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INNOVATIONS IN HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

by

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"Innovation" and "humanistic" were "hot" words in the 1960's. The climate of the '60's supported experiments with new approaches and especially approaches that were designed to respond to human needs in a humane way. Students demanded an education that was, in their words, "meaningful and relevant." Educators, responding to the moods and demands of the time innovated--tried new approaches, new designs--and even examined new value frameworks for education.

Humanistic Education provided one such value framework for the exploration of a rich variety of educational activities. Always present as an alternative in the thousands of years of educational practice, Humanistic Education flowers from time to time as an exciting viewpoint--often accompanied by conflict and controversy. In this century Progressive Education and General Education are forms of Humanistic Education that emerged briefly, had considerable impact, but faded from center stage when new approaches came along or when social upheavals such as Sputnik stimulated new directions in American education.

In the '60's Humanistic Education emerged again, this time actually called Humanistic Education, an unfortunate designation because it immediately challenged and accused established education as nonhumanistic or inhumane. The rebirth of Humanistic Education came about in part because of new developments in psychology. Humanistic Psychology or Third Force Psychology developed in the 1950's and emerged in the '60's as a radical departure in psychology suggesting that human beings were good--not evil, were full of unrealized potential, could be self-directing, were trustworthy, and were educable beyond our wildest imaginations of what heretofore had been thought regarding the educability of human beings.

Humanistic Education became popular and commonplace. It was used as a frame of reference by a variety of groups. The AFL-CIO negotiated with management for a

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"humanistic work environment." Registrars talked of humanizing registration. Presidents suggested that a community college ought to model a humanistic community for students and citizens.

The impact of Humanistic Education is still evident in educational practices today, particularly in community colleges. There are fewer rules and regulations in community college catalogs. Non-punitive grading systems became popular in the early 1970's and still hold out in some colleges. Encounter groups were offered to students and faculty alike and in many instances were accepted into the curriculum and offered for academic credit. Services were extended to groups of students who had not benefited from the community college, such as the aged, the handicapped, and the mentally retarded. Learning opportunities became individualized and new machinery and formats for presenting small units of learning became the most popular implementation of humanistic education in the '60's and '70's. More recently there are humane attempts to match students' styles of learning with the styles of teaching available in the institution. In these ways Humanistic Education continues to have impact on educational practices in the mid '70's as it is likely to have in the late '70's and '80's and perhaps beyond. Though the term is no longer in vogue, the philosophy it represents is still very much alive. There are exciting innovations--a term also no longer in vogue--that validate the impact of this alternative educational viewpoint.

Innovations are seldom if ever new inventions. They emerge out of the collective exploration and experimentation of creative staff members and they emerge over a considerable period of time. Three innovations to be described in this paper have historical roots which deny any suggestion that they are new or different. What is new, however, is that they have emerged in the last decade as more important and in different forms, and they are receiving more national attention in these forms than they have in the past. Three innovations in Humanistic Education that have captured the imagination of staff members in community colleges include: 1) an alternative to organization by discipline, 2) Human Development Education, and 3) staff development.

An Alternative To Organization By Discipline

Almost all institutions of higher education are organized

around the traditional disciplines. In the typical university there is a College of Commerce, a College of Engineering, a College of Fine Arts, etc. In the typical community college there is a Division of Communications, a Division of Life Sciences, a Division of Social Sciences, etc. In each division there is also a series of departments representing the further breakdown of discipline units. In one Canadian community college there are 54 discipline units representing faculty members' wishes to be identified specifically by discipline areas to which they feel strong allegiance.

Organization by discipline is a universal model that has been implemented fully and unquestionably in the community college. Such organizational structure may not always be appropriate to the goals and purposes of the community college. In a discipline oriented organizational structure faculty members are often more oriented to the discipline than to teaching or the institution. The demands or "standards" of a discipline offer convenient barriers for faculty members who do not wish to experiment with new approaches required for the challenging tasks of educating community college students. There is also the problem of a hierarchy of status in terms of who is more knowledgeable in the discipline (who has the most publications) or who has the highest degree in the discipline, rather than who is the best teacher and who contributes more to the institution's purposes and goals.

Some community colleges--to counteract the negative forces that can accompany a discipline organization, and to experiment with new organizational structures more appropriate to community colleges and the mission of the community college--have developed organizations that do not rely on discipline affiliation. Instead, groups of faculty members representing a variety of disciplines are organized into units to provide instruction and to participate in the on-going affairs of the institution.

One approach--though still discipline oriented in the broadest sense--is found at the College of DuPage in Illinois and Indian Valley College in California. These two institutions, as well as several others, are organized in broad based clusters or houses that have been organized primarily to assist students in identifying with a broad focus such as the social sciences or scientific inquiry. It is hoped that such organization will encourage a greater sense of identity among students

and among faculty members and that there will be more opportunity for interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge in such a setting. At Indian Valley College there is a purposeful approach to increasing the amount of interpersonal relationships among the staff. Retreats and special meetings are held to give attention to this purpose.

An approach that completely destructs the discipline organizational structure is found at Moraine Valley Community College and Oakton Community College--both in Illinois--and Santa Fe Community College in Florida. In these colleges the focus is on multidisciplinary groups bound together by attention to interpersonal relationships and a sense of community. At Moraine Valley groups of faculty members representing a variety of disciplines are intermixed in crossroads communities with administrators and students. In these communities there are no private offices; the open space is designed to facilitate communication. Members are encouraged to focus on problems of the college without specific reference to their discipline affiliation.

At Santa Fe Community College units of 16 or so faculty members, representing most of the disciplines in the institution, and a counselor work in clearly identified physical arrangements that encourage communication and the sharing of ideas. Faculty members in these mini-units are encouraged to develop a special climate and some groups have designed their office areas to represent particular interests and creativity of the group. The units meet periodically just as if they were a department or division to consider institutional problems and processes and to make their contributions through a chairperson. When it is necessary to meet as a discipline group--for example, to consider the adoption of a new text in communications--the groups do meet on a college-wide basis. These meetings are infrequent, however, and only for the purposes of agreeing on educational problems that require decisions by representatives of a specific discipline.

At Oakton Community College groups of 25 faculty members are organized into communities which include a human development specialist whose purpose is to facilitate a sense of community in the group. These groups form the major structure of the college and most educational decisions pertaining to instruction and curriculum emerge from these groups.

The examples are attempts to organize "caring communities" in the community college--structures that encourage a sense of community based on interpersonal relationships. Such communities, it is hypothesized, provide support and encouragement, challenge and confrontation, trust and openness, for the members. In addition, it is felt that in this kind of community faculty members are more likely to innovate and experiment with new approaches since there is a richer input from various members of the institution and fewer limits of discipline traditions. Such communities are designed as places to practice new ideas and to try on new styles. When a special facilitator is present, such as is the case at Oakton, such practices are encouraged more directly.

Although the college is not organized along the lines noted above, the climate of a caring community has been described by the faculty at Eastfield College of the Dallas County Community College District in the college's Statement on a Person-Centered Climate. The College is dedicated to the following characteristics:

- 1) An atmosphere is sought in which all persons have maximum opportunity for personal growth and self-fulfillment.
- 2) Efforts are made to develop an open climate on campus in which all persons can freely express their concerns and opinions.
- 3) There is a desire to place human concerns and needs above those of tradition and convenience.
- 4) An effort is made to encourage all individuals to be supportive and thoughtful in personal relationships.
- 5) There is a desire to develop a relaxed and warm friendly atmosphere on campus.

The kind of person-centered climate described at Eastfield represents the ideals of a "caring community." Such ideals are more likely to be met when organizational structures are designed to encourage such ideals. (For more detailed discussion see Organizational Breakthrough in the Community College. ERIC Topical Paper no. 47 by Barry Heermann.)

Human Development Education

Human Development Education is one of the more creative facets of the Humanistic Education movement. Human Development Education "HDE" grew out of the General Education movement of the 1940's and 1950's and was to have been the integrative force that would have made General Education work. Called life adjustment then, courses in college adjustment, personal living, and introduction to personal psychology were offered in almost all colleges and universities across the U.S. The life adjustment courses in this period, however, failed, because there was no adequate psychology, no methodology, and no qualified instructors. It was a naive attempt to focus on personal development at a time when educators tended to oversimplify personal development. Such courses were most often limited to basic didactic instruction in study skills, social regulations, and a perspective that it was easy to help students adjust to a social order in which values were clear and accepted by the majority.

The life adjustment focus was fortunately dismantled with the launching of Sputnik and a return to science and the basics in education. Had the life adjustment phase persisted it may have undermined much of the current advances that have emerged out of a more lively and creative Humanistic Education that was built on stronger foundations in the '60's. In the '60's the life adjustment curriculum was reborn as Human Development Education with a much sounder base because Humanistic Psychology provided a direction, the group encounter movement provided a teaching methodology, and creative and potent educational mavericks have rooted out their own education to become highly qualified facilitators for this new form of old education.

The student revolution also hurried the emergence of Human Development Education. Students demanded attention to their personal lives from educators and the free university movement was the spawning ground for a great variety of alternative courses--courses that provided opportunity for personal development and exploration.

Basically, Human Development Education is a course or a series of courses designed to help students explore the eternal and perplexing questions Who am I? Where am I

going? and What difference does it make? One prototype course developed at Santa Fe Community College in Florida is described as follows:

BE-100 is a course in introspection; the experience of the student is the subject matter. It provides each student with an opportunity to examine his values, attitudes, beliefs, and abilities and how these and other factors affect the quality of his relationships with others. In addition, he examines the social milieu--challenges and problems of society--as it relates to his development. Finally the course provides each student with an opportunity to broaden and deepen a developing philosophy of life.

At the present time hundreds of community colleges offer a variety of experiences in Human Development Education.. These range from very "straight" courses in career exploration and study skills to more exotic courses in "love" and explorations of varieties of human sexuality. Some colleges offer one or two basic courses in self-development; others offer as many as 20 or 30 different experiences in Human Development Education focusing on special groups and special needs arranged in a variety of formats.

In a dissertation at the University of Illinois, Terry Ludwig studied human development courses offered by 100 community colleges and discovered that in almost all of them academic credit was provided, the focus of the course was on the experience of the student, and almost all of them were taught by small group methods. Such courses were unknown in the curriculum 15 years ago and offered only for noncredit some 7-8 years ago. They are now offered in community colleges for academic credit and are often included as electives in transfer work to universities.

More and more such courses are included as parts of courses in communications, speech, humanities, and the social sciences. In some community colleges an entire division called the Human Development Division, for example at El Centro College in Dallas, or the Affective Education Division at Jamestown Community College in New York has been organized to offer this form of instruction to students.

Although there are some recent signs that the rapid development of Human Development Education in the

early '70's may be beginning to slow--and in some cases actually dismantled--it is, nevertheless, one of the more creative aspects of Humanistic Education in the last decade. Human Development Education represents the curricularization of affective education and that is quite an innovation--the granting of academic credit for what many students feel is their most important college experience.

Staff Development

During the 1960's the growth of community colleges was unprecedented in the history of educational development in the U.S. In the ten year period 1960-70 the number of two year colleges increased by 61%, the number of students increased by 271%, and the number of staff increased by 327%. Because of this growth, the priority of resources in community colleges focused on growth. Increasing numbers of students meant that new programs had to be developed and new facilities had to be located and constructed. The priority was on the increasing number of students, the diversity of programs, and the expansion of facilities.

Only in the middle '70's did the community college come to a resting place where it could review what happened during the last decade and a half. In that review it has become increasingly clear that a new priority has emerged, a priority on persons, a priority on the people who staff the people's college. Staff development has emerged in the last decade as a new program of high priority designed to respond to the professional and personal needs of the staff of community colleges.

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges held its second national assembly on the topic of staff development in 1973. Members of the national assembly noted the importance of staff development.

The staff of a college is its single greatest resource. In economic terms, the staff is the college's most significant and largest capital investment. In these terms alone, we affirm that it is only good sense that the investment be allowed to appreciate in value and not be allowed to wear itself out or slide into obsolescence by inattention or neglect. But in a more crucial sense

the college's staff is the expression of its purposes, the collective manager of its missions. As the college's purposes change and adapt to the social needs of its community, its staff deserves--must have--opportunities to adapt and change too.

Inservice training has always been a part of activities in educational institutions, but in the past the concept has been quite limited. Most colleges provide a two-day orientation session for staff each year, but such experiences are seldom rated highly by teachers who are forced to sit through the sessions. One faculty member asked to evaluate the most important thing that occurred to her during the two-day orientation session indicated on her evaluation form that she had completed knitting a left sock.

Recognizing the need to respond to more basic needs that faculty have such as improving instructional approaches, designing new curricula, and learning better how to relate to students, staff development has emerged in the last ten years as one of the most important priorities in community colleges. Good staff development is a humane response to human needs and is an attempt to provide Humanistic Education for staff.

The state of Florida is an outstanding example of commitment to staff development. By action of the Florida Legislature special funds are allocated to community colleges each year for staff development programs. Each college has a staff development officer and usually a staff development committee that attempts to design programs to meet the needs of staff members as well as to meet the priorities of the institution. Activities are available for full and part-time faculty, classified staff, and administrators. Staff development activities include retreats for groups of faculty or for the total faculty, grants to encourage staff members to develop innovative approaches to improving instruction, personal development plans, and a variety of in-house workshops and seminars often provided by an in-house staff of consultants.

In the League for Innovation, a national consortium of 48 community colleges in eleven states, staff development is one of the highest priorities. Member colleges in the League have developed a number of creative and innovative ap-

proaches to staff development and the League itself acts as a staff development program for member colleges.

Examples of staff development programs in League colleges include a series of self-instructional modules for part-time staff at the Maricopa County Community College District. Modules focus on such items as the nature of the community college and the community college student, approaches and techniques of teaching, career development, and the nature of the community served by the college. At Eastfield College in Dallas there is a staff development program for members of the classified staff. Classified staff members have opportunities to participate in workshops and seminars and to participate in activities that are available to professional staff members in the college. Also in the Dallas district top administrators intern in new positions in various units of the district colleges and also use programmed materials on community college administration developed by the district to further their learning of administration and the community college. In the Foothill-De Anza Community College District there is a focus on interpersonal relationships to improve communication among administrative staff and a comprehensive program for updating counselor skills in the new counseling approaches.

In these colleges staff development is certainly an innovation compared to what was available ten years ago. As these programs focus on the continuing development of staff members both professionally and personally staff development is a reflection of the best in Humanistic Education.

These three innovations in Humanistic Education serve to illustrate that Humanistic Education is simply good education-education that attempts to bring some balance to our past over-emphasis on rational and cognitive processes.

These three innovations provide examples of how Humanistic Education has had influence on the organization of an institution, how it has helped contribute to the development of a new curricula area and improved instructional opportunities for students, and how it has had direct impact on staff members themselves in terms of providing opportunities for their continuing professional and personal development. As these three examples illustrate, Humanistic Education underscores the value of human feelings and emotions in the education of human beings and aims toward

the development of students and staff who are both warm-hearted and hard-headed--both tough and tender--both knowing and caring. It is this kind of balance that is the only proper purpose of education. Humanistic Education attempts to right that balance