

4-1-1980

Continuing Education: A Challenge of the '80s

Edwin Hamilton

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections>

Recommended Citation

Hamilton, Edwin (1980) "Continuing Education: A Challenge of the '80s," *New Directions*: Vol. 7: Iss. 3, Article 4.

Available at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol7/iss3/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Directions* by an authorized editor of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact digitalservices@howard.edu.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

16 A Challenge of the '80s

By Edwin Hamilton

The advent of an increasing number of adult part-time students as a major clientele for higher education presents the greatest challenge for establishing and expanding continuing education programming in American institutions. These efforts are in response to meeting the manpower training needs of the nation.

Many colleges and universities have been encouraged to alter, revise and extend traditional educational programs to reflect a continuing education or community service approach. The growth of two-year colleges has been overwhelming because their curriculum was developed partly in response to a special student clientele and partly in response to educational and training needs not currently available elsewhere.

Many institutions have seriously re-evaluated their commitments to the education of non-traditional students and have opened up their physical, technical, and manpower resources to support the continuing education format.

What is continuing education?

There is no universally agreed upon definition. However, it is vital to provide some discussion of the basic tenets of the term as they relate to the concept and context of the continuing education program. The terms "adult education" and "continuing education" may confuse the uninitiated reader. And some writers add to the confusion by trying to distinguish between the terms. [Their usage in this article should be regarded as synonymous and interchangeable.]

Continuing education or adult education "implies that no one is too old to learn and that one's education is never finished. Each graduation is really a commencement into a new phase in the development of the human potential." (Charles Monroe, "Profile of the Community College.") The terms further suggest that adults of all ages and in all stations of life are in need of an endless variety of educational opportunities.

The idea that one's education should stop after a few years of formal schooling during childhood and adolescence is no longer the case. Cyril O. Houle, professor of education at the University of Chicago, and one of the leaders in the continuing education movement, sees adult students as the "new majority."

The American Council on Education, in a report issued in 1974, "Financing Part-time Students: The New Majority in Post-secondary Education," indicated the extent, depth, and characteristics of the new student population at these institutions. According to the report, "for the first time in history, adult part-time students comprise the majority of students enrolled in both post-secondary institutions and in institutions of higher education."

The concept of continuing education clashes with the traditional view of graduation and commencement, the end of schooling, the "terminal" degree and the beginning of life.

Milton Stern, dean of University Extension, University of California at Berkeley, refers to a continuing education program as an invisible body consisting of "all those people nobody counts, the millions of people not included in higher education records because they are not enrolled in regular classes but in continuing education programs. Continuing education is untidy, messy, sprawling over the landscape of the academy, offered not only in evening colleges or extension divisions, but often in internal schools and colleges that don't even know they are engaged upon continuing education."

On the national level, there are many directions that the continuing education movement is taking. It has fused and is considered the *sine qua non* of the emerging concept referred to as "lifelong learning." There is a great diversity in continuing education programs across the country. New terms and labels are being coined: open university, extended or external degrees, university without walls, and weekend college. Concurrently, several hundred colleges and universities are finding new ways to focus their resources upon

the life-long educational needs of part-time adult students in society.

When one looks at continuing education from an operational point of view, one finds that there is no common organizational pattern. However, there are common functions of continuing education which can be discerned from study and observation of most programs. What are these basic functions? Here is a formulation under three headings:

First, there are credit courses which consist of both existing courses in a given speciality and new courses which have been developed for specific clientele. Second, there is a general non-credit and credit cultural program, not only in sequential courses but in varied formats—weekends, institutes, seminars—largely, but not exclusively, for educated adults. This is the category where the bulk of activities will be developed. Third, is continuing professional education, with a self-evident audience.

Concepts like "public service," "community service," "extension," and others have an overlapping definition with "continuing education." In Britain, for example, continuing education is called "recurrent education." These potpourri of words tend to cover the whole field and imply differences of goal and purpose. The word "extension" clearly carries a different connotation from the words "continuing education," just as "public service" or "community service" are differentiated, each from each, and from the other words.

The three areas portrayed represent a simplistic categorical model and are inclusive. They reflect a classification system under which most programs in continuing education can be put.

The major federal legislation which provides financial assistance to operate continuing education programs in colleges and universities is Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Title I is labeled Community Services and Continuing Education Programs. The act enables the U.S. Commissioner of Education to make grants to states to strengthen the community service program of the institutions. The act has no

...continuing education programs in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area are thriving.

restrictions on the types of problems that institutions of higher education may assist the people to solve, but does indicate some of the problem areas which Congress had in mind—housing, poverty, government, recreation, employment, youth opportunities, health, transportation, and land use.

The following descriptions are some examples of innovative continuing education programs which were reported in the 1975-76 Yearbook of Adult and Continuing Education and funded under Title I of the Higher Education Act:

Paraprofessional Personnel

New York City Community College graduated 111 adults during the year from a 60-hour program for 26 poverty and community agencies in the borough of Brooklyn. This continuing education program was specifically designed to upgrade the skills of paraprofessional counselors and support personnel.

Continuing Education for Women

Mature women in Iowa were assisted to move outside traditionally feminine occupations through two related university projects. The University of Northern Iowa's program of Counseling Mature Women for Productive Employment served a large number of women in individual counseling sessions, weekly group guidance sessions and conferences on Women in Industry. For the already employed women, Drake University initiated a pioneering program of Management and Supervisory Training. The women received 65 hours of classroom instruction and attended three intensive weekend workshops during the course of the year.

Community Education

Six colleges and universities in North Carolina assisted people in the state to make decisions about environmental problems of the Seventies. Through a multi-dimensional program of seminars, workshops, films, and educational television, hundreds of responsible and responsive citizens are dealing with the documented environmental problems across the state.

Minority Businessmen

Indiana University at South Bend undertook a two-phase project to increase the knowledge and skill of Black businessmen in the community. In the first stage, Black students in the business school served as interview consultants for 140 firms. In the second stage, Black and white instructors were used in problem-oriented workshop sessions. Throughout the project, one-to-one technical assistance and support was given to enhance learning.

Volunteers

At the University of Virginia, the Office of Volunteer Community Service recruited and trained 800 young adults for volunteer service to their community. Orientation sessions on "the role of the volunteers" preceded on-the-job training in a variety of human assistance agencies. The areas of concentration were: tutoring of poor youth, youth in a big brother/big sister relationship, services to the elderly, recreational supervision, and assistance in general and psychiatric hospitals.

Inmates in Penal Institutions

Manchester Community College developed a program at Connecticut State Prison in order to reduce the recidivism rate. Two hundred men, more than half of whom were between the ages of 21 and 35, received college-level instruction and intensive counseling services. Within a year, similar programs were undertaken in five other states: Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and North Carolina.

Aging Population

The Senior Citizen Resource Center at the University of Nevada and a pilot Life Enrichment Program at the University of South Carolina are two examples of innovative approaches to the widespread concern for the aging population. Such programs focus on lecture-discussions on such areas as Social Security, wills and the psychology of aging. The sessions usually include information about the functions of a Senior Citizen Center in a local community.

Elderhostel

Elderhostel, Inc. is a national non-profit organization whose goal is to serve older adults by responding to their capacity to meet change and intellectual challenge and by nourishing in them a spirit of adventure. Elderhostel offers a one-week residential educational experience during summers in colleges and universities across the country. The courses offered do not presuppose any particular academic credential or previous knowledge of the subject. Students have ranged from high school dropouts to Ph.D.'s and represent a broad spectrum of occupational backgrounds.

The foregoing seven categorical types and eight continuing education programs point out the great diversity of programming in operation across the nation. Although the programs described here were funded under Title I the great majority of continuing education programs are financed from a combination of sources. The typical budget is a result of funding allocation from: 1) the respective college or university, 2) federal and state grants, 3) private foundation grants, 4) gifts, 5) contracts, and 6) individual fees.

In summary, at the national level, it is clear that higher education institutions are accelerating their efforts to implement and expand continuing education programs. More and more institutional resources — faculty and student — are being applied to the continuing education of adults.

At the local scene, continuing education programs in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area are thriving. Most area colleges and universities have viable programs of continuing education. Some are much larger and more visible than others. One example is: The Consortium of Universities consisting of American University, Catholic University, Gallaudet College, Georgetown University, George Washington University, Howard University, Mount Vernon College, Trinity College and the University of the District of Columbia.

The demand for continuing education in the Washington, D.C. area stifles the imag-

ination in terms of the type and nature of programming that will meet the education needs of a vast, diverse, and complex market of both actual and potential consumers.

During the past 10 years, the demand for a variety of continuing education programs has been accommodated by the in-migration of a growing number of higher education institutions from other states. A few who have satellite programs in the city are: University of Southern California, University of Oklahoma, Southeastern University, Walden University and Nova University.

The in-migration trend of continuing education programs is expected to continue due to the projection of severe financial restraints which higher education institutions will face in the 1980s. Remember, that Washington is the nation's capital, and efforts to lobby for federal grants can be more efficient and beneficial to institutions having personnel in the city. Second, please note that continuing education programs make money for their respective institutions. It is common knowledge for administrators in the field that for years continuing education programs have been paying for themselves and also bailing out other programs.

In the District of Columbia, businesses and government agencies are generous with tuition grants for employees; they also use the local colleges to develop training programs and provide classroom space. The city is also loaded with professional organizations which produce valuable short-term seminars, workshops, and conferences for their members. This is often performed in cooperation and under the aegis of the continuing education programs at one of the local universities.

In December 1979, *Washingtonian* Magazine published an informative article entitled, "A Guide to Continuing Education in Washington." The article provided a cross-sectional brief account of innovative continuing education programs at the various colleges. "American University, for example, is offering a certification program in archival management at the National Archives, and Catholic University will be

bringing a number of courses to army bases for military personnel facing career transitions. If students can't attend weekday or evening classes, there are weekend programs or courses available via TV, radio, and newspaper. American University and Mount Vernon College now give credit for experiential learning in an attempt to find a more equitable means of balancing the two years of coursework of the twenty year old against the wider work experience of the older student."

The article pointed out that campuses have become decentralized, and that only a few local universities today offer courses in one place. Classes are moving into churches, libraries, offices and factories. *The Washington Post* carried a news item about continuing education in the District entitled, "Adult Education Creating a New College Majority." (December 31, 1979). This was an insightful new report which provided an indication of the magnitude of adult education programs in the city.

Let's look at what happened in the program development of one institution mentioned in the *Post's* article: "Ten years ago, Georgetown University launched a modest program in adult education. There were 79 students enrolled in five courses. As the decade closed, that program had grown into the largest single division of the university. The estimated 7,000 adults enrolled in 600 courses offered annually in Georgetown's school of continuing education now outnumber the university's 5,864 undergraduates and there are no indications that the program will stop growing."

The Howard Experience

There is a bright future in terms of expanding and coordinating continuing education at Howard University. Many efforts have taken place through the formation of committees and task forces organized to provide documentation on the need for an expanded effort in the developmental process.

At Howard, continuing education programs are decentralized. The organizational structure of continuing education and community service exemplifies the

principle of unit autonomy applied administratively throughout the university. There are (probably) more than 15 separate continuing education and community service programs, reporting to professors, department chairmen, deans, directors, and vice-presidents.

One urgent issue which must be considered is whether continuing education at Howard should be centralized or decentralized. That is, shall continuing education be mandated to a single comprehensive school or division, or shall it be undertaken by otherwise internally-oriented departments and colleges of the university?

Notable efforts had been made in the past by various units of the university to document the need for continuing education and provide recommendations for a plan of action. This writer is familiar with three of those efforts, having served on two of the committees. The first committee's effort involved the School of Social Work during fall 1974. (The school initiated continuing education program that semester).

The second committee's effort involved the School of Education, which this writer co-chaired, during the Spring of 1976. Currently, the development of a continuing education program in the School of Education is being planned. Some of the major recommendations of the committee's report follow:

The School of Education will develop a comprehensive program of continuing education studies related to public education and directly linked to the university-wide program.

The program of studies and activities will encompass the following major categories:

- University-level Studies
- Non-University Level Studies — Transitional Program for Non-Traditional Students
- Professional and Personal Enrichment
- External Degree Programs

The third committee's effort involved university-wide representation from the major schools and reflected a general consensus to enlarge the continuing education focus. The university-wide committee recom-

mended the following program types as guides to objectives of the continuing education program:

Community Education Programs

- a. Programs Related to Special Educational Needs

Degree Preparatory Program

- a. High School Dropouts
- b. Graduate Levels

Adult Enrichment Programs

Mandatory Continuing Education

and accept formal education as a lifelong endeavor.

Edwin Hamilton, Ph.D. is chairman of the Department of Educational Leadership and Community Services, School of Education, Howard University.

Last year, an evaluation team of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools released its evaluation of the programs at Howard. Overall, the report assessed the university very favorably. Specifically, relating to continuing education, the report analyzed the existing status of the efforts and made a number of recommendations.

In summary, the report stated:

"Although Howard is not currently experiencing a decline in student enrollment, it seems proper and fitting for the university to utilize preventive means whereby the need for faculty retrenchment and program cut-backs will not occur because of a decreasing student population."

Further, the report noted:

"Consistent with Howard's mission and accompanying goals, the time seems ripe for the university to strengthen its community outreach by increasing programmatic and course offerings for the older target population of Washington, D.C. and its environs."

In the past decade, Howard has experienced the greatest growth in its entire history. The university has a special mission, and a critical role to play in American higher education. Indeed, it has the heritage and the tradition to continue to provide effective leadership for the future.

On campuses in the District of Columbia and across the nation, the adult presence is forcing a redefinition of the mission of higher education. During the 1980s, the average adult student will come to realize