



## **Nicholas Hobbs** by Susannah Brackett

Nicholas Hobbs (1915-1983) was an American psychologist, policy maker, thought leader, and one-time president of the [American Psychological Association](#) in 1966. He is most noted for his work in the field of child psychology and for furthering understanding of human development.

### **Background**

Nicholas Hobbs was born in Greenville, South Carolina on March 13, 1915. He was raised in the south with his sister and three brothers. As a family, they spent their summers in the Blue Ridge Mountains, hiking, swimming, and canoeing. Nicholas always had a love of these and other outdoor activities and they would later show an influence in his work with children. He decided at an early age that he wanted to be a teacher, but it was not until he was actually teaching that he became more interested in children and the best settings in which they could learn (Kaufman, 1974, p. 146).

### **Academic Career**

Nicholas Hobbs received his B.A. degree from [The Citadel](#) in 1936. He was awarded his M.A. in 1938 and Ph.D. in 1946 from [Ohio State University](#), where he completed his dissertation on "Psychological Research and Services in an Army Air Forces Convalescent Hospital." He would also come to later receive honorary degrees from the [University of Louisville](#) (1972), [The Citadel](#) (1973), and [Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier III](#) in Montpellier, France (Hobbs, Ireys & Perrin, 1985, p. xxxvii).

### **Work**

Hobbs held many teaching positions in his lifetime, mostly in the field of special education. He taught at the [Teachers College, Columbia University](#), beginning in 1946, where he was in charge of the Clinical Psychology Training Program. He later noted that his time spent working at the Teachers College, Columbia University led him to many new ideas for working with disturbed children (Kaufman, 1974, p. 148). In 1950, he became Head of the Department of Psychology at [Louisiana State University](#). He

then served as Chairman of the Division of Human Development of [George Peabody College for Teachers](#) from 1951 to 1965. While at George Peabody College for Teachers, Hobbs served as Chairman of the Division of Human Development, which combined psychology, special education, a child study center, and important research projects (More About Nicholas Hobbs, p. 1). While holding this position, Hobbs was instrumental in establishing many training programs at Peabody. These programs included those in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology, special education, leadership, and research in intellectual disabilities.

During this same time, Hobbs was working as visiting professor in the Department of Psychology at [Harvard University](#) (1954-55 academic school year). He worked as Lecturer at the Institute of Humanistic Studies of the [University of Pennsylvania](#) from 1956 to 1960 (Kaufman, 1974, p. 148). Also while working at Peabody, Nicholas Hobbs and co-worker, Susan Gray, co-founded the John F. Kennedy Center for Research on Education and Human Development, now known as [Vanderbilt Kennedy Center](#), of which Hobbs was also the founding director beginning in 1965 (More About Nicholas Hobbs, p. 1).

From 1967 to 1975 Hobbs served as provost of [Vanderbilt University](#), then became the director of the Center for the Study of Families and Children at Vanderbilt's Institute for Public Policy Studies for five years. Hobbs continued to work as professor emeritus of psychology at Vanderbilt and as senior research associate at the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies until his death in January 1983 (Hobbs, Ireys & Perrin, 1985, p. xxxvii).

Throughout his lifetime Nicholas Hobbs served on many regional and national bodies concerned with children, health, and education. The positions he held include: first director of selection and research for the [Peace Corps](#); a member of [President John F. Kennedy's](#) panel on Mental Retardation; a member of the advisory committee on child development of the National Research Council; co-founder of a national program of mental retardation research centers; and member of the Select Panel for the Promotion of Child Health established by Congress in 1979 (Hobbs, Ireys & Perrin, 1985, p. xxxvii).

Nicholas Hobbs received the [American Psychological Association's](#) Award for Distinguished Professional Contributions and the award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest in 1980.

What Nicholas Hobbs is most well known for, however, is his idea of Re-EDucation, which is still widely used today.

## **Re-EDucation**

Re-EDucation, or Re-ED, was initially a demonstration project which was funded in 1961 by the National Institute for Mental Health and sponsored by Peabody College as well as the Departments of Mental Health of Tennessee and North Carolina. There were two pilot schools set up; Cumberland House in Nashville, TN, and [Wright School](#) in Durham, NC. The project gave way to many important new ideas concerning work with disturbed children. The influences of many of these ideas have reached beyond just the Re-ED project.

Re-ED is a systematic approach to working with children and youth who have emotional and/or behavioral disorders and focuses on nurturing personal strengths as opposed to finding disease or weakness in people. According to Hobbs, "The vital essence of Re-ED is that it is a self-renewing institution, always in the process of becoming" (Kaufman, 1974, p. 146). There are twelve principles that summarize the philosophy of Re-EDucation:

1. Life is to be lived now, not in the past, and lived in the future only as a present challenge.
2. Trust between child and adult is essential, the foundation on which all other principles rest, the glue that holds teaching and learning together, the beginning point for reeducation.
3. Competence makes a difference; children and adolescents should be helped to be good at something, and especially at schoolwork.
4. Time is an ally, working on the side of growth in a period of development when life has a tremendous forward thrust.
5. Self-control can be taught and children and adolescents helped to manage their behavior without the development of psychodynamic insight; and symptoms can and should be controlled by direct address, not necessarily by an uncovering therapy.
6. The cognitive competence of children and adolescents can be considerably enhanced; they can be taught generic skills in the management of their lives as

- well as strategies for coping with the complex array of demands placed on them by family, school, community, or job; in other words, intelligence can be taught.
7. Feelings should be nurtured, shared spontaneously, controlled when necessary, expressed when too long repressed, and explored with trusted others.
  8. The group is very important to young people; it can be a major source of instruction in growing up.
  9. Ceremony and ritual give order, stability, and confidence to troubled children and adolescents, whose lives are often in considerable disarray.
  10. The body is the armature of the self, the physical self around which the psychological self is constructed.
  11. Communities are important for children and youth, but the uses and benefits of community must be experienced to be learned.
  12. In growing up, a child should know some joy in each day and look forward to some joyous event for the morrow. (Hobbs, 1982, pp. 22-23)

Many of the ideas of Re-ED were influenced by programs that Hobbs observed while spending time in 1956 working for the Joint Commission on a study of programs for retarded and disturbed children in several western European countries. He found his observations in Scotland and France to be particularly helpful once he began working on the Re-ED project. Hobbs had been surprised by the extensive public school-based program of mental health services for children that were available in places such as Glasgow, Scotland, noting that, "The program in Scotland provided more than just a model to be emulated; it also served as a demonstration that patterns of care other than those sanctioned by professional groups in the United States could work" (Kaufman, 1974, p. 151). In France, Hobbs found a network of residential schools or treatment centers that he found to have a salutary effect with children. These were characterized by small size (usually no less than 40 or more than 60 children) comfortable, home-like settings, close community ties, and staff members with more of an educational than a psychiatric orientation. (Kaufman, pp. 151-52)

These staff members, called *educateurs*, had no American counterpart, yet they played a central role in the running of these schools and were essentially surrogate parents for the children there. An *educateur* was required to have three years of training in teaching and mental health prior to taking this position, as well as continued professional development while working in order to remain up-to-date and effective in this role.

Hobbs later used the concept of the *educateur* in the Re-ED schools. This concept was transformed and evolved to fit what was needed for the schools and given the title of Teacher-Counselor.

Hobbs (1982) best describes the attributes of a teacher counselor in his book, *The Troubled and Troubling Child*:

But most of all, a teacher counselor is a decent adult; educated, well trained; able to give and receive affection, to live relaxed, and to be firm; a person with private resources for the nourishment and refreshment of his own life; not an itinerant worker but a professional through and through; a person with a sense of the significance of time, of the usefulness of today and the promise of tomorrow; a person of hope, quiet confidence, and joy; one who has committed himself to children and to the proposition that children who are disturbed can be helped by the process of reeducation (Hobbs, 1966).

From the beginning, it was known that the role of Teacher-Counselor was one that would be defined by those in it and constantly changed by their experiences while living it. Within just a few years of beginning the Re-ED schools, a new approach to working with disturbed children had been created by those who had served as Teacher-Counselors (Kaufman, 1974, pp. 152-53).

Today there are schools and organizations all over the country that cater to troubled and developmentally challenged children and are based on the Re-EDucation model. Some of these organizations include:

- [Cal Farley's](#)
- [Centerstone](#)
- [Charis Youth Center](#)
- [Christie Care](#)
- [Family Links](#)
- [Pressley Ridge](#)
- [Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs](#)

- [Stepping Stones](#)
- [The Positive Education Program](#)
- [Washington Reeducation Association](#) (WAREA)
- [Whitaker School](#)
- Wright School
- [Youth Academy](#)
- [Youth Villages in Tennessee](#)

## Selected Works by Nicholas Hobbs

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AREA - The American Re-EDucation Association. [www.re-ed.org](http://www.re-ed.org)

More About Nicholas Hobbs. *About the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center*.  
<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/site/about/history/page.aspx?id=102>

Hobbs, N., Ireys, T., & Perrin, J. (1985). *Chronically ill children and their families*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Kaufman, J., & Lewis, C. (1974). *Teaching children with behavioral disorders: personal perspectives*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing Company.

## External Links

[www.warea.org.whatisreeducation.html](http://www.warea.org.whatisreeducation.html)

<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/site/about/history/>

[www.re-ed.org](http://www.re-ed.org)

[www.pepcleve.org](http://www.pepcleve.org)

[www.secep.net](http://www.secep.net)

<http://www.pepcleve.org/>

<http://www.youthvillages.org/>

[www.calfarley.org](http://www.calfarley.org)

[www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)

[www.charisyouthcenter.org](http://www.charisyouthcenter.org)

<http://www.killerstartups.com/Site-Reviews/christiecare-org-christian-mental-health-center-in-oregon>

<http://www.familylinks.org/>



<http://www.pressleyridge.org/>

<http://www.steppingstonesinc.org/>

<http://www.pepcleve.org/>

[www.warea.org](http://www.warea.org)

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/whitaker.htm>

<http://www.wrightschool.org/>

<http://academyprograms.org/>

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