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ABSTRACT

The increased interest in lifelong learning has presented a challenge that higher education institutions are meeting with three interrelated developments: New degrees, academic credit for experience, and programs for older people. A variety of new degrees are described, including the extension degree offered to part-time students taking off-campus courses; the adult degree, which may depart from traditional degrees in admission, instfuction, and evaluation, and is based on the idea that adult students are different from college youth; and the assessment degree, which emphasizes demonstration of competency. Examples of new degree programs are given. The increasing trend toward granting credit for experience is documented. Assessment and creditation has been done by the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experience (CASE). Programs for older people are designed to assist this part of the population to adjust to changing life patterns, to find outlets for skills and interests, and to make use of their desire to serve. Several issues that are unresolved are raised, including Who pays? Should the fee structure differ from the traditional? How should the unit of credit be defined? Can quality control be maintained in these programs? (JMF)

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LIFELONG LEARNING:

HIGHER EDUCATION'S RESPONSE

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College of Education
University of Arizona

July, 1976

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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by

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LIFELONG LEARNING: HIGHER EDUCATION'S RESPONSE

The phrase, "a learning society," is appearing in the professional literature with increasing frequency. A skeptic might contend that this phrase is an exaggeration when used to describe American contemporary society. Nevertheless, evidence abounds that a higher ratio of people of all ages are pursuing learning activities than at any time in our history. The same phenomenon is occurring in other countries of the world especially Europe and our neighboring countries of Canada and Mexico.

There have always been in our society individuals who, after completing full-time formal education and assuming roles as adult citizens, continued their education on a part-time basis for a host of reasons. However, the number has increased rapidly in recent years and the end of that increase does not appear to be in sight. A few statistics will illustrate this point.

Community college part-time credit course enrollments increased 350 percent in the decade 1964 to 1974. Such enrollments exceeded 1.7 million in the fall of 1974 and represented nearly half of the total community college enrollments (SOURCE: Junior College Directories). As impressive as those figures are, senior colleges and universities in the fall 1974 enrolled an additional 2 1/4 million students (SOURCE: National Center Educational Statistics). In neither case do these figures include many thousands of other adults who were engaged in non-credit educational activities conducted by community colleges, senior colleges, and universities.

One other introductory comment on this matter of enrollment warrants mention. The gains in higher education enrollments which have occurred during the past two years, reversing the no-growth period of the early 70's, are due in substantial part to the continued increase in part-time enrollments. In fact, the no-growth period of the early 70's would have been a painful reduction in enrollments for many more institutions than it was except for a significant growth in part-time enrollments during that same period. The majority of this part-time enrollment is comprised of adults who combine learning with earning. There is every indication that this trend will continue. What better evidence is there that we are in fact increasingly becoming a "learning society."

The terms "adult" and "continuing education" have traditionally been used to designate the programs developed to serve this group. The terms "lifelong learning" and "lifelong learners" which are coming into common use emphasize the fact that the sharp line of demarcation between the full-time education traditionally undertaken by youth and the part-time educational activities undertaken by adults is largely artificial. Education is increasingly being viewed as a continuous process of LEARNING.

A variety of cultural, social, and economic factors account for this increased interest in lifelong learning. Also, a variety of agencies, public and private, educational and non-educational in basic purpose, are offering programs and activities to serve the growing interest in lifelong learning. It is not the purpose of this presentation to address the factors which are creating this demand nor describe how various social agencies which are attempting to serve it. Rather, it is to explore how

one major component of our educational system, higher education, is responding to this challenge.

A study conducted in 1972 by the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, led to the conclusion that at that time one-third of American colleges and universities were engaged in non-conventional programs, many of them related to lifelong learning.

To show more explicitly how higher education is responding, three specific developments have been selected for elaboration. These are 1) new degrees, 2) academic credit for experience, and 3) programs for older people. Their interrelatedness will become evident as they are presented.

NEW DEGREES

1. The External Degree.

Several types of external degrees have appeared on the educational scene. Houle says that "external degrees, like computers, come in 'generations,' in each of which some new theory, organizing principle, or invention creates an advance in potential service" (Houle, 1973, p. 87). Houle goes on to describe three types of external degrees: (1) the extension degree, (2) the adult degree, and (3) the assessment degree.

a) The extension degree is the oldest of the three types. In its most common form, it is awarded upon completion of a traditional program conducted at a time and place accessible to those who cannot come to a campus and who usually need to study on a part-time basis. Few

modifications are made in admission, instruction, and evaluation. It is pretty much a case of old wine in old bottles doled out over a period of time.

b) The adult degree was developed on the premise that psychologically and socially, adults are sufficiently different from college youth to warrant a different type of educational program. Such a degree may depart substantially from traditional degrees in admission, instruction, and evaluation. Old wine may or may not be used but it is served from new decanters.

Interest in the adult degree has picked up rapidly in recent years. Houle reports that in the two-year period from 1969 to 1971, of a group of approximately 100 institutions with membership in the Association of University Evening Colleges, the percentage offering special degree programs for adults increased from 50 to 75 percent.

c) Using the computer analogy, the assessment degree might be thought of as the third-generation degree. It emphasizes the assessment and demonstration of competency. The basic rationale of awarding this degree is that <u>learning</u> rather than course credits and other formal requirements should constitute the basis for awarding a degree. Consequently, this degree represents a substantial departure in philosophy from the extension and adult degrees. Those who opt for the second generation external degree for adults are ready to abandon some of academic tradition. Proponents of the assessment degree are committed to trying a major departure. They emphasize accomplishments of the learner, however acquired, over other considerations.

2. Institutional Examples.

a) The Regents External Degree of the University of New York is a highly flexible degree. There are no entrance requirements based on previous educational attainment, age, or place of residence. No formal instruction is offered as part of the program though a carefully developed curriculum is outlined for each degree. Students may study in any way they choose. Their accomplishments are assessed by grades for courses taken elsewhere; college-level standardized examinations; and, when adequate methods of assessment are available, college-level knowledge acquired through life experiences.

This Regents External Degree is different in four ways from our traditional higher education degree: (1) formal admissions requirements are waived, (2) all effective methods of learning are accepted as valid, (3) varied methods of assessing achievement are used, (4) the degree is awarded by a state agency rather than directly by a higher educational institution.

b) Learning at Empire State of the State University of New York can be undertaken in six different ways: (1) formal courses offered by another institution but not limited to colleges and universities (Empire State itself offers no courses); (2) tutorials in which a teacher guides an individual student in the study of a particular area of knowledge; (3) organized self-instructional programs such as correspondence courses, programmed learning, and televised instruction; (4) cooperative studies in which several students with similar interests work together; (5) direct experience, which may be supervised or unsupervised; (6) independent study by such means as reading, writing, or traveling.

A student may begin a program at any time by developing, in consultation with a mentor, a contract which describes what he or she proposes to do during a specific period of time to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. These goals may be occupational, disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or problem oriented. The student selects the method of learning, subject to the resources available to him. A student's work is directed by a mentor; an experienced faculty member, who may work full- or part-time for Empire State. This mentor may also serve as a tutor and helps the student evaluate his or her performance.

A degree is awarded when a student completes a program of study at a level which the faculty accepts as meeting the college's standards. Credit earned at other accredited colleges is completely transferable into the program in most cases. Like the Regents External Degree, virtually everything differs from normal college practice. The one traditional element that has been retained is the minimum period of full-time study which remains basically the same as normally required for an associate and bachelor's degrees.

c) Minnesota Metropolitan State College was authorized in 1971 by the State College Board as an upper division college. MMSC is located in the shadow of the University of Minnesota. It has no physical facilities of its own and but a small core of full-time faculty and administrators. Instruction takes place in schools, libraries, churches, parks, and commercial institutions.

MMSC was designed to serve a student body that is beyond the traditional college age. Further it is committed to provide educational

opportunities for the poor, minority groups, and women. Basically, MMSC serves adults who have acquired the equivalent of two years of post-secondary education and have the potential and desire to complete a bacculaureate degree. Many of its students are transfers from the six Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area junior colleges; others have completed post-secondary vocational-technical schools or have attended senior colleges.

A student may enter at any time and, as with the SUNY program, develops an educational degree contract. Also, he or she can utilize a variety of approaches to carrying out the contract. When a student believes he or she has completed the degree requirements, evidence is presented to a Final Assessment Committee. If the Committee concludes that the student has attained a satisfactory level of competence, he or she is recommended for a degree. If not, the Committee makes recommendations for the student's continued study.

d) A fourth example can be seen at community colleges. It is difficult to categorize an external degree so far as these institutions are concerned. Their range of services is so broad that the distinction between full-time on-campus and part-time and off-campus students has little meaning. Furthermore, many community colleges began as "external" institutions. That is, they operated entirely with rented and borrowed community facilities while a campus was being developed. Even thereafter, most have continued a major "outreach" effort using borrowed facilities.

A number of community colleges around the country, however, have remained entirely external institutions with no campuses as such. Two

of these are the Community College of Vermont and Whatcom Community College in Washington State. I will describe briefly the program of CCV administered from Montpelier by the Vermont Regional Community College System. It has regional site offices located in high schools, state colleges, and other facilities in various sections of the state. The College is designed primarily for a rural population which could not otherwise achieve a college education.

The emphasis is upon the associate degree though certificate programs are offered for those not interested in a degree. No specific level of educational achievement is required for entry but applicants are required to undergo an extensive process of counseling and exploration. The exploration process involves taking selected courses with achievement carefully evaluated. When the counselor and student are both satisfied that the exploration process is satisfactorily completed, a contract is developed between them for completing the program. This contract includes plans to attain achievement in intellectual, social, and physical skills.

ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR EXPERIENCE

There is a growing trend and interest in granting academic credit to adults for learning acquired from life and work. This effort is a recognition of the fact that adults who return to college bring with them a variety of learning experiences which they should be entitled to have evaluated for academic credit.

A 1972 survey of 1185 colleges and universities was conducted to determine the extent to which academic credit was being awarded for prior-experience learning (Ruyle, 1974, pp. 53-94). It was found that

institutions of higher education are increasingly awarding academic credit for knowledge and experience formerly unaccreditable. Two-thirds of the 1185 institutions surveyed reported that they were granting such credit. Of that group, thirty-five percent gave credit for courses offered by military programs if approved by the Office of Educational Credit of the American Council on Education. By contrast, only eight percent of the institutions reported that they awarded academic credit for Peace Corps, Vista, or community volunteer work.

Further perspective of developments in this area can be gained from a 1974 report of a survey reported by the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL Newsletter, 1974). That report states that of 266 selected institutions, forty percent granted credit for one or more types of prior learning and thirty-one percent granted credit for work experience in business. Another investigator estimated that in 1963 fewer than ten institutions were involved in granting credit for non-college learning (Meyer, December, 1974). By contrast, he concluded that in 1974 the number was close to 200. He found credit was being granted at four levels: (1) directly for life or work experience without evaluation; (2) for demonstrated knowledge, competence, or skill gained from experience; (3) for analysis of learning gained from a specific type of experience; and (4) for the synthesis of knowledge gained from a variety of experiences.

The literature available on the assessment and creditation of prior experiential learning is sparse. The traditional and predominant work in assessing the educational efforts of non-educational organizations has

been that of the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences (CASE). Over the years three CASE guides have been published by the American Council on Education: the first one shortly after World War II, the second after the influx of Korean War veterans, and the third in 1968. The Guide provides recommendations on granting academic credit based on an evaluation of courses taken at military service schools.

Major current work in this area is currently under way by the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL), which was referred to previously. This is a joint effort of the Educational Testing Service and a group of colleges and universities, with financial support from the Carnegie Corporation.

CAEL's primary effort is the development of methods and techniques for assessing experiential learning. Current practices are being inventoried. The results will be used to prepare manuals and guidelines. Assessment devices developed through CAEL will be tested and the results shared with other institutions. Initial CAEL surveys show that traditional institutions are most likely to grant credit for work experience sponsored by an institution and undertaken after admission. By contrast, new and innovative institutions frequently grant credit for life experience which occurred prior to admission (Trivett).

SERVING OLDER PEOPLE

One out of every ten Americans is over sixty-five years old, over twenty million people. Approximately seventy-five percent of those men and ninety percent of those women are not working. Yet the vast majority

of them are mobile and in good health. There are another twenty million in the fifty-five to sixty-five age range.

These older individuals represent as wide a variety of backgrounds as do any other age group. Nevertheless, they are often stereotyped. Older Americans require a broad range of educational programs to assist them in (1) adjusting to changing life situations, (2) finding outlets for skills and interests, (3) participating in personally satisfying activities, and (4) fulfilling desires to be of service.

Because of the recent trend toward lifelong learning, along with efforts of agencies, organizations and groups at the state and local levels and of the Administration on Aging at the federal level, a growing number of colleges and universities are making special efforts to serve older people. These programs range from free or reduced tuition to special classes and programs. A recent study involving a cross-section of 300 higher education institutions produced the following list activities for older people--a number of which are overlapping (Never Too Old to Learn, pp. 19-33).

- On-campus courses
- Outreach courses in off-campus locations
- Peer group instruction by well-educated retirees
- Comprehensive programs in areas with high concentration of older people
- Preretirement planning to help prepare for a new life style
- Educational vacations on college campuses
- Consortia of institutions to maximize resources
- Supplementary services such as counseling, health and transportation

- Mass media instruction and information for an older audience

- Training for new careers

Here are examples of what higher educational institutions are doing in some of these areas:

Residential courses. Some colleges and universities have residence programs for older people. At Western Washington State College a group of senior citizens live on campus and take college courses. In addition, they are available to younger students as informal advisors and counselors.

A public housing project for the elderly is located on the campus of Syracuse University. Residents of the project hold University identification cards entitling them to full use of University facilities.

Outreach programs. A number of institutions take courses to older people in community centers, housing complexes, churches, schools and nursing homes. This type of program is being conducted by Pima Community College in Tucson. Another example is the OPUS program (Older Persons Using Skills) of Florida Community College at Jacksonville. That outreach program serves over 1000 older persons through classes focused on leisure activities and personal health and finance.

Retired professionals. Some institutions in urban areas have developed programs which tap the pool of talent represented by retirees. One such program is the Institute for Retired Professionals at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Participants, who come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds, serve as discussion lecturers in many of the Institute's courses (numbering about sixty) which range from contemporary affairs to poetry, language, and music.

Comprehensive programs. Miami-Dade (Florida) Community College is an example of an institution which offers a comprehensive program of services for retired people. Among the methods they have used to reach this group is a flyer describing their programs for senior citizens, which is distributed with Southern Bell Telephone bill mailings. Several thousand older people are involved in their various programs at any one time. Since the Miami area has a high concentration of Spanish speaking older people, many of the courses are given in Spanish.

Miami-Dade Community College is also coordinating a nationwide consortium of community colleges called Project Elderly. Institutions in the consortium plan together and exchange ideas and information on program development and outcomes.

SUMMARY

This paper presents an overview of how American higher educational institutions are responding to the trend toward formal lifelong learning. As with any social effort, problems and issues exist. The purpose of this paper is to report developments rather than to evaluate and air issues. In closing, however, some of the problems and issues confronting lifelong education will be identified.

As with any social program there is the issue of "who pays?" With states and communities being increasingly pressed to finance social service programs, it is very difficult to obtain funding for new programs. As a consequence, most lifelong learning activities require substantial financial support by the participants. This produces the inevitable

result of precluding many people who have the need, desire, and ability to benefit from lifelong learning activities.

There are other financially-related issues which have not been adequately resolved. For example, if credit is granted for experiential learning, should tuition and fees be charged, and if so, should they be the same as for residential students? Further, if tuition and fees are, in part, for services available only on campus, should they be assessed at a different rate for off-campus courses? Little research has been done on the comparative cost of on-campus and off-campus education. An analysis by the educational economist Howard Bowen, led him to conclude that it varies little (Bowen, Howard R., "Financing the External Degree," pp. 151-163 in Diversity by Design, edited by Samuel Gould).

Translating experiential learning into credits represents another problem area. It is probable that the credit unit will remain the standard of academic exchange among institutions of higher education in America. The system has much to commend it. At the same time, difficulties are encountered when non-traditional learning is involved.

A related and more serious problem is quality control. There is a strong temptation for institutions that are pressed for funds and short on students to give lip service to quality control in their non-traditional learning activities. Horror stories abound of instances where institutions have awarded credit for activities which could hardly be classified as educational or where the amount of credit awarded was greatly in excess of what seems reasonable. Further, in many such cases no effort has been made at evaluating what might have been learned from

life experiences for which credit is awarded. Finally there have been instances of fraudulent or at least highly questionable institutions appearing on the landscape to take advantage of the growing interest in lifelong learning and non-traditional education. Too often they appear to be more interested in making a "fast buck" than in providing quality education.

Even with these unresolved issues and problems, there is every reason to conclude that educational leaders with vision and higher educational institutions whose motives and reputation are beyond question will provide the leadership and research needed to move lifelong learning forward as a vital function of American higher education. They will, I am confident, prevent Gresham's Law of poor educational practices and ulterior motives discrediting lifelong learning as a legitimate higher education activity.

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