Odnosi s javnošću u neprofitnim organizacijama

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PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

BACHELOR THESIS

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Communication Studies

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Content:

1.   Introduction

An organization can be a part of one of three sectors – for-profit, non-profit and public sector. Each of these sectors has a different role in a society, as well as different approaches to social issues. This paper will focus on defining ways non-profit organizations tend to use different public relations' tools and techniques in order to fulfil their roles in the social system.

For-profit organizations are focused on gaining profit for their owners and shareholders, however, they don't have any obligations to the society with an exception of paying taxes. On the other hand, public sector offers various public services that don't serve only individual, but a society as a whole. These services are specific because they can be used even by people who don't pay for them. For example, public services are traffic infrastructure, public education, military or similar services. Non-profit organizations are focused on satisfying needs to which neither for-profit or public sector pays much attention.

In this paper I will tend to demonstrate different ways public relations assists non-profit organizations with creating and implementing programs and, consequently, fulfilling their role in the society. Furthermore, I will emphasize the specifics of public relations' function in non-profit organizations, as well as introduce different non-profit campaigns.

The first part of this paper will be focused on public relations, especially its development and techniques that allowed the profession to become an important part of non-profit organizations' activities. The second part of the thesis will contain specifics of non-profit organizations and roles of public relations' function in such organizations. The last part of this seminar will present different non-profit campaigns and the role public relations profession had in implementing them.

2. Public Relations

Public relations is a profession closely connected to communication studies. Throughout its history public relations was considered to be an extension of marketing or political propaganda, therefore PR practitioners have often encountered different prejudices about their role in different organizations. At the very beginning of a rapid development of the profession, it was considered to be impossible for the public relations to be the main component of the non-profit activities.

2.1.   Definitions of Public Relations

Public relations is quite a complex profession because of its using numerous tools to fulfil different functions and considering the span of PR activities used in different situations, it is no wonder that theorists have numerous definitions of the profession.

Dan Lattimore and associates (2009: 4) believe that public relations is a management function, that it should develop positive and long-term relationships with different publics, as well as execute programs that should promote understanding among organization's publics. Zoran Tomić defined PR in a similar manner. For him (Tomić, 2008: 50), public relations is "(…) a communication process between an organization and its publics with a view to achieving mutual understanding, developing social responsibility and achieving mutual interests".

Finally, after analysing 472 different definitions of public relations, Rex Harlow came up with this comprehensive definition:

> "Public relations as the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools." (according to: Broom, 2010: 6)

All of the mentioned definitions are quite similar, but the last one by Rex Harlow contains all of the most important aspects of the public relations. Noticing the similarities between these definitions, the conclusion can be drawn that public relations indeed combines numerous functions with a view to achieving numerous goals.

2.2.   Models of Public Relations

To understand what role public relations has in a non-profit sector, it is necessary to understand the manner public relations began and developed. Arguably, the most common way of understanding the history of the profession is by studying the Grunig-Hunt models of public relations.

The four Grunig-Hunt models are an explanation of development of public relations. The history of public relations is closely connected to the United States of America and the American theorists and practitioners. Since most scientist researching PR are the Americans, most data collected about public relations is also connected to the United States of America. According to Tomić (2008: 12) in the United States there are approximately 200 000 PR practitioners, predominately employed by the American government. Even though we know that PR has been around for at least as much as the media have, public relations has experienced its greatest progress in the United States in the twentieth century.

Kunczik believes that viewing PR as a profession born in the United States is inaccurate. As an alternative, Kunczik (Tomić, 2008: 37) claims that public relations was already developed in German public sector by the time the profession found its way to profit sector in the United States. On the other hand, Ana Tkalac Verčić (2015: 51) states that the first organized beginning was indeed in the United States. Therefore, even if the origins of the public relations remain unclear, it is obvious that the greatest growth experienced by the profession was in the USA.

The first model of public relations according to Grunig and Hunt (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 52) is the press agentry model. It marks the beginning of upturn of the profession between 1850 and 1900. This model's characteristic is a one-way communication which doesn't allow feedback from the public. At this time the goal of public relations' function and press-agents is to raise publicity about the organization in the media. It did not matter if such

a publicity was positive or negative as long as information reached as many people as possible.

According to the authors (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 52), the second model that was popular from approximately 1900 to 1920 is the public information model. This model also uses only one-way communication ignoring feedback. The only role of PR at this stage of development is spreading information to the public without investing in their relationship in any other way. For the organizations it was only important that information was published and made available to the public.

The last two models are more sophisticated than the first ones as they start to perceive public relations' function as a more strategically oriented function based on research and interactive communication. Also, they are predominantly used today. The two-way asymmetric model appeared between 1920 and 1960 (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 52). It has used research to determine public opinion and shaped its messages accordingly. Unfortunately, it recognized only organizations' influence on the public and not the other way around. Today, professionals know that if they want their company to stay competitive, they have to enable public to make changes in the organization as well and not just try to influence their public.

Finally, the two-way symmetric model is similar to the previous one, but more suitable for situations involving conflict between the organization and the public (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 52). According to this model, PR uses research and communication to manage conflict, as well as allowing change of organization's behaviour under public's influence. With the use of the two-way symmetric model, the public is given the role of an equal interlocutor.

The profession's focus switching to an equal interaction with public was a long, but quite noticeable change that earned public relations its rightful place of important aspect of every organization.

2.3. Level of Development of Public Relations

Public relations didn't only develop through time, but also depending on the organization's needs. That is visible in the table number 1 which shows the level marketing and public relations development in different types of organizations.

According to Tkalac Verčić (2015: 345), non-profit organizations usually have poorly developed both marketing and public relations. The reason for that is lack of financial resources that would enable such an organization to a employ public relations practitioner. It is incorrect to say that there are no public relations techniques and tools used, but rather that employees, who face lack of time and multitasking, don't tend to use them strategically.

		Public relations	
		Poorly developed	Well developed
Marketing	Poorly developed	Small, non-profit organizations	Hospitals and universities
	Well developed	Small, production companies	Big organizations

Table 1: The level of development of marketing and public relations in different types of organizations

Looking at other types of organizations in this table, a conclusion about the differences and similarities between marketing and PR can be drawn. As it was mentioned before, public relations is directed towards developing and maintaining relationships between an organization and its various publics. The goal of marketing, on the other hand, is managing relationships with customers, or to be more precise, paying customers.

Considering that and keeping in mind that lines between PR and marketing are often unclear, it only makes sense for non-profit organizations or schools and hospitals to have better developed PR than marketing function.

2.4.   Process in Public Relations

Having such a complex role in organizations and using a whole range of tools, public relations has well defined a step-by-step process. The next table demonstrates different ways different authors have defined the process of public relations in organizations (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 171). There are five different divisions.

PACE is arguably used most often. It includes planning, action, communication and evaluation of the entire process. The other divisions have similar steps in mind when implementing a program.

PACE	ACE	GRACE	STARE	ROSIE
		Goals setting	Scanning	
		Research	Tracking	Research
Planning	Assessment	Assessment	Analysis	Objectives
Action			Response	Strategy
Communication	Communication	Communication		Implementation
Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation

Table 2: Process in public relations

That means that the first step to strategic use of the PR is to research the problem or the opportunities in order to understand what is happening in the organization's environment. Next, PR practitioners should ask themselves what they should do to solve the problem or to

use the opportunity. The next phase of the process is implementation or deciding what is a message or action which the organization wants to transmit or do, who should do it and how, and additionally, when it should be done (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 171).

Evaluation is the last phase and it is a chance for PR practitioners to look back and analyse how the plan was executed in order to be aware of the possible mistakes the next time or even to change them in the current project if possible. The process is under a great influence of internal and external circumstances. Therefore, it should be constantly re-evaluated and adjusted to the changes in the environment (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 171).

Public relations <u>is</u> a very complex profession that has changed greatly in the past two centuries. Even though there was a popular opinion that public relations <u>is</u> a part of marketing in an organization and therefore exclusively contribute to the profit-making process, the truth is that public relations is focused on creating positive and two-way relations with anyone affected by the organization's activities in any way.

3.   Non-profit organizations

Non-profit organizations are a part of non-profit sector. More and more people, especially public relations practitioners, work in non-profit organizations. Graph number 1 shows that combined of approximately 32 % of PR practitioners nowadays work in non-profit organizations (Broom 2018: 31).

Being a specific sector only loosely connected to other two, non-profit organizations have a specific type of management and public relations' function.
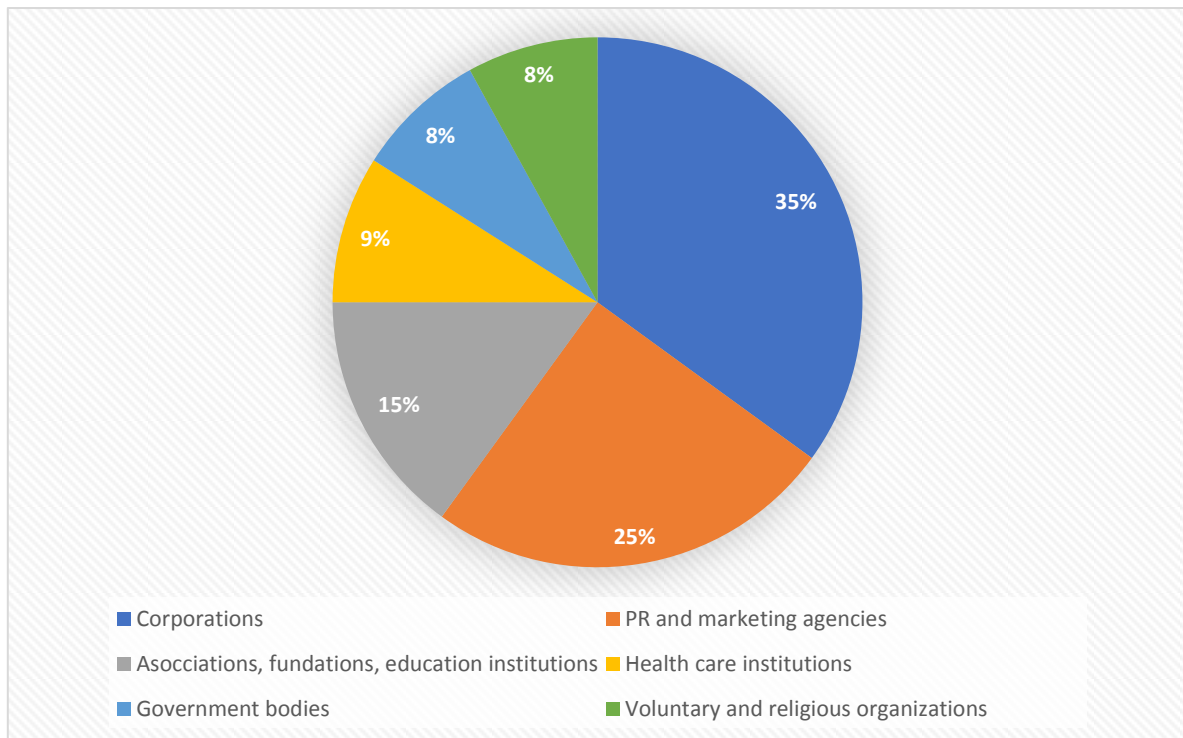
Graph 1: The percentage of PR practitioners in different types of organizations

3.1.   Definition of Non-profit Organizations

Non-profit organizations are, at first, easier to define than public relations. Pavičić (according to Alfirević et al., 2013:16) defined non-profit organizations as "all organizations which satisfy public interest, but whose primary purpose is not generating profit."

This definition clearly states that non-profit organizations make positive changes in the society but don't accumulate profit by doing so. Several philosophers and economists have raised discussion about the society's needs, or lack of them, that would justify the existence of non-profit organizations.

Adam Smith (according to Alfirević and others, 2013: 44-45) thinks that there should be such organizations, because there should be certain mechanisms in the society that would give people an opportunity to do good hoping to fulfil their own interests. Milton Friedman (according to Alfirević and others, 2013: 45), on the other hand, believes that it's not a company's job to do that. Organizations can't have responsibility to the society because decisions made in an organization are made by individuals – managers who have their own

interests and values. Therefore, individuals are the ones who should try to make society a better place.

The liberal approach (according to Alfirević and others, 2013: 45) similarly believes that individuals should contribute to society's progress without institutional help. Carrol (according to Alfirević and others, 2013: 47) making a pyramid of manager's responsibilities in a company emphasizes that the first manager's obligation is economic, followed by legal, ethical and philanthropic.

Taking into consideration all these different opinions on the necessity of existence of non-profit organizations as well as on the nature of management these organizations require, there are different types of non-profit organizations.

3.2.   Types of Non-profit Organizations

According to Broom (2010: 438), there are five different types of non-profit organizations - organized, private, non-profit, self-governing and voluntary.

Organized non-profit organizations are institutionalized. They have officials, regular meetings and work like any for-profit organization. Private non-profit organizations are not controlled by the government in any way, even when receiving funding from the government. Non-profit non-profit organizations do not distribute part of its profit to owners or managers. Other types of non-profit organizations do pay their employees, non-profit don't but rather invest that profit into development of various activities.

Self-governing non-profit organizations have their own set of rules and are not an object of external control. Finally, voluntary non-profit organizations have to possess some form of voluntary work, either in leading the organization or implementing its program. All of these types, of course, overlap in reality and one organization can be a combination of different types.

3.3.   Specifics of Public Relations in Non-profit Organization

Non-profit sector is specific and different from the other two for various reasons. One of those is, of course, the goals the organization sets for itself. Every organization is made with a

certain goal in mind. This is especially true for non-profit organizations. Broom defines different goals of PR in non-profit organizations:

"1. To define and brand the organization, to achieve acceptance of its mission and to protect its image.

2. To develop communication channels with those who the organization serves.

3. To develop and maintain positive climate for a fundraising.

4. To support development and survival of public policies that could be favourable to organization's mission.

5. To inform and motivate key stakeholders of the organization (such as employees, volunteers and commissioners) to dedicate themselves to the organization and actively support its mission as well as its general and specific goals." (Broom, 2010: 442)

These goals are specific for a non-profit sector meaning that most for-profit and public organizations don't have to adjust their behaviour in order to achieve these goals. On the other hand, non-profit organizations have to form each of their activities in a way that would enable fulfilment of these goals as well as some of the more specific ones for the organization itself.

Lobbying, mentioned as the fourth goal of PR in a non-profit organization, is one of the most important activities of non-profit organizations. Lobbying is defined as the practice of "conducting activities aimed at influencing public officials and especially members of a legislative body on legislation" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Goals of many non-profit campaigns are directed towards gaining legal and political aid in solving certain social issue, so in achieving those goals non-profit organizations rely on lobbying. Gaining that kind of support is usually under PR practitioner's jurisdiction.

Another important characteristic of non-profit organizations is their dependence on public opinion (Radalj, 2018: 27). Non-profit organizations less and less rely on the government funding for developing programs, but rather depend on private donations. Therefore, the role of PR in a non-profit organization is to present an organization and its work in public eyes in such a way that would evoke trust and consequently gain support for financing and implementing programs and projects.

According to Miro Radalj (2018: 53-54), there are three categories of strategic communication of non-profit organizations. The first is the media promotion of a certain initiative, the second is networking or collaboration with members of your organization or of other organizations. The third and last way to use communication strategically is by creating and distributing own media resources which can be used as a response to media's unwillingness to cooperate.

Every goal of a non-profit organization can be achieved by inventing and implementing programs and splitting those programs into different project that enable organizations to reach their goal more simply.

3.4.   Similarities of Public Relations in Non-profit and Other Organizations

As mentioned, non-profit organizations do not differ from other organizations just by the absence of the profit-accumulating process or by different ways of distributing money, they also have less obvious differences. Taking that into consideration, there are more than a few similarities between non-profit and for-profit organizations, as well.

Public relations' place in organizations in general should be as close to the leadership management as possible, this especially refers to non-profit organizations which benefit from the PR the most. Even though non-profit and profit sectors are two different parts of the society, there are several things that make the two quite similar. The most important is connected to the management of the organization. Both profit and non-profit organizations share similar models and techniques of business management. After reaching a certain point of demand for managerial leadership non-profit organizations should separate functions of a manager and an owner by employing a person who can manage the organization according to the owner's expectations.

Public relations practitioner can have a few different roles in an organization. These roles are communication technician, expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator. These roles differ by the tasks and responsibilities of people carrying these roles.

According to Broom (2010: 38-40), the communication technician's role is an entry-level work position. A technician doesn't make any decision, he or she helps with the

execution of the program his or her superiors have invented. That includes writing press releases, materials for web pages and maintaining communication with the journalists.

The expert prescriber (Broom, 2010: 40), on the other hand, takes full responsibility for developing and executing a program. The expert prescriber is usually given freedom and complete control over the public relations of the organization. Those assignments are entrusted to him by the management of the organization.

The main role of the communication facilitator (Broom, 2010: 40-41) is to keep the communication channels open at all times and to enable two-way communication between an organization and its public. The problem-solving process facilitator (Broom: 2010: 41) works closely with other managers in an organization on defining and solving problems which the organization encounters.

Non-profit sector is increasing its attractiveness for the public relations practitioners. Also, the profession recognizes the potential for further development of PR in a non-profit organization. Trying to fulfil that potential, public relations practitioners should recognize the specifics of the non-profit sector and adjust its role accordingly.

4. Examples of Public Relations in Non-profit Organizations

The role of public relations is perhaps the easiest to notice in PR campaigns aimed at external publics of the organization. These campaigns often aim at people's emotions and are usually focused on raising awareness about a certain social problem or, on the other hand, on gaining public's support for resolving that issue.

4.1. Croatian National Campaigns

An excellent example of a non-profit organization's public campaign in Croatia is the UNICEF Croatia's campaign "Every Child Needs a Family" (Tkalac Verčić, 2015: 41-43). The mentioned campaign is an example of an excellent management of media resources and partnerships in a campaign. "Every Child Needs a Family" campaign has started in 2004 and its main goal was to familiarize Croatian citizens with the never-ending problem of orphaned

children living in institutions rather than in foster families. Also, this campaign aimed at encouraging families to apply for becoming a foster family for such children, making themselves a part of a solution by doing so.

Considering financial limitations, the campaign relied extensively on media partnerships to reach its audience. Croatian Telecom and Croatian Radio Television with other campaign partners helped both by donating money and offering their communication channels for the cause. Since collecting money through telephone calls wasn't thought to be substantial for gathering the planned amount of 2 million kuna, the campaign leaders decided to organize several events, such as concerts and football games, that would be paid by the partners. Those events made donating money even simpler and more appealing.

Another non-profit campaign held in Croatia is "We Demand Dignity" campaign (*Guerilla* marketing: successful campaigns of non-profit organizations, 2017). The campaign was oriented towards experience of homelessness and was performed in Zagreb by Amnesty International. The goal of this campaign was to raise awareness of homeless people living among us and their social status, or lack of it. A homeless person, just like any other person, has his or her dignity, rights and freedoms. Many of these people find themselves in the streets not by their fault, therefore shouldn't lose their dignity because of it. The main activity of Amnesty International in this campaign was to spread mannequins wearing homeless people's clothes in Zagreb with different signs. For instance, the sign "If you ignore me long enough, I will disappear, but my problem never will" should have encouraged passers-by not to ignore people in need and their problems.

The two mentioned campaigns are an evidence of an increase of importance of public relations' function in various types of organizations in Croatia. These campaigns especially talk against the widespread opinion that PR is reserved only for big for-profit organizations. These campaigns indeed prove that PR professionals have their role in non-profit organizations just as much as they have in any for-profit or public organization.

4.2. Foreign National Campaigns

The natural progress of public relations profession is visible in its involvement in various professions and social sectors. Besides being different by the sector they are executed in, campaigns also differentiate by the volume of the people they are aimed at.

One example of nation-wide campaign with a clear educational purpose is "Know the Signs" campaign by the Sandy Hook Promise in the United States of America (Lile, 2019). The Sandy Hook Promise is an organization formed after 2014 school shooting. The video campaign in the first viewing contains an innocent love story between teenagers trading messages by writing them on a library table. Finally, by the end of the video, the protagonist meets the girl he was unknowingly receiving messages from when suddenly they find themselves in the middle of a shooting in their school gymnasium. At this point, the video reveals its true purpose and the goal of this campaign - to provide school children with programs that could protect them from similar tragedies as Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting was. One way, of course, is to teach children to recognize early signs in the behavior of the person who could commit such a thing.

Even though the previous campaign evoked intensive emotions with the viewers, the next one has made that even more obvious. "Be a Mom for a Moment" was a campaign developed by UNICEF Finland (*Guerilla* marketing: successful campaigns of non-profit organizations, 2017). It featured 14 children strollers distributed around a Finnish town with a recording of a child's cry playing inside of the strollers. This campaign used people's emotions and natural human instinct to protect threatened children. When people approached strollers, they could read the sign saying "Thank you for caring, we hope there is more people like you. UNICEF, Be a mom for a moment". The goal of this campaign was to raise awareness of the number of orphans or abandoned children in the world. At the time the campaign was held, in 2009, that number was around 145 million children. This campaign wanted to show how we care about one abandoned child close to us, but often forget about the millions we don't see. The goal of the campaign was to increase donations to UNICEF as well.

"I Want to Be a Bench" campaign was directed exclusively to the local community of a town in the USA (Lile, 2019). An idea was to encourage residents to recycle more by enabling them to visualize a story of a plastic bottle wanting to become a part of a bench. Campaign leaders believed that, if people knew what their garbage could become, they would be more likely to recycle it. Stickers with the quote "I Want to Be a Bench" were put on

recycling bins in the whole community and bottles that were collected were processed to make the parts of a bench that were later put in the park.

4.3.   Foreign International Campaign

World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) campaign "Don't Let This Be My Last Selfie" showed great ways to use social media, especially Snapchat, as a platform for PR campaigns (Lile, 2019). Snapchat allows its users to see somebody's post in a form of a photo or a video for ten seconds before erasing it. This campaign used that time limit to warn people about endangered animal species living on Earth. Users were encouraged to take screenshots of photos of those endangered animals with a caption "Don't Let This Be My Last Selfie" and share those screenshots on different social media platforms.

In this campaign WWF compared photos on Snapchat with endangered species because both could only last for 10 seconds unless users help to keep them alive, in a way, by taking screenshots and sharing. This campaign was proclaimed a success because in just 3 days WWF reached donation target for a whole month.

The mentioned campaigns are thought to be some of the best examples of creativity in public relations. Using creativity for directing public's focus on often neglected issues is an efficient way to fulfil a goal and encourage people to find a way to become a part of a solution themselves.

5.   Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to demonstrate the ways public relations assists non-profit organizations with creating and implementing programs and fulfilling their role in the society as they do. Also, I have emphasized the specifics of public relations' function in non-profit organizations and similarities with other sectors, and have presented different non-profit campaigns as well.

The first part of this paper has been focused on public relations – <u>its</u> development and techniques that allowed the profession to become a crucial part of non-profit organizations' activities and programs. The second part of the paper contained specifics of non-profit organizations and the roles of public relations' function in such organizations, as well as some similarities with other organizations in other two sectors of the society. The last part of this paper presented different non-profit campaigns and the role public relations' profession had in implementing them.

Public relations <u>is</u> a complex profession with a complex role in different organizations. Having experienced the change of image from being thought of as a manipulation and propaganda tool to being perceived as an important addition to non-profit sector, public relations has started to earn its own place in the organization hierarchy independent from marketing and similar functions. One of the main reasons for such a change is time invested in understanding similarities and differences between three sectors. That has enabled PR practitioners to adjust their tools and techniques to needs of a certain sector. Finally, the level of development of public relations is visible in the quality of non-profit campaigns around the world. Further development of the profession and its guidance in the development of non-profit sector is to be directed by further education and mutual understanding of differences and similarities.

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