligence, schopnosti nebo zájmů. Dají se v něm odlišit různé stránky, např kognitivní, afektivní, behaviorální. Pro zjišťování stylů učení existuje mnoho diagnostických metod. Autor si vybral metodu, která vychází z tradic hlubinné psychologie, z Jungovy typologie osobnosti (dotazník Brigse–Myersové). Pomocí čtyř bipolárních úrovní (introverze–extraverze, čití–intuice, myšlení–cítění, hodnocení–vnímání) se dá dospět k 16 osobnostním typům.

Myšlenka, že by učitel při koncipování výuky mohl využít nových poznatků o učebních stylech žáků, vede k netradičním pohledům na učivo a učitelovu vyučovací činnost. Autor článku tyto pohledy před čtenářem postupně otevírá.

Nejprve cituje doporučení Hymana a Rosoffa, kteří říkají, že by učitel měl: 1. zkoumat u každého žáka jeho styl učení, 2. určit, ke kterému typu žákův styl patří a tím mu lépe porozumět, 3. snažit se buď přiblížit žákův styl učení tomu, co požaduje škola, a pokud to nepůjde, pak adaptovat své vyučovací postupy zvláštnostem žákova stylu učení, 4. naučit se vykonávat jmenované činnosti během pregraduálního a postgraduálního vzdělávání.

V dalším oddíle autor kritizuje dyadické pojetí výuky, které si všímá jen učitele a žáků. Jakmile se základem pedagogického rozhodování stanou jenom charakteristiky žáků, zejména jejich styly učení, učitel se soustředí na otázku koho bude vyučovat, nikoli co bude vyučovat. Teoretici zabývající se kurikulem promýšlejí už desítky let hlediska, podle nichž by se měl vybírat obsah výuky, aby navodil u žáků žádoucí činnosti. Figuruje tam mj. závažnost obsahu, relevantnost obsahu cílům, i když se ohled na žáka úplně nevytratil. Autor dospívá k tvrzení, že při rozhodování o obsahu, o učivu se musí více přihlížet k žákovi. Zřetel k žákovi ovšem nesmí vyústit v další krajnost, jíž je „žákocentrický" přístup k učivu, doporučovaný některými psychology. Výuka je triadická záležitost, zahrnující učitele, žáka a kurikulum, přičemž kurikulární cíle jsou pro výběr učebních aktivit žáka primární.

Pokud přistoupíme na myšlenku, že učitel má při koncipování výuky přihlížet k žákovským stylům učení, vzniká ryze praktický problém. Ve třídě bývá 20 až 30 žáků a může se tedy vyskytnout 16 typů osobnostně podmíněných učebních stylů. Má učitel vymýšlet vhodné činnosti pro každého z těchto žákovských typů zvlášť? Jedna odpověď předpokládá, že žáci jsou flexibilní a sami se přizpůsobí měnícím se učitelovým vyučovacím stylům a měnícímu se prostředí třídy i hodiny. Výzkumy však varují: prostředí bývá málo měnlivé a učitelova činnost je často velmi stereotypní.

Druhá odpověď počítá s flexibilitou učitele a jeho dovedností adaptovat se na rozdílné žákovské styly učení. Autor uzavírá, že oba extrémy jsou nevhodné a učitel musí hledat rozumnou rovnováhu mezi naznačenými krajnostmi.

Poslední problém navazuje na požadavek, aby učitel přizpůsobil své postupy zvláštnostem žákovských stylů učení. Týká se tedy

podmínek, které učitel vytváří pro žákovo učení. Autor upozorňuje: pokud bychom vycházeli žákovi ve všem vstříc, přizpůsobovali ve všem vyučování jeho stylu učení, pak nestimulujeme žákův rozvoj. Žák potřebuje zažít určitý rozpor, potřebuje překonávat překážky, aby pokročil dále, aby se rozvíjel.

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Autor: DENNIS C. BUSS, Ed. D., Associate Professor of Education, Rider College, School of Education and Human Services, Division of Graduate Studies, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648, USA

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE GENT • BELGIUM 28 – 30 september 92
CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT: c/o I. Schelstraete Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25
B 9000 Gent Belgium
tel. 32/91/64.30.82 fax. 32/91/64.35.97

This international conference is organized on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the University of Gent and in cooperation with the joint university project of the CRE (Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities) for the publication of a general survey of the history of the European universities and their social context, *A History of the European University.*

The conference will address topics of concern to historians and educationists, to faculty and administrators in higher education, and to public officials and representatives of business.

THEMES

1. Pattern and Structures: the relationship between the university and the local authority and/or central government, regionalization and decentralization, the relationship between the university and industry, ...
2. Students: admission, political commitment, May 68, student mobility, university education and employment opportunities, ...
3. Staff: the increase in the number of lecturers, increasing numbers of administrative staff, profile of the professors, ...
4. Learning: instruction/research ratio, the anticipation and integration of social and scientific innovations, the development of the various disciplines, The Open University, ...

PROCEDURE

Each of the 4 themes will be dealt with in a half-day (plenary) working session: First the rapporteur will introduce the theme, comment on the state of research, and give a brief survey of the papers to follow. Then five invited speakers in about fifteen minutes each will present the results of their research and indicate the subjects of discussion. These papers will then be followed by one hour discussion among the panelists and audience, led by an expert in the field. Clearly, comparison and dialogue will be central in this conference. All registered participants will receive the papers in advance. The definitive version of these will appear in the conference proceedings.

CONFERENCE LANGUAGES

English, French and German.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

Professor Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, Department of Medieval History at the Universities of Gent and Amsterdam.
Professor Jan Art, Department of Contemporary History at the University of Gent.
Inge Schelstraete, Conference Secretariat.