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ABSTRACT

Recurrent education may be defined as formal education provided outside of the traditional academic context for the purposes of: (1) continuing education in professional and vocational fields: (2) part-time instruction toward an academic or vocational degree: and (3) personal or social development. In California, while state policy encourages recurrent education, the University of California and the California State University and College system offer only student-fee-supported continuing education. Only the community college system has offered state-supported continuing education. Since 1978, post-Proposition 13 funding reductions have caused significant declines in the provision of community services by the community colleges, causing many to forecast a bleak future for recurrent education. However, when considered in its entirety, recurrent education is rapidly expanding. Most large corporations, all levels of government, and the military are all increasingly providing educational opportunities for their employees. In addition, there are numerous examples of voluntary and informal associations and educational brokering services facilitating recurrent education. Therefore, the major challenges for the 1980's are how to inform individuals of these opportunities, how to meet their schedules and needs, and who will pay for what kinds of recurrent education--the student, the state, the private sector, or social service agencies. (AYC)

HARD TIMES FOR RECURRENT EDUCATION? PREDICTIONS FOR CALIFORNIA DURING THE 1980's

A Paper Presented to A Seminar on the Cost and Financing of Recurrent Education

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PREDICTIONS FOR CALIFORNIA DURING THE 1980's

William H. Pickens

This second Conference on recurrent education reveals much interest in providing opportunities for individuals to continue their formal education during years after they leave postsecondary institutions as full-time students. However, the literature and dialogue on this subject indicates a need for some definitions and guidelines. As an example, J. Roby Kidd states that "recurrent education is perceived as a European notion restricted primarily to work-oriented education supported by government policy,"[1] a definition which does not adequately correspond with practices in California. At the risk of being arbitrary, let me suggest the following definitions for this paper:

> FORMAL EDUCATION is instruction in an orderly sequence offered by an institution in order to increase the skills and knowledge of individuals;
>
> RECURRENT EDUCATION is formal education provided outside the traditional context of academic and vocational programs, and seeks to reduce barriers to attendance and to integrate education into the lives of individuals.

Defined in this way, recurrent education has many purposes, but most appear to fall into three general categories: to provide continuing education in professional and vocational fields (both to enhance knowledge in current occupations or to retrain individuals for new careers), part-time instruction toward an academic or vocational degree (frequently conducted off-campus), and personal or social development (recreational, interpersonal relationships, and skills in crafts).

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[1] J. Roby Kidd, "Lifelong Learning in the United States," in Tom Schuller and Jacquetta Megarry, eds., Recurrent Education and Lifelong Learning, World Book of Education (London, 1979), p. 113.

No one doubts that postsecondary education in general, and recurrent education in particular, will be responding to a different American society during the 1980's and will face difficult challenges. Moreover, there is a general opinion that during times of declining resources for postsecondary institutions, recurrent education for individuals who attend part-time has a lower priority than full-time, regular instruction. Some recent experiences in California seem to corroborate this opinion, but I submit that this is a view unduly pessimistic and narrowly conceived. The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of recurrent education in California, to describe some of the limitations on State support, and to suggest how institutions can adapt successfully to the new circumstances.

In describing postsecondary education, the standard approach is to focus on the public colleges and universities, and that is a reasonable place to start. In California, the State's policy is to encourage recurrent education:

> The Legislature finds and declares that continuing education for adults is an important purpose of institutions of postsecondary education (Chapter 1103, Statutes of 1976).

Although the policy is straightforward, its implementation has not been entirely consistent.

Two issues have been most prominent in the State's debate over recurrent education:

> Which institutions should offer it?
> Who should pay for it?

With regard to public institutions, these questions have been answered in the following ways. The University of California offers recurrent education primarily through University Extension, which does not receive State support. Extension has a projected 1980-81 enrollment of 375,000 students in hundreds of classes, short courses, seminars, and field studies throughout every county

in California and in several other nations. The California State University and Colleges offers upper-division and graduate recurrent education to approximately 100,000 students, primarily through off-campus operations. These include individual courses offered away from campuses to regularly matriculated students, campus sponsored external degree programs, consortium sponsored external degree programs, and extension credit/noncredit programs. Except for the 1,500 students taking individual courses, the State does not directly support these activities; they are funded principally through student fees. As Mr. Geioque has mentioned, the State is making this policy more liberal so that more students will receive State support and pay lower fees in the future. The California Community Colleges offer recurrent education chiefly through noncredit, lower-division courses to 110,000 students in 1978, which receive State support and charge no student fees, and through community service activities, which received support through local property taxes and student charges before Proposition 13.

The response of the Community College boards of trustees to Proposition 13 is an example used by those who argue that recurrent education is on the skids. If only the area of community services is considered, it is true that most Community College districts placed a higher priority on other programs during the fiscal crisis of 1978, as described in the following report by the Chancellor of the Colleges:

> From 1951-1978, the colleges were able, under the $0.05 permissive override tax [a local levy assessed against property within a district, at the option of the Board of Trustees], to serve as civic, cultural, and educational centers, opening their doors to community organizations and groups and extending comprehensive and flexible educational programming to meet the needs of older adults, the under and unemployed, the handicapped, the disadvantaged, the incarcerated, the minorities - in short, the unique populations of each college district.

After Proposition 13 eliminated the permissive tax override, SB 154 and AB 2190 provided a state "bail-out" allocation to community college districts. The bail-out assumed district expenditure of up to 92% of the 1977-78 budget revenues for community services [but this was left to the discretion of the Trustees]. Although the amount theoretically available for community services based on 92% of the 1977-78 revenue was $35,496,120...the amount actually allocated was $14,701,730 or $23,881,009 less than the previous year. [These funds presumably were spent on other items of higher priority.]

This reduction of funding caused a significant decline in service to the communities through the community colleges:

- 59% of the districts reduced community services staff to manage and carry out the services.
- The total number of participants served in 1978-79 was slightly more than 11,400,000, or one-third less than the number served in 1977-78.
- The number of cultural and community programs declined by 57%.
- The number of civic center permits to community organizations using college facilities went up by 48,765, but served 672,852 fewer participants, while permit fees increased almost $2,000,000.

The results of this comparative study raise serious concern about the community services function within the comprehensive community college. The data from the 1978-79 composite report show that the majority of the districts tried to make community services either partially, or completely self-supporting. Fees for community services programs were increased by $3,254,809 or 80% in one year. Yet, it is clear that this 80% increase did not bring in nearly enough revenue to make community services self-supporting, indicating that fees may be a part of but not a total funding solution. Under a philosophy of self-support, programs must either be readjusted or restructured to reach people who can pay the fees charged. Persons who cannot afford the fees cannot benefit from the programs. The community services function thus tends to become an auxiliary business rather than an integral part of the comprehensive mission.[2]

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[2] Board of Governors, California Community Colleges, "Chancellor's Report," April 24-25, 1980, pp. 1-2.

This presents a bleak picture for recurrent education, at least when it is offered as community services or non-academic activities in publicly supported institutions. Certainly recent decisions show that many institutions do consider these to be lower priorities during fiscal crises, at least in competition for tax dollars. Nevertheless, the extent of recurrent education is seriously understated by focussing on public institutions to the exclusion of instruction by private universities and colleges, public adult schools, business, industry, government, and the military. Rather than being in retreat when considered in its entirety, recurrent education is a rapidly expanding area of postsecondary education.

Under the spur of changing demands on employees in business and industries, most large corporations offer many educational opportunities, both in the form of tuition assistance and special training. The last major study in this area found that the majority of U.S. companies had substantially increased their educational activities between 1970 and 1975, and that two-thirds planned more by 1980. All these companies spent an average of $161 per employee for education in 1975.[3] A survey reported by the Postsecondary Education Commission found that California companies provided training between an annual average of 11 hours for secretarial and clerical employees, up to 41 hours per year for managers. Almost two-thirds of these firms used videotape/closed circuit television in their training programs,[4] the most popular form of instruction.

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[3] Stanley Peterfreund, "Education in Industry--Today and in the Future," Training and Development Journal (May, 1976), p. 32.

[4] CPEC, Formal Education and Training Programs Sponsored in California by BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT and the MILITARY (Sacramento, 1978), p. 29.

Government is another enterprise where recurrent education is increasingly popular, an important fact because one California worker in five is on the local, state, or federal payroll. A survey of federal employees in 1975 found that 35% of all workers participated in some educational program: nineteen percent were enrolled in various school, college and university programs while 81 percent "were trained either in programs designed by individual agencies or in interagency programs....."[5] The programs were typical of recurrent education offered in work-related environments: they offered general and personnel management, management sciences (quantitative and analytical, financial, computer sciences, environmental/engineering), and communication and office skills. The State of California and local governments provided similar opportunities, many of them involving cooperative arrangements with colleges and universities.

Perhaps the best example of the extensive use of educational resources is the link between the institutions and the military. In 1976, one of every six members of the armed forces was participating in training or education as a student or instructor; the federal budget for such activities nationwide was $7 billion. In California, twenty-four community colleges and five independent institutions participated in the Serviceman's Opportunity College, a national consortium designed to meet the unique needs of a mobile, often isolated clientele. In addition, sixteen community colleges, three campuses of the State University, and two campuses of the University conducted classes on naval bases in California. There are lessons for the 1980's in this pattern of institutional response to the specific needs of a large organization.

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[5] United States Civil Service Commission, Personnel Management and Effective Government (91st Annual Report, 1975), p. 74. Marcia Salner, Inventory of Existing Postsecondary Alternatives (Second Technical Report--Postsecondary Alternatives; Educational Testing Service, September 1975), p. 139.

In addition to these formal arrangements, there are numerous voluntary associations and informal organizations which play an important role in recurrent education. The Association of Continuing Education was formed during the early 1970's by representatives of business, industry, and educational institutions in the San Francisco Bay area. The Association offers a wide range of programming though the Stanford Instructional Television Network which leads to graduate degrees from Golden Gate and San Jose State Universities. Organized into eight chapters in California, the American Society for Training and Development is composed of educators and trainers who coordinate efforts and attempt to increase the educational resources available to industry and government. Most major cities now have Learning Exchanges which offer a variety of low-cost classes, primarily in personal development and crafts. Finally, several private firms are operating as agents for institutions of postsecondary institutions. These "educational brokers" provide services which include the marketing of established programs, development of new programs, student recruitment and faculty selection, and the actual administration of the programs as a quasi "franchise" of the institution. Although the "brokering" phenomenon is recent, it has already grown to significant proportions in California: two firms out of seven listed income above $1 million from their educational activities in 1977.[6]

[6]California Postsecondary Education Commission, Educational Brokering in California (Sacramento, October 1977), p. 8.

In sum, a reasonable conclusion is that the "tax revolt" and fiscal stringency in California will not roll back the trend to recurrent education, as it is defined in this paper. Technological and social change will increase the need for such education, and there are many vendors willing to meet that need. The major challenges for recurrent education during the 1980's are how best to inform individuals about their opportunities, how to accommodate their schedules and meet their goals, and the perennial issue of who should pay. This issue deserves particular attention for the public segments of post-secondary education.

This paper began with an arbitrary list of the purposes of recurrent education: continuing education in professional and vocational fields, part-time instruction (generally off-campus) toward an academic or vocational degree, and courses for personal or social development. State policy is clear that most continuing education should be student fee-supported since it directly enhances the earning power of presently-employed individuals. Further, the increasing need for employees with both technical and personal skills virtually guarantees that the private sector will invest in this kind of education.

State policy is less clear for the remaining two purposes of recurrent education. Although all instruction toward an academic or vocational degree is State-supported at the Community Colleges, this has not been the case for all part-time students at the University or the State University. Likewise, State grants for tuition and fees are restricted to full-time students, though loans and federal grants are available for part-timers.

Finally, State support for personal and social development has been limited to the Community Colleges and to the public adult schools, but this support has been eroded by the fiscal crisis of Proposition 13. It is safe to predict that this kind of education, except for that provided through social service agencies, will be overwhelmingly fee-supported by the end of the decade.

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