

Adaptation to innovative colleges may be difficult, but if faculty can cope it may help them become more developed teachers.

innovative colleges: challenge to faculty development

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In studying college faculty for the past three years, we have been particularly fascinated with their adaptation to innovative colleges.* Despite the great diversity among these colleges, we have been struck time and again by the similar problems faced by their faculties. The movement from traditional to innovative educational settings creates a crisis in faculty development. (We use the word *crisis*, as does Erikson, 1969, to refer to a period of heightened potential and vulnerability.) We have seen hope followed shortly by despair, remarkable growth coupled with startling regression, and the like—

*By *innovative college*, we do not refer to every new or experimental program in any college anywhere, but to a subset of this group: those sharing the innovative model of education defined below. Further, even though we have seen the innovative model in educational settings ranging from high schools to graduate schools, we are referring to the modal case of a four-year experimental cluster college.

all due to the fundamental necessity of adapting to drastic change. Faculty participation in an experimental college experience may enlarge the sense of choice and competence or it may result in loss of self-esteem and a sense of failure. Thus, innovation seems to be by nature an imprecise art fraught with uncertainty and anxiety.

In this article we analyze how similar conditions create a common set of problems for faculty in innovative colleges. We examine interrelated phenomena at three levels: the societal, the organizational, and the individual. As part of this analysis we consider some characteristics of an innovative model of education; the kind of social environment that develops in experimental colleges; the impact of an innovative environment on faculty; how professors have adapted to this environment; and finally, the future of alternative educational forms.

the innovative model

Faculty members become committed to innovative colleges largely because of their dissatisfaction with traditional forms of higher education.* This dissatisfaction commonly becomes crystallized over specific extraeducational issues, when campuswide disruptions such as the Berkeley Free Speech Movement or the Cambodia crisis throw into question assumptions on which conventional higher education is based. In this turbulent climate faculty explicitly address fundamental educational issues which had been only on the periphery of their awareness. They are no longer certain that traditional approaches can prepare students to cope effectively with rapid social change.

People must learn to deal with a culture in which change and turbulence are the only constants, in which the authority of conventional concepts of social reality is no more and individuals are confronted with the relativity of all such constructs. Under these conditions, the new educational task is to help individuals make commitments in a new kind of social field. One college founder

*A more detailed discussion would include ideas about the types of faculty who are attracted to and selected by innovative colleges. We have research to show that ideologically and characterologically they are different from parent-college faculty. Dr. Lynnette Beall has also suggested that faculty could be divided into conflicted and conflict-free innovators. Such a discussion is beyond the scope of our concerns here, however.

describes the situation succinctly: "An awareness of basic premises, a formulation of integrating patterns or world views, is one of contemporary man's most urgent needs." As he put it, a college is successful to the extent that it can "replace meaninglessness with significance and estrangement with communion." A new educational form is needed because by its very structure traditional education may perpetuate maladaptation.

The innovative model of education is seen as a solution to the deficiencies of traditional education, which is seen as disciplinary, authoritative, and academic. In contrast, the innovative model is interdisciplinary, egalitarian, and developmental. An interdisciplinary approach is needed because the usual separation of the domains of knowledge fosters only partial solutions to complex contemporary problems; these require methods of inquiry that cut across conventional academic fields. This aspect of the model calls for members of different disciplines to work together, often using a team-teaching approach.

Power and decision-making originate from an egalitarian rather than an authoritative* base. That is, no element of the social structure is considered as given by authority, whether this be a professor, a discipline, or a tradition. For example, evaluation procedures and curriculum, usually defined only by faculty in traditional academic settings, are to be arrived at by consensus among all constituents of the college. Consensus thus emerges from this egalitarian orientation as the most appropriate mode of governance.

Egalitarianism also characterizes personal relations between faculty and students. While in conventional programs faculty are viewed as authorities to be treated with a certain amount of respect and deference, in innovative colleges their position is more like that of a peer. To emphasize this distinction, faculty are often referred to as "resource people" or "co-learners," peers in the search for knowledge.

*In attempting to describe the power dimension of the traditional model of education we tried to find a word which would convey the idea that the exercise of power in that frame of reference could have a legitimate basis. In that context the professor wields power on the basis of personal expertise and competence; presumably he is able to make judgments on educational issues with more competence than students. The word *authoritative* seemed the best choice. *Authoritarian* was another possibility, but we wished to reserve this term for the exercise of power in an irrational manner, that is, for power not based on competence and exercised illegitimately.

The educational goal most frequently stated is to promote the growth and development of the individual as a personal and social being. While the traditional mode stresses the acquisition of certain facts, techniques, or vocational abilities, from the innovative perspective the primary task is to acquire a more general set of skills which might be called learning how to learn, thus to become an autonomous learner who is flexible enough to adapt to a fast-changing environment. This goal will be accomplished most easily when students are intrinsically motivated, when they have wide latitude to realize themselves. Any hierarchical or formal structural arrangements are undesirable, since they provide an individual with something less than complete freedom and autonomy for growth.* The faculty member's primary function is not dispensing information but rather serving the more global aim of promoting character development—both the student's and his own.

the innovative environment

The social environments within the innovative colleges we studied[†] were highly unusual and quite unlike what the founding faculty had expected. Since students and faculty come to these colleges because of a strong dissatisfaction with traditional forms, they are determined not to create another structure which would perpetuate old ills. As a result, remnants of traditional models are abandoned with a vengeance in the early stages of these colleges. Highly structured forms of evaluation such as tests and grading are dropped, along with standard curricula and conventional roles. Traditional academic goals are little valued; they may even be regarded as handicaps to student development. In this beginning period community identity is to a large extent negatively defined. Being

*The developmental theory implicit here is close to what Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) describe as romanticism: "Romantics hold that what comes from within the child is the most important aspect of development; therefore the pedagogical environment should be permissive enough to allow the inner 'good' to unfold and the inner 'bad' to come under control. Teaching the child the ideas and attitudes of others through rote or drill would result in meaningless learning and the suppression of inner spontaneous tendencies of positive value." The romantic view of development is to be distinguished from a progressive theory which Kohlberg and Mayer hold to be the only viable model.

[†]For a highly descriptive and rich study of similar types of experimental colleges, see Jerome (1971).

innovative means being antitraditional, antiacademic, and anti-authority.

Though traditional structures are easily abandoned, new ones are established only with great difficulty, for several reasons. First, there is a tendency to view the creation of any structures as a regression to a traditional model—since the old way was highly organized, being without structure is seen as a virtue. Second, since decision-making is by consensus, all details of curriculum, evaluation, admissions procedures, faculty-student roles, use of resources, and the like have to be decided by long and arduous group discussions of the town-meeting variety. The time and turmoil connected with reaching something that feels like consensus are probably unrivaled in the life of other organizations. For example, in one college we studied, it took three weeks of meeting every day for three hours to arrive at an evaluation procedure that everyone could accept. (One irony of these colleges is that their decision-making process is inherently conservative because of this egalitarian style of governance. Everyone has a chance to veto procedures or at least delay consensus, and there is likely to be at least one person who finds some reason to do so.)

A third reason for the difficulty in building new forms is that administrative energies are likely to be focused on resolving the reciprocal antagonisms and stereotyping between the parent college and the innovative college—trying to explain the new college to the parent administration, board of trustees, evaluating committees, and the surrounding community and, similarly, to explain the actions of these bodies to members of the innovative college. Little time or energy is left for developing internal procedures and structures. Because of these factors, old forms are often eliminated without new ones taking their place.

Another irony is that innovative colleges, founded with the hope of replacing “meaninglessness with significance and estrangement with communion,” tend to heighten feelings of meaninglessness and estrangement at the beginning, as the participants struggle to develop open-ended, individually defined models for education. The turbulence and anomie that characterize the larger social system are present in an intensified form in this environment, accentuating alienation among members of the college community.

In this early period the college is virtually a community without a social structure. Unless it can move beyond this stage, it fails

to provide for certain basic needs. In our view the primary psychological need satisfied by social structures is to provide an individual with well-defined and socially sanctioned paths of action for maintaining a sense of security and self-esteem. When such structures are lacking, as happens frequently in the case of innovative colleges, individuals experience loss of self-esteem and increased anxiety. A major determinant of organizational structure is the need to find socially defined and shared defenses against these feelings.

impact on faculty

Our studies reveal that faculty who come to innovative colleges are quite unprepared for this environment. The profound discontinuity between a conventional setting and this one produces a kind of culture shock. Most everyone feels disappointed and deceived at some level, especially the minority of tradition-oriented faculty who, because of the ambiguous image of the innovative college, imagined they could pursue standard academic goals with merely a few new innovative wrinkles. Antagonism between these faculty members and the more radical majority of the college community is often severe and a source of constant conflict. However, all faculty, regardless of their initial expectations, tend to be surprised. No matter what they were told, they usually expect something fairly familiar and comfortable that coincides with their own patterns and values. One faculty member told us:

I expected the program to be a challenging, active intellectual pursuit of an interdisciplinary theme with the students actively contributing to the inquiry. I also expected that the students would respond to the self-initiated dimension of the program and begin looking into issues that concerned them. A line from *Hair* goes, "When he [LBJ] got there, what did he see—the youth of America on LSD." Instead of intellectually curious students I found gripers . . . con-men, escapists from the regular school, the "easy riders," fifteen-units-for-doing-nothing anarchists, any structure is bad, rampant antiintellectualism, students handicapped by reading ability and interest. In short, I was expecting too much of the students: why should this program attract any different population from the regular college? . . . we entered

the experimental college with our own private hopes for an exciting educational experience. Unfortunately, these hopes were developed prior to actual engagement with the reality of the program and therefore were private fantasies.

In the early stages faculty find it difficult to make an accurate assessment of how unfamiliar the setting actually is. Despite intentions to the contrary, most continue to teach in fairly standard ways. They want to give up conventional roles, but in some ways these roles, which habitually provided them with a certain sense of security and self-esteem, work better than the new and very uncertain arrangements. But once faculty confront the fact that half-way modifications of a traditional approach are not really so innovative as they and their students wish, they are faced with a frightening prospect: changing their behavior to accommodate the novel conditions of the college.*

To change in such important ways is always difficult. Eric Hoffer (1963, p. 3) has written incisively on the concept of change: "We can never be really prepared for that which is wholly new. We have to adjust ourselves, and every radical adjustment is a crisis in self-esteem; we undergo a test, we have to prove ourselves. It needs inordinate self-confidence to face drastic change without inner trembling."

To a considerable degree faculty have been socialized by their discipline. Suddenly, they must teach from another perspective, often with a teacher from another field in a team arrangement. The result is a multidisciplinary approach rather than a truly interdisciplinary one, leaving students with the work of real synthesis—a job which often generates a good deal of complaint. Developing interdisciplinary teaching skills, like acquiring any other new and difficult skill, is a challenge. A faculty member commented, "We spent interminable hours in faculty meetings trying to coordinate our efforts to focus on the theme. We were beginning to really

*What individuals want is never a simple matter, and especially so in this case. It is probably more accurate to state that the desire of a majority of students and faculty for a radically innovative college is ambivalent. For example, some students want initially to be totally free to do whatever they choose, but soon became anxious about taking responsibility for this freedom and demand guidance from faculty. Faculty, trying to extend help to students, then may be rebuffed in subtle ways—reinforcing the students' and their own ambivalence.

understand for the first time the concept of interdisciplinary teaching. It was still a new behavior to work through.”

The most fundamental change to which faculty must adjust is the abandonment of their role as authorities in favor of a more egalitarian stance. In traditional settings faculty are able to structure evaluation procedures and curriculum according to their own needs and interests, but in the innovative college, where students needs and interests are given first priority, faculty are no longer masters of their own fate; they are very much at the mercy of the whims of students. Some faculty find sharing authority with students so unacceptable that they withdraw from the program. Others want to avoid the appearance of being authoritarian, and they lean over backward to do so. But in avoiding the Scylla of authoritarianism, they may veer toward the Charybdis of the opposite pole.

Even those faculty who accept the need for more egalitarian relationships are unprepared, on the one hand, for the hostile frankness of many students in this rather rebellious setting or, on the other, for the lack of distance from students and their needs. In programs that require students to depart from conventional roles, they are often thrust into periods of intense crisis, and frequently faculty are called on to help them not only with educational matters but with a variety of personal issues, some of them highly charged emotionally. The problem is especially acute for faculty in residential programs, where students expect them to be on call twenty-four hours a day. One group of faculty stated that they had the feeling of being “cannibalized.” Their involvement with students is so exhausting and time-consuming that they have little time or energy for their own private lives and their intellectual or research activities.

It is also a new experience for faculty to teach with developmental rather than purely academic goals in mind. In traditional settings faculty have some idea of what academic achievement means and also how to evaluate it with grades. But how to create teaching methods that will produce character development, refinement of personal sensibilities and values, independent judgment, flexible perspectives, and the like is a mystery to faculty. Obviously teaching with a concern for the personal development of students entails much experimentation and inevitably some failures.

Evaluating students according to developmental goals provokes some of the most bitter disputes in innovative colleges, not only because these goals are hard to define but also because of

consensual decision-making. As a result, faculty tend to let the question of evaluation slide until the end of a semester or the approach of graduation requires that it be directly faced. At this point antagonistic positions concerning goals for the college become explicit. Without some appropriate mechanisms to resolve these disputes, they become protracted, and some faculty choose to leave the program at this time as a consequence.

In summary, faculty members find adaptation far more challenging than they had expected. Their new role requires that they learn to serve as facilitators rather than authorities. They must help students derive their own goals rather than imposing them. Instead of prescribing certain information to be learned, they must assist students in finding out what needs to be known. By being routinely presented with issues on which they are not experts yet which students wish to explore, faculty begin to serve as models of the learning process as they show students how they themselves research novel problems. This type of learning may be the most valuable, as Michael Polanyi (1958) notes: "By watching his master and emulating his efforts in the presence of his example the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of an art, including those which are not explicitly known to the master himself." But this role is difficult for some faculty. A student commented, "This kind of educational experience, which requires that a student learn as much from what a teacher *is* as from what he *says*, is very threatening to some."

Confronted with these many demands, most faculty feel bewildered and at times severely threatened. Some find it necessary to leave, as we mentioned earlier; others who stay on find the emotional price quite high, and psychological and somatic difficulties often ensue. A few individuals who have great self-confidence and little investment in traditional roles are able to fare well in the program. The initial period of innovation and experiment is often full of intensity and excitement. To venture into the unknown, to try something new, is frightening but also thrilling. It is to define oneself, at least for a time, as incompetent according to long-held values.

faculty adaptation and development

Most educational innovations are incremental in nature, and the adjustments faculty have to make are correspondingly small.

But innovative colleges are a qualitatively different educational milieu. Their discontinuity with traditional settings is so great that faculty have to create genuinely new models with little personal experience or educational tradition to serve as bases. However, the turmoil, the sense of discovery, the feelings of community, and the intimacy can be valuable and cherished experiences. As one professor recalls: "Even though the program was exhausting it was more stimulating and exciting than my courses in the regular traditional program. I liked the family-community feeling the group generated. I liked many of the people in the program. It was a very human place to be."

With the passage of time faculty members begin to acquire new skills in performing their roles. They develop the capacity for interdisciplinary approaches to intellectual problems. They learn to place realistic but sympathetic limits on the emotional demands which students make. They become sensitive to the character-developing functions of teaching and to personal development as well as academic achievement.

Some faculty find ways to give students guidance and evaluation even when there are no structures to validate such feedback. For example, at times students may define goals for themselves that are unrealistic, or they may approach a subject in a limited or shallow manner. On these occasions, even though faculty find them difficult, straight talk and clear, explicit evaluation are desirable. In our interviews students frequently criticized faculty for holding back on such evaluation: lack of frank criticism not only denied them the opportunity to experience faculty as three-dimensional people, it also short-circuited an important part of their process of self-definition. As Sanford has noted: "Freshmen flourish best not when they are given no grades, but when they are given searching and hard-hitting analyses of their performances—accompanied by intelligible and realistic pictures of what they can become" (1962, p. 264).

Most important of all, as a result of the innovative experience, many faculty members become more developed teachers. By *developed* we do not mean simply becoming a more skillful teacher; we mean that faculty have a more differentiated view of their role. For example, several teachers said that when they returned to traditional settings they had at their disposal not only conventional techniques but more experimental ones too, and they could use

either as appropriate. Faculty in innovative settings have to read more widely and think more broadly than they would in usual teaching situations because of the interdisciplinary thrust of their programs. Experimental colleges give them experience with a range of possibilities in education that most teachers can only read about. One teacher commented:

The college gave me firsthand experience with alternative educational programs and tempered my educational idealism with reality. Keeping intellectual company with the critics and prophets of education doesn't work when you have to deal with individuals who have not been exposed to these points of view—educators, teachers, students. Before I came to the college, I conducted some classes on an open, minimum-requirement basis with somewhat disastrous results; I think I believed too blindly in a method or approach to education and lacked enough actual experience with such a method in operation to avoid the pitfalls.

One important factor that helps faculty improve their skills is that the program as a whole gains coherence and stability as it proceeds. It acquires a more substantial culture, a set of structures and procedures that become routinized and a set of symbols with which individuals can identify and which permit joint action and joint understanding. One faculty member recalls an element of this process: "In the third semester a list of undebatables was developed so as to indicate that the program had elements that were essential to the experiment. This minimized the endless dialogue."

As time passes, conflict between the innovative program and the parent institution is likely to diminish. Less energy is invested in self-justification and defense against hostile criticism and more in the actual operation of the program. Although uncertainty concerning course content and evaluation may remain, reduced antagonism and scrutiny by the parent institution enable the innovative college to progress in self-definition.

Another factor permitting the development of an innovative culture and laying the groundwork for coherent faculty roles is the fact that the highly turbulent, frustration-filled climate of the 1960s has gradually settled into calm, perhaps even apathy. Innovative colleges, consequently, may operate within a less charged

milieu. This relatively stable setting permits faculty to develop a more secure and comfortable role for themselves and the skills that go with it.

continuing issues

The problem of how to foster both developmental goals and traditional academic objectives is a prickly one for the faculty. As we have said, innovative programs are likely to avoid defining educational goals in the usual academic fashion. Affective and interpersonal growth and general character development take precedence over intellectual or professional achievement. The faculty must find ways to integrate the innovative and the traditional. Loevinger observes that the separation of development into affective and cognitive spheres is probably "a relic of outworn categories of thought, for integration of observations into a coherent frame of reference is obviously cognitive, while anxiety is obviously affective. But the failure to attain a meaningful and coherent integration is precisely what generates anxiety" (Loevinger and Wessler, 1970, p. 8).

A related issue is the success of these programs in preparing students for engagement in "real life." If developmental goals are emphasized rather than vocational and professional ones, where does this leave students after they graduate? Will they be able to compete with graduates of traditional colleges for jobs and for entrance into graduate schools? Some students in innovative colleges find it hard to leave and want to prolong their stay. Others conclude that their only choice for postgraduate work is a so-called experimental graduate program. Faculty often have the nagging feeling that innovative colleges prepare students just as poorly for engagement with important life tasks as do traditional schools.

future innovation

Educational innovation entails introducing change into a social system. Menzies (1960, p. 108) comments:

Change is inevitably to some extent an excursion into the unknown. It implies a commitment to future events that are not entirely predictable, and to their consequences, and inevitably provokes doubt and anxiety. Any significant

change within a social system implies changes in existing social relationships and in social structure. It follows that any significant social change implies a change in the operation of the social system as a defense system. While this change is proceeding, i.e., while social defenses are being restructured, anxiety is likely to be more open and intense. Jaques (1955) has stressed that resistance to social change can better be understood if it is seen as the resistance of groups of people unconsciously clinging to existing institutions because changes threaten existing social defenses against deep and intense anxieties.

In her remarks, we find two important considerations for educational change. First, innovators must be aware that some of their expectations of these programs will inevitably be frustrated. Faculty who have a large emotional investment in the initial plans will tend to resist adaptation. But any persons engaged in social innovation must learn to continually reevaluate early formulations in the light of unanticipated consequences. Likewise, faculty recruiters should admit to the uncertainty. They frequently give potential instructors an optimistic view of the program which ignores the negative features, and such recruits, eager to find a situation congruent with their ideals, are likely to enter into this mutual deception.

Second, organizational change cannot occur unless real people, (not manipulable elements in someone's ideal plan) change their behavior. While the individual is creating a new role and identity, anxiety and conflict are to be expected, but there should be ways of eliminating unnecessary stress so that the experience can be integrated into his personality, giving the person an enlarged sense of choice and competence.

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