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A STUDY OF PROGRAM RELEVANCE IN SELECTED MICHIGAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

By

Marylou Robins

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF PROGRAM RELEVANCE IN
SELECTED MICHIGAN COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES

By

Marylou Robins

The pressures and demands for curriculum change and development under the theme of "relevance" have plagued some college administrators and curriculum committees with increasing frequency in the past decade. These administrators are eager to meet these demands in ways that do not violate institutional goals and objectives. Perceptions of relevance, responses toward relevance, resistances to changes toward relevance, and curriculum changes (and their success, when indicated) toward relevance in selected colleges and universities were determined in this study.

The presidents of some 29 of the colleges and universities in the state of Michigan were asked to respond to a questionnaire dealing with relevance as related to their institutions and were assured anonymity in answering the questionnaire.

The findings of this study indicated the following: (1) The idea of relevancy received overwhelming attention from almost everyone queried. (2) There was wide disagreement

about the meaning of relevancy in higher education and the effective ways of achieving it in a college or university setting. (3) The majority of the respondents considered those programs responding toward relevancy as successful. (4) The quality of the response toward relevancy made a greater impact on the students participating than did programs renovated by attempting to change quantity factors. For example, attendance dramatically increased when a course title was changed from "Home and Family Living" to "Marriage and Human Sexuality." On the other hand, one institution of higher learning set up a school of community services within the existing structure of the college and found, much to its chagrin, that student interest and participation were sadly lacking. (5) Although the study was begun in the area of social science, both the literature on relevance and the questionnaire respondents indicated a more general approach toward relevancy in all spheres of academic studies within the college or university.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the knowledge concerning relevancy and aid administrators of institutions of higher learning. The information may have specific implications in these areas: (1) in improving the insight of the administrator about what other administrators are doing when faced with the same "cry for relevance," by operating within similar or different structures; (2) in providing insight into the administrative decision of whether

to adhere to present plans for curriculum change toward relevancy or whether to alter their plans within the existing framework of the college or university; (3) in reviewing plans for responding toward relevancy in traditional ways, by modification of traditional ways, or by departures from traditional ways; and (4) in improving administrative responses regarding relevancy by aiding in building a more effective curriculum.

To someone special

Thank you for being . . .

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The appeal for relevancy in education is not new. Authors from Plato to Emerson to contemporary writers such as Arrowsmith and Agee all have considered the concept of relevancy. The term is new but the idea is ancient. What is also new is the intensity with which students have seized upon the idea of relevancy and have demanded that the curriculum be remodeled in accord with the idea. To outward appearances, in many instances it seems that student demand has elevated the matter of relevancy to the status of a major problem.

Statement of the Problem

As will be shown in Chapter II, the pressures and demands for curriculum change and development under the theme of "relevance" have plagued some college administrators and curriculum committees with increasing frequency in the past decade. Some administrators are eager to meet these demands in ways that do not violate institutional goals and objectives. To do this, they need to know something of the origin and significance of the demand for relevance, and be informed about the variety of current responses to this demand.

In studying the problem, it will be necessary to find information to aid in answering such questions as: (1) What has been the perception of relevance? (2) How have colleges and universities responded to the demand for relevance? (3) Which pressure group or groups have constituted the major driving force? (4) What have apparently been the principal sources of resistance to changes proposed in the name of relevance? (5) How were the changes, if any, implemented as colleges and universities sought to meet this demand?

Where significant changes have been introduced, the writer will seek to determine: (1) Are the programs of relevancy in operation successful, in the opinion of the respondents? (2) Which plan, program, or operation in progress is considered the most effective? The least effective? (3) How does the administration react to the various responses toward relevancy? The faculty? The students? (4) How have the changes in curriculum been received by the several "publics" of the institutions? Questions such as these can be answered only through a systematic study.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the improvement of administration of institutions of higher education. Through the investigation, it is hoped that information gained will have specific implications for: (1) improvement in administrative sophistication regarding

the issue of relevancy; (2) improvement in the insight of the administrator into what other administrators are doing in response to the "cry for relevance"; (3) insight into the process of reaching an administrative decision about whether to pursue curriculum change toward relevancy or to continue within the traditional framework; (4) clarification of options for responding to the demand for relevancy--tradition, modification of tradition, or departures from tradition; and (5) through all of these to aid in building a more effective curriculum and administration.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Because of the particular cross-section and the types of institutions investigated, there are certain delimitations on the degree to which findings can be generalized:

1. Procedures that worked well in one setting may not necessarily be transferable to another setting--to other colleges or universities, to other divisions within the college or university, or to colleges or universities in other geographic areas.

2. Each institution has certain uniquenesses--traditions, chronological age, levels of learning, nature of the setting, academic disciplines, types of administration, faculty and student body, and economic resources. Therefore, the findings of the research must be broadly interpreted in terms of their application to a specific institution.

3. A definite limitation of any study of higher education arises from the rapidity of change in student perceptions and demands. The period of time required to complete such a study means that its findings must be reassessed in light of student perceptions and demands at the time any policy implications of the study are used in administrative decision making.

4. The findings of research that occurred in the 1960's may not be applicable to the 1970's.

5. A research study drawing data from the social sciences may not be "relevant" to disciplines other than social science.

6. Questionnaire responses reflect the usual weaknesses: (1) possible biases, (2) the respondents' unfamiliarity with what actually occurred at the institution or with the topic involved, and (3) possible misinterpretation of some of the wording of the questionnaire or of the respondents' answers. (See Chapter III for a more detailed discussion of the use of questionnaires.)

7. Although the respondents' evaluations may be indicated or inferred, no true evaluation of alternative programs is possible within the confines of this study.

Definition of Terms

For the potential user of these research findings, as is the case in any research study, there is always the problem of word usage. Definitions of certain key words

used in this study, therefore, become essential. Particularly does this seem necessary since many of the words are in common use, but have a variety of shadings and meanings.

Administration--the persons collectively who manage or supervise an institution of higher education.

Curriculum--the courses of study offered at a college or university.

Higher education--education beyond the first twelve years of formal schooling.

Relevancy--There are about as many definitions of relevancy as there are people writing about it. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the term is used to refer to a particular attitudinal posture or a perception of desired outcomes in matters of curriculum content. More specifically, this stance contains the essential ingredient of personal fulfillment and meaning plus direct application to the perceived needs of students. Thus, this study is directed toward an appraisal of the various ways and means by which the faculty and administration at selected kinds of institutions of higher education have responded to the demand that the curriculum content be so devised and structured that it fulfills a sense of personal meaning and direct application to the needs of students, as they perceive them. (See Chapter II for a more detailed discussion of meanings of relevancy.)

Social science--an organization and integration of various disciplines concerned with understanding the different aspects of the social behavior of human beings in contemporary society; ideally, an integration (not merely a composite) of sociology, psychology, economics, political science, anthropology, and history.

Methodology and Analysis of the Data

The questionnaire was selected as the tool to be used for gathering the necessary data in this study. The analysis of the data was undertaken by dividing the data collected into units of consistency of like response and different response to each question in the questionnaire.

Overview

In Chapter II the pertinent aspects of the study are discussed in relation to the literature in the field. Included are the perception of relevancy now and in the past; college and university responses to the demand for relevancy; and, when indicated, evaluations of the effectiveness of plans or programs now in operation. The design of the questionnaire, the instrument used, the population, and the treatment of the data are discussed in Chapter III.

Data derived from responses to the questionnaire are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, interpretations, implications, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

A study of the response to the demand for relevancy in higher education would be incomplete without a brief discussion of the definition of relevancy; a look at the history of the idea of relevancy; an indication of the diversity of administrative views regarding relevancy; and an investigation of curriculum plans in operation, with an assessment, when indicated, of the effect of such efforts upon higher education. The following accounts are not presented as complete descriptions of the studies and programs, but seek in capsule form to provide the reader with a general background that will give a better picture of the investigation undertaken in the present study. Chapter II also contains a review of the most prominent studies related to the aspects of relevancy, including history, definitions, authors' opinions, curriculum plans, and evaluations. In this discussion, the terms relevance and relevancy are considered to be synonymous and interchangeable.

Definition of Relevance

As Brickman (1970) said of relevance:

> This is a strangely popular word which is difficult to define. On some campuses, the word "meaning" is substituted as easily. Both relevance and meaning are aimed at the kind of educational experience in both its academic and social aspects which fits the needs of these students in their time, not ours (p. 23).

Whether because the term is too difficult to define, or because most scholars consider it too obvious to demand definition, formal definitions are difficult to locate. Indeed, in an entire volume entitled Search for Relevance (Axelrod et al., 1969), the present writer was unable to find any definition of the term. And in another volume devoted to an analysis of the problem of relevance (Schutz, 1970), the writer located no concise formal definition, although discussion of the various categories of relevance (topical, interpretative, motivational, imposed, second order) filled many pages. One can infer only from the usage of the term what the definitions in the minds of the scholars were.

The various usages of the term relevance all seem to focus on the student's rejection as "irrelevant" whatever he perceives as not meaningfully contributing to the growths and goals he desires. Statements such as that of a Stanford student--"Undoubtedly I will not use nine-tenths of the course information gotten here at the university. . . . In the past few years I feel that I've been taking courses that have little impact on what I do and that are not fruitful intellectually" (Katz et al., 1968:242)--are typical,

in that a vague feeling of meaninglessness is expressed. As Donaldson (1969) said,

> Their questioning of the relevance of a college education corresponds to the skeptical opinion held by a large segment of the student body that many traditional college courses are meaningless to their development as individuals and concerned members of society (p. 36).

However, the preceding statement must be placed in a time context. For many of the students, the time context they appear to have in mind is the present or the immediate. Therefore, the definition of relevance cited above in general terms becomes more specifically "whatever the student perceives as relevant to his immediate or present situation." Thus the task of educators charged with maintaining a viable curriculum is to balance the pressures of the time context of immediacy with the long-range goals and purposes that students may ultimately come to define for themselves (and thus change their definition of relevance) after leaving the educational institution.

Finally, not only is the time perspective significant in student perceptions of relevancy, but to students the focus is also important. This unique focus is what Jencks (1968) referred to: "These students believe that what matters is untutored and wholly spontaneous feeling and McLuhanite media mixtures rather than books" (p. 37). In essence, this is a somewhat personalized, self-centered perspective that suggests a "self-actualizing" experience dimension to definitions of relevancy.

If pressed for a formal definition, these various ideas could be incorporated in some such statement as "Relevance in education is the quality of being perceived as functionally related to the attainment of some goal that is valued by the perceiver."

Since the term relevance has no agreed-upon formal definition among scholars, and seems to be used to indicate the feeling of relatedness to one's own goals and purposes, it would appear that the only useful definition is an operational one: Relevance is whatever the observer perceives as relevance. Anything the observer perceives as bearing a functional relationship to the attainment of his goals and purposes is relevant. All else is irrelevant. The "search for relevance" is, therefore, the quest of students and some educators to find materials and modes of study that will be more widely perceived by students as contributing to their goals and purposes, and not as serving some other purposes that are not their own (e.g. fulfillment of tradition, grading, collection of credentials, maintenance of the educational establishment, status system maintenance).

As with all important concepts, the concept of relevance has a long history, which is discussed in the following section.

History

The appeal for relevancy is not new. The words of Gaius Petronius in Satyricon, written in the first century

A.D., sound very timely today:

> I tell you we don't educate our children in school; we stultify them and send them out into the world half-baked. And why? Because we keep them utterly ignorant of real life. The common experience is something they never see or hear.

Writers since the time of Plato have expressed the idea of relevance, although perhaps they did not use that term. Jaeger (1939) noted that Plato, in speaking of education, "used the physical metaphor of molding character." Arrowsmith (1966) recalled, "The teacher . . . will have no function or honor worthy of the name until we are prepared to make the purpose of education what it always was--the molding of men rather than the production of knowledge" (pp. 1-3). Jones (1966) noted that, to Emerson,

> The great object of Education should be commensurate with the object of life. It should be a moral one; to teach self-trust; to inspire the youthful man with an interest in himself; with a curiosity touching his own nature; to acquaint him with the resources of his mind (p. 211).

In the course of a penetrating human study of a southern rural family, Agee (1957) used telling words to describe the irrelevance of the school as he knew it in his childhood:

> Or again on the curriculum: it was unnecessary to make even such search into this as I made to know that there is no setting before the students of "economic" or "social" or "political facts" and of their situation within these "facts," no attempt made to clarify or even slightly to relieve the situation between the white and negro races [sic], far less to explain the courses, no attempt to clarify psychological situation in the individual, in his family, or in his world, no attempt to get beneath and to revise those "ethical"

> and "social" pressures and beliefs in which even a young child is trapped, no attempt, beyond the most nominal, to interest a child in using or in discovering his senses and judgment, no attempt to counteract the paralytic quality inherent in "authority", no attempt beyond the most nominal and stifling to awaken, to protect, or to "guide" the sense of investigation, the sense of joy, the sense of beauty, no attempt to clarify spoken and written words whose power or deceit even at the simplest is vertiginous, . . . nor to "teach" a child in terms of his environment, no attempt, beyond the most suffocated, to awaken a student either to "religion" or to "irreligion", no attempt to develop in him either "skepticism" or "faith", nor "wonder', nor mental "honesty", nor mental "courage", nor any understanding of or delicateness in "the emotions" and in any of the uses and pleasure of the body save the athletic; no attempt either to relieve him of fear and of poison in sex or to release in him a free beginning of pleasure in it, nor to open within him the illimitable potentials of grief, of danger, and of goodness in sex and in sexual love, nor to give him the beginnings at very least of a knowledge, and of an attitude, whereby he may hope to guard and increase himself and those whom he touches, no indication of the damages which society, money, law, fear, and quick belief have set upon these matters and upon all things in human life, nor of their causes, nor of the alternate ignorances and possibilities of ruin or of joy, no fear of doubtlessness, no fear of the illusions of knowledge, no fear of compromise:--and here again I have scarcely begun (pp. 292-293).

Although the idea of relevancy is not completely new, the determination to incorporate the search for relevancy into the curriculum is new. Many of the methods employed in pressing the demand for change in higher education are shocking to many of today's administrators, especially those who have been in the arena for the past fifteen years or more. The occasionally violent and noisy student demonstrations in the 1960's brought an awareness that change was needed, and "now." Schwebel (1968) stated:

> Student involvement in curriculum change evolved largely at institutions where students were highly socially conscious. It also seemed to appear at schools where conditions were so poor, education so backwards, that only a faint degree of awareness was necessary for student discovery of problems (p. 32).

This brief statement of history is far from complete, but serves to show that the idea of relevancy has been with educators and students for a long time. Thus the current chorus of demand for change toward relevancy is a continuation of an ancient awareness.

The Demand for Relevancy in the 1960's

A number of influences have been at work in recent years, forcing institutions of higher education to reexamine many of their long-held views about the nature and form of undergraduate education. New kinds of students now seek college degrees; many of them are older and more experienced than the typical student, and many come from minority groups and low-income families. They bring special aspirations and handicaps that require more flexible and individualized programs.

New views are emerging of what is important in the physical and natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences. Faculties and students alike are only too aware that much of what has been taught is often unusable or obsolete, and that much of what needs to be learned cannot be comprehended within the confines of the usual college curriculum. New careers have arisen, requiring special

competencies that few institutions can provide, no matter how comprehensive their course offerings.

Rapid advances in technology have added greatly to the explosion of knowledge, and pose both problems and challenges as to how man can make the most of technology, without being mastered by it.

The financial plight of colleges and universities has become increasingly serious, requiring that they find ways to operate under far more stringent conditions, yet without sacrificing educational quality. And pressing social problems raise many questions about what a college ought to be, whom it should serve, what should be taught, and how it might best be taught.

Times have changed very rapidly indeed! Many authors and administrators have noted that the past ten years have brought sweeping changes in higher education, some of which have been unfamiliar to the practicing administrator. Axelrod et al. (1969) pointed out that:

> . . . While the dissatisfactions have been myriad, attempts at innovation and reform of a highly creative order have taken place on many campuses during the past ten years. . . . Since 1965 there has been a great deal more confrontation between administrators and students.
>
> . . . General and strong discontent among higher educational personnel has been, during the past decade, with the standard structures designed to carry out curricular-instructional functions in American higher education. This discontent has expressed itself in two ways--in expressions of dissatisfaction about the standard pattern, and in efforts on almost every college and university campus to change some features of that pattern.

Let us present some of the evidence supporting the conclusion that 1958-59 marked the end of the old era and ushered in a new one. It marked the end symbolically, for 1959 was the year of the John Dewey centennial. And it marked a beginning also, for the National Defense Act of 1958 opened the road to a new role--a role that has turned out to be overwhelmingly important--of the Federal Government in American education. Another event in 1958 also proved prophetic in the realm of student affairs; . . . the year 1958 can be taken to mark the emergence of the current student activist movement. This is the year when SLATE was organized on the Berkeley campus and when the first student "demands" were issued.

As the old era drew to its close, and as American educators became more aware that the most important objectives of undergraduate education were not being attained, a nationwide movement to reform the undergraduate curriculum came into existence. Almost every campus in the United States, in one way or another, seems to have been influenced by these efforts. The past decade has seen great ferment in curriculum planning and curriculum revision. Education at Berkeley (Muscatine, 1966), the report of the Select Committee on Education of the Academic Senate on the Berkeley campus, thus prefaces its recommendations for change: "We are far from alone in our self-examination. Nearly every major college in the country has, or has had, or is planning similar studies by similar committees. We sense that we are part of a great national--and international--Development, the response to an historical crisis in higher education (:3)" (pp. 47-52).

Behind this gigantic reform movement has lain a universally accepted assumption: The right curriculum can make a difference. An undergraduate college exists for the sake of its educational programs. Thus, the president of Parkinson College, addressing a curriculum committee on his campus, pointed out that the curriculum is not simply one segment of a college's life, but its very center:

As I have pondered the perplexities of this college, it has seemed to be that the undergraduate curriculum is the key to solving the entire range of problems. It is the curriculum which costs the most. It is the

> curriculum which sets the intellectual tone of the campus. It is the curriculum which demands the most from faculty. And it is the curriculum through which the college best can achieve its purposes (Mayhew, 1965: 103).

As the preceding quotations show, the current changes have emerged from a widespread conviction that on almost every college and university campus many traditional approaches have failed to change some feature of the standard curriculum structural pattern in American higher education. Several educators have suggested that not much has been done to rectify administrative responses to the demand for relevancy. Axelrod et al. (1969) wrote:

> In spite of the jolt that institutions have received in the last few years, not enough effort has been made to illuminate the underlying causes of student protest. Even less attempt has been made to modify substantially the relevant educational arrangements. Until this happens, one may safely predict continued clashes--or as an unlikely alternative, a return to apathy (p. 26).
>
> . . . .
>
> As educators we must aim at helping each student to develop, to the highest degree possible, a rich and varied impulse life as well as a repertory of intellectual skills and abilities. Certain qualities of intellect, character, and feeling distinguish the educated person. His conscience is refined and enlightened. The process by which he judges events and manages actions is strong and flexible. He is adaptively responsive to the myriad of stimuli without and in close touch with the deeper urges and emotions within. He has freedom of imagination and an enduring capacity to be fully alive. When these kinds of developments occur in students, education is taking place; and faculty members may enjoy a sense of contentment with their work (p. 124).
>
> . . . .
>
> Above all, higher education needs to know how to make educational use of student dissent. At present, emphasis is placed on ways of achieving political accommodation; in the long run it will be more important to learn how to tune dissent into a genuine educational experience (p. 200).

Dunham (1971) also indicated that change has been long overdue.

> Thus it is that about the only element of choice open to today's student at most colleges and universities is essentially the same as that which today's professors found as an undergraduate five, ten, twenty or thirty years ago. . . (p. 5).
>
> As someone once remarked, the military is always preparing for the last war, so too the curriculum seems to be always preparing for the "then generation", rather than the "now generation" (p. 6).

Many more citations could be mentioned, but this would only be a meaningless reiteration of the obvious fact that the current demand for relevancy has historical roots, but has recently been pressed with a directness that makes temporization or evasion unsuccessful. What has been the response to the demand for relevancy?

Responses to the Demand for Relevancy

On any issue there will be those who support a proposed response to the issue, those who oppose this response, and those taking still other positions. Such is true of the issue of relevancy. There are those educators who feel we haven't responded enough to the demand for relevancy, others who feel that the demand for relevancy is itself so "irrelevant" it should not even be considered, and those with various intermediate positions. Apple (1971) noted that "It would be a mistake to consider those who have sounded the call for a relevant education as one body. They are separated by their espousal of different positions and different senses of ought" (p. 504). It is the present writer's

belief, after reviewing many statements on the topic, that educators who have expressed themselves on the topic can be divided into three general categories:

1. Educators who question the search for relevancy. Some educators doubt that any major change is necessary, and suspect that the "search for relevancy" may lead to a dilution of learning. For example, Nisbet (1971) stated:

> American universities should stop trying to be so relevant and get back to the old ivory tower business of teaching and research in the learned disciplines if they want to survive . . . the academic community "to our shame" broke the traditional social contract between the university and society which gave professors the pleasure of seeking knowledge for its own sake and teaching this to students (p. 3).

In a trenchant statement, Shirk (1972) attacked the entire concept of relevancy:

> A third reason for the revolt against excellence arises out of a confusion as silly as it is tragic. There is a much-admired, yet little-analyzed, prescription that education should be relevant. Now who would not agree that education should be relevant? The question is, relevant to what? Relevance is a term needing a reference to be meaningful. So to say that today's education does not meet this standard and is "irrelevant" must refer to some goal students have covertly in mind which either certain subject matter or certain teaching methods do not serve. The writer casts about to make some sense of this complaint. A liberal arts curriculum gives much opportunity for choice of materials and courses which will serve a student's particular professional interests. A music major need not study statistics, nor need an economist study Greek unless he has an interest in the economic structure of Greece. Surely, this criticism must mean something more; but it would be strange if it meant that some particular branch of learning is irrelevant in itself, since each and any branch of learning always is relevant to certain kinds of inquiry. Each discipline attempts to pursue just certain questions, and each subject matter is relevant to those who ask those questions. . . (pp. 22-23).

These two quotations are a sample of the thinking of a considerable number of scholars who believe that the concept of relevancy itself is vague and lacking in meaning, that for the most part the curriculum is already adequately relevant, and that the pursuit of the "Holy Grail" of relevancy will divert higher education from its proper task.[1]

2. Educators who are sympathetic but uncertain. A second group of scholars is concerned over the issue of relevancy, but uncertain about the direction in which to proceed. Smith (1970) noted the difficulties in determining just what *is* relevant:

> Knowing whether or not education is relevant to society is difficult to determine unless you are very specific in answering the question, "Relevant to what?" For example, not so many years ago we heard jokes about university research projects that were delving into the sex lives of certain insects. Irrelevant? That knowledge had no value then, but today tremendous agricultural problems are solved by inhibiting or controlling the reproductive cycles of marauding insects.
>
> Those who cry "Irrelevant!" would have us design superficially relevant curricula that should be outmoded in a very short time. . . . Until we develop the ability to read the future accurately and to understand perfectly the interests, talents, and aptitudes of every student, there never will be a totally relevant education. But elusive as this objective may be, we must still pursue it (p. 3).

Mayhew (1970) reported that students are equally unclear in their desires:

---

[1]To avoid the monotonous stringing together of quotations, only one or two representative quotations will be reproduced here, and additional quotations representative of the same central position are given in Appendix A. On the point above, see statements of Henry (1969) and Barzum (1968) in Appendix A.

> Twenty-two congressmen, in search of various reasons for troubled campuses, discovered that students were bothered but not about academic matters. . . . Students mentioned relevance but not what they thought was irrelevance (p. 31).
>
> Colleges and universities, however, would be mistaken to assume from this evidence that all is right with the curriculum (p. 32).

Thus these and many other scholars are very much interested in the idea of relevancy, but are not inclined to rush into wholesale curriculum revisions.

3. <u>Educators who support the search for relevancy</u>. A third group of educators makes an unequivocal call for an uncompromising response to the demand for relevancy. Pace (1966) sounded the call to action:

> Knowledge . . . must be related to social and personal problems and the curriculum must include secular as well as clerical organizations of knowledge. Otherwise, education becomes totally irrelevant to life and often leads to anti-intellectualism (pp. 41-42).

From this and many similar statements,[2] it is clear that there is no consensus among educators about relevancy, but that there is a very powerful drive, apparently enlisting a majority of the articulate educators, who feel educational change in the direction of relevancy is overdue. The pressure for such change comes not only from educators but from other sources as well.

---

[2]See quotations of McGrath (1972), Hartnet (1972), Henry (1969), Bell (1966), Apple (1971), and West (1969) in Appendix A.

Pressure Groups for Educational Change

The administrators of any college or university would like to operate without any pressure groups on the campus except those that are supportive of administrative goals and programs. In many addressed by college presidents, one hears the president state: "Here we are free to make our own decisions. Here we as an administration, faculty, and student body act in the best interest of all concerned."[3] But in reality, this is not the case. To deny the existence of pressure groups is to be unaware of the total college picture; but to identify those pressure groups that are truly effective and not simply noisy is not an easy task. Also, within a given society the factors that exert any influence on curriculum change or on curriculum stability are so numerous that one could not hope to identify them all.

As pressure groups plan a large part in initiating and resisting change, they also play a part in determining what changes will take place, how quickly, and how long the changes will endure. For these reasons, it is important to consider the role of pressure groups. Government, business, the surrounding community, alumni, parents, and many other groups and agencies can operate as pressure groups at a given moment. Data on pressure groups operating in the drive for relevancy are presented in Chapters IV and V.

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[3]A paraphrase of some dozens of presidential addresses the writer has been privileged to hear.

Based on the assumption that a response toward relevancy is beneficial, curriculum plans and their evaluations are investigated next.

Analyses and Evaluations of Curriculum Plans in Operation

In attempting to analyze the existing curriculum plans, one may search the literature for relevant changes initiated by students themselves, by professors, by college administrators, and by external pressure groups. However, the literature does not usually identify the initiator of the change for relevancy *per se*. Instead, the writings show the change toward relevance existing under the following four categories: (1) student-, faculty-, or administration-initiated changes toward relevancy within the existing structure; (2) modification of the existing sturcture through interdisciplinary programs; (3) abolition of the traditional structure and its replacement by an experimental structural model; and (4) miscellaneous efforts to attain greater relevance.

Within the university or college structure one may find a number of plans in operation in response to the demand for relevancy. These will be listed below and examples of each one will be given, beginning with the simplest, which is a case history of an individual student changing his own goals in a search for relevancy, and progressing to the most

complex changes, involving the entire college or university structure.

1. Student-, faculty-, administration-initiated change within the present structure. In the school year 1963-64, a graduate student decided to become a teacher at the college level. Inquiries made to the Director of Curriculum at the university the student attended disclosed no existing programs were designed to prepare the student for teaching at the college level. The student requested and obtained permission to seek out a college that would allow one of its professors to guide him in his preparation for college-level teaching. As a result of the student's innovation in changing his program, his alma mater has designed a complete program to prepare teachers to teach at the college level. The degree to which the student's action stimulated a curricular change would be difficult to determine, since other factors were also operating at the same time. For example, at the same time community colleges were increasing in number and many new programs were being inaugurated.

A second example, consisting of a more complex type of student-initiated change involving a group of students, was described by Schwebel (1968):

> Seeking to enrich their educational experiences, students often have attempted--occasionally with the support of faculty and administration--to operate within the present framework of an institution to bring about changes they deem desirable. Their efforts have

assumed various forms, including seminars and conferences on higher education, curriculum and course studies and reviews, curriculum committees, programs to supplement the curriculum, and student-initiated courses (p. 32).

. . . .

Students sometimes perceive the faculty and administration as being antagonistic toward or uninterested in student participation in curriculum planning and reform. At several schools such perceptions were so compelling that students set up committees independent of the academic structure, to review and criticize the curriculum. Comprehensive curriculum and course reviews of this nature were carried out at the University of Pennsylvania and Maryville College of the Sacred Heart. . . . Students in recent years have been learning how to exploit better the prevailing college structure and available resources to enrich their curriculum. The importation to campus, by student groups and governments, of interesting lecturers and visiting fellows is a notable method (p. 36).

In many schools channels have been opened and utilized by students to initiate courses not offered by their institution. It is generally agreed by members of the academic community that some of these courses fill genuine gaps in the curriculum. However, some faculty administrative people argue that other student-initiated courses, especially those dealing with drugs and sex, are nothing more than "dormitory discussion topics." But students disagree, claiming these topics to be relevant to their lives. Students attempt to get courses that speak to their interests included in the school's curriculum. However, if this is impossible, the courses are offered independently, with the hope that through exposure their merits will be weighed and that they eventually will be integrated into the regular program.

Undergraduates at Cornell University, which has no religion department, arranged to offer seminars on "The Death of God Theology" . . . (p. 37).

. . . .

Last year I was involved in the newest, most radical, and perhaps most unusual form of student participation in the academic community. Along with five others --two from Antioch, one from Goddard, one from San Francisco State College, one from the University of California at Berkeley, and a Stony-Brook drop-out--I served as a "student-consultant" on the planning committee of the State University of New York's new experimental college in Nassau. This concept of student involvement developed from an address delivered in February, 1967, by Samuel

> Gould, Chancellor of the State University, in which he said henceforth "the State University of New York will, as a matter of policy, seek to involve students in the planning and development of each new college." He added that he had been "convinced that students are able not only to identify faults in the educational system but also to spell out practical steps to reform" (p. 42).

Yatvin (1971) provided a representative example of the extensive literature describing faculty-initiated changes toward relevance. He mentioned a faculty-initiated change in which he became aware of the necessity to consult with his students to get their opinion of whether or not their mutual learning goal was the same. Without this feedback loop, Yatvin found he was not achieving his goal, nor was he achieving their goal. In describing his experiences, he wrote:

> . . . I wrote new units, selected new materials, and built an element of choice into my reading lists. I also planned a more informal classroom atmosphere, with student-led small group discussions and no formal tests. Whatever I had to know to grade students I would find out from their writing and from listening to them. Now, nine months later I sit among the ashes of my course and my ideals, wondering what went wrong. How did hard work and careful planning lead to disaster? We have resisted and ignored change too long; our feeble efforts to catch up now are worthy of the scorn they receive. . . . We continue to teach things because we've always taught them without looking into the questions of why they may be valuable or what we hope our students will gain from exposure to them. We still talk about getting into a good college as if it were important and about handing down our culture as if our students were proud to receive it.
>
> As far as possible within this curricular framework, I will try to choose materials that have ready appeal for my students (although I have been notoriously unsuccessful at predicting appeal in the past). For help in this area I will consider suggestions made by students this year, and I will work with an elected advisory group of students. Such a group has existed this year,

but its efforts were devoted too often to evaluation after work had been covered, . . .

I will continue the practice of offering required, alternate, and optional readings. If I were an inexperienced teacher, however, I would avoid committing myself to such an overwhelming task.

In regard to classroom practices, I would make some changes while continuing many of the procedures I've been using. I will continue to have no tests, because they put too much emphasis on my version of the "right" answer, even though I try to avoid it. Their existence makes students concentrate on the wrong aspects of materials and work for the wrong reasons. However, I will increase the number of short factual quizzes given on the day a reading is to be completed. Human nature being what it is, a little extrinsic motivation is needed to persuade students to do their reading carefully and on time.

. . . It is important that students know why they are being asked to learn something and ideally if they agree that it is a good thing to learn. Perhaps in the practice of presenting a rationale, I will sometimes discover that my assignments aren't as important as they seemed, and I can omit them.

Finally, I shall continue student evaluation of the course, but I will change the emphasis and the methods used this year . . . build evaluation into each unit, then to ask students to assess the materials and methods on the basis of whether or not they functioned effectively to help them attain the stated objectives. . . . In the end, when the teacher faces students instead of a typewriter, he realizes that their most powerfully felt objectives must be met not instead of his, but along with them (pp. 1084-85).[4]

2. Interdisciplinary programs searching for relevance. One possible approach to the search for relevance involves an interdisciplinary effort to bring several fields of study to bear upon a common topic or problem.

Morgan described a successful interdisciplinary program already under way at Hiram College:

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[4]See Newsweek article (1972) quoted in Appendix A for another example of faculty-initiated change.

In the fall of 1969, after two years of intensive discussion and planning, Hiram College launched a new integrated curriculum that emphasizes interdisciplinary studies and increased student freedom and responsibility.

Our experience at Hiram is valuable in two ways. First, I believe that the Hiram curriculum provides a specific example of a successful implementation of several goals that are now coming into acceptance in higher education. Therefore, a description and critical evaluation of the curriculum should be of interest. Second, our experience should provide encouragement to educators who hope to make significant academic changes at their colleges. The Hiram program provides evidence that substantial innovations, more than just tinkering or gimmicks, can take place at typical (that is, moderately selective, nonexperimental) colleges that have fairly traditional faculties and student bodies. Furthermore, our experience indicates that such changes can have a generally positive impact on student achievement, attitudes and satisfaction, and can be operated with little additional staff or cost. Despite the fact that we face the enrollment and financial problems of most small private colleges, we have this year a balanced budget and the largest freshman class in our history.

The Hiram program has several major objectives. First, we encourage students, starting in the freshman year, to take on more responsibility for planning and conducting their own education. To implement this goal, we have greatly reduced the number of graduation requirements and provided the opportunity for individualized major areas of concentration. Although students have more freedom of choice than is typical at most colleges, freshmen are supported by close relationships with faculty and a strong advisory system that is built into the course structure. Second, we try to make education integrated and holistic by developing many topical and interdisciplinary courses and by encouraging cross-disciplinary majors. The college graduation requirements are all interdisciplinary in nature. Third, the entire college emphasizes effective written communication and open, articulate discussion. Fourth, we place the rational discussion of contemporary society (its heritage, problems, and future) at the thematic center of the curriculum. Fifth, the curriculum encourages faculty to use new content and new approaches to teaching, to respond to students more individually, and to try cooperative teaching efforts. Finally, the focus of the Hiram curriculum is on the freshman year because of its importance in the development of student attitudes toward education and because it was previously the weakest part of our (and most) college programs.

> We are thoroughly evaluating the curriculum and its effectiveness. As part of this evaluation, we have studied the impact of the new curriculum on the general satisfaction, achievement, and attitudes of students. We are still collecting data, but the preliminary results are encouraging.
>
> Although I personally feel that the positive findings were largely due to the new curriculum other factors may have influenced the results. For example, it is well established that most innovations work at first.
>
> We hoped that the relevance of the topics and the rich mixture of visiting speakers, films, and the like would make up for the large size and relative passivity inherent in the Twentieth Century course.
>
> We have found that it takes a tremendous amount of energy to get a major change started and to sustain it. There is always the possibility of slipping back into traditional ways, but we are working hard toward effective, comprehensive innovation (Smith, 1971:70-77).

Interdisciplinary programs are one of the many possible approaches to relevancy, within the framework of modification of the existing structure. Other approaches include efforts to educate students in more effective use of the thinking process, and efforts to expand the student's awareness of how his actions are meaningful to his society.[5]

3. New structural models. Among the various proposed new models for higher education, Axelrod et al. (1969) suggested the cluster college concept.

> . . . A plan for a cluster college to be established on the campus of an urban college or university, College M is a three-year, year-round, degree program emphasizing a certain type of faculty-student relationship but operating at about the student-faculty ratio now found in, say, the California state colleges. . . . The curriculum at College M is based on the motto:

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[5]For further comments on the interdisciplinary approach, see statements of Dunham (1971) and McGrath (1972) in Appendix A.

> "Freedom to Teach and Freedom to Learn." College M . . . appealing to those high school graduates who would like to (a) get their undergraduate degree after three full years of study (twelve quarters), (b) take more responsibility for their own education than is possible in standard programs, (c) work in an urban-oriented and intercultural curriculum, and (d) delay professional training or intensive specialization (such as is now normally available during the undergraduate years) until they have completed their B.A. degree. . . .
>
> . . . The services of faculty members are reserved for learning situations that require human relationship as opposed to one-human media such as the printing press, TV . . . or the computer (pp. 125-134).

A quite different structural reorganization is the proposed "open university," sometimes referred to as the "free university." The so-called "free university" was described by Schwebel (1968):

> . . . Free universities have been created at numerous spots across the nation, including Dartmouth; University of California at Berkeley and at Davis; Princeton; Stanford; University of North Carolina; University of Pennsylvania and surrounding schools; within the New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Detroit areas; . . . Another is a joint effort combining students from Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke, and the University of Massachusetts. Though all these efforts differ from one another in some ways, most are similar in at least a few respects: the types of subject matter, the atmosphere desired within the classroom and the various functional aspects of the classroom setting.
>
> Most free universities subscribe to the policy approximating that of the Free University of Pennsylvania, that "any subject matter is considered valid and will be offered if an instructor wants to teach it and there are students who wish to take it" (p. 39).[6]

Exactly how the open university differs from the experimental college is not clear, for they seem to have much

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[6] For additional statements on the open university, see statements of Nelso (1972) and Baskin (1969) in Appendix A.

in common. Both are sharp departures from tradition, and both give students a major role in determining the content and direction of their education. Schwebel and Smith described the experimental college concept, as exemplified by San Francisco State College. Schwebel (1968) related:

> Perhaps the best known student venture in academic reform is the Experimental College at San Francisco State. Initiated by students and offering the opportunity to earn regular academic credit, this institution is unique. Students may design courses, decide how they will be taught, choose an enrollment limit and select their own texts at the Experimental College.
>
> In its first year of existence (1965-1966) about 350 students attended seminars. . . . In the fall of 1966 some 650 students enrolled. . . (p. 41).

Smith (1968) expanded upon the experimental college concept by stating:

> In the fall of 1965, a number of administrative officers, interested faculty members, and several "combination" faculty-administrators at San Francisco State College gathered in a series of meetings on late Wednesday afternoons. An unofficial group with no authority whatsoever on the campus, we simply called ourselves THE GROUP . . . when we learned that another largely spontaneous group was developing within the student body itself. Five or six of these young people, some of them graduate students, some of them undergraduates, were invited to join The Group the following week. [The students] felt much of the curriculum and other aspects of the teaching and learning process at the college were irrelevant to the student of today.
>
> . . . The Group responded sympathetically, but we did have a lot of questions about how comments on relevance, no matter how articulately presented, could be translated into a program in a well-established institution with its own traditions of discipline and orderly curriculum process.
>
> [The students wondered] if they had been adequately educated in college to do what they thought was necessary to do as members of a larger community. This is the kind of relevance they were speaking of in the meeting of The Group. This track was developed into what on

our campus is called the Community Involvement Program. . . .

The second track that was developed by the students who met with us was the now widely known Experimental College, which turned out to have both formal and informal curricular aspects. . . .

The curriculum offers courses such as these to the student who wishes to compensate for his perceived need for curricular and instructional relevance: God in a Mid-Century Milieu, . . . Exploring New Forms of Sexual Relationships, . . . A Search for Methods of Survival in the 20th Century--to name but a few. I do not think I need to point out that this outburst of curriculum, cocurriculum, quasicurriculum, pseudocurriculum, and new curriculum--born of a demand for relevance--was revolutionary.

. . . The third program has just developed in the past year, a program in Black Studies.

. . . But we soon found, in this age of relevance, that traditional practice itself can be considered the most irrelevant of all irrelevancies and that a revolution of all process, from curricular development to student discipline, was demanded. And we further found that the methods of demand themselves were revolutionary.

I believe I could say that we have responded in most instances well. Nevertheless I must report that many of my colleagues feel we may be opening ourselves to chaos, true chaotic anarchism, through our kinds of response to demands for relevance. Such demands challenge every aspect of the system--administrative processes, instructional practice, and curricular structure. Such demands are delivered with an immediacy and urgency about them that offends our sense of history and our commitment to thoughtful and disciplined change. Moreover, when the demands are presented through revolutionary tactics and strategies, they produce reverberations throughout the entire college and frequently beyond. The tactics and rhetoric of controntation, mass pressure, intimidation, and occasionally violence are not only relatively new to the American collegiate scene but offensive to much of our traditions and beliefs. They present contingencies that most of us are ill equipped to handle. It is not an easy experience to live through. We are prepared for dialogue--for reasoning through issues until mutually acceptable solutions are reached--but we are not prepared for the silent, stubborn, and accusing eyes of confrontation. It is a paralyzing experience. Yet, clearly, the mere application of administrative fiat, the clamp-down that is so often asked for these days, is not appropriate or particularly effective. What is

> needed (it is easy to say but needs to be constantly repeated) is the sharing of responsibility in judgment making among all the elements of the college community (pp. 214-219).

4. Miscellaneous proposals and programs. A number of other suggestions for the attainment of relevancy do not fit into any of the foregoing categories. The goal of developing in the student a greater awareness of his total role in society was mentioned by Fitzgerald and Marker (1967) as they reported an attempt to attain a change toward relevancy by establishing a more personal relationship between the student and his instructor at the college level through the mechanism of the tutorial system:

> . . . Chabot is a community college in Mayward, California. . . . The Chabot Tutorial Program abandons conventional courses in its curriculum. When it began in the winter quarter, 1967, 125 students were enrolled in the program for five quarters, and five faculty members from five different areas of study devoted full time to it. Each instructor in the Tutorial Program is responsible for "tutoring" the texts in all five areas; and he assumes certain major responsibilities for instruction in his own particular area. Students are rotated to a new tutor each quarter so that all students will study under each of the five faculty members. Students working under a given tutor look upon him as their "personal guide, friend, mentor and advisor in the world of learning." Instructors, for their part, "endeavor to establish a close, personal instructional relationship with their own tutorial students and be available for consultation to members of the entire group (pp. 7-8).

Axelrod et al. (1969) suggested that the student be brought to an awareness of his total role in society through a greater degree of community study and participation.

> . . . We recommend a plan that would make it possible for the intellectual activities of students really to

contribute something to the community in which they live. . . . (p. 160).

Individuals could have an experience in which their best intellectual endeavor becomes a part of a group enterprise, its social meaning and relevance can become apparent to them (p. 161).

. . . .

[Plan X] required for space nothing more than comfortable meeting places on campus; . . . (p. 188).

The wall between the curriculum and the world outside is, however, slowly being broken down. There are now hundreds of campuses which have community involvement programs in one form or another. As early as 1964, Randolph (1964) reported that tutorial projects--following the moto "Each one Teach one'--involved more than 4,000 college students described specific programs that had started on a dozen urban campuses. Pitkin and Beecher, in their chapter in the book of essays on newer developments edited by Baskin (1965) emphasize how the community can be used by the college as a resource for learning. Hesburgh (1965), president of Notre Dame University, declared his strong belief that college and university faculties "must accept as part of the whole educational system this experience of service," and there has been evidence to indicate that an ethic of social service has been assuming more moment in the lives of students (Freedman, 1966) (p. 67).

In the new curriculum models, however, community involvement is not a part of the extracurriculum; it has been worked into the very fabric of course assignments. In urban institutions, the city itself is used in a systematic way as an educational laboratory. A relationship between two major educational means--books and direct experiences in the city--is being worked out so that each can enrich the other (p. 68).

In an ideal undergraduate curriculum, the great issues that concern us all, but which academic men rarely let creep into their courses, will become the major focus. Such a curriculum would emphasize the human problems that exist in the community where the young people live, and students would not be discouraged from going off-campus to look into such problems, or even to engage in actions affecting them. . . .

(Bidwell, 1962:110) showed that 1960 senior's knowledge "of foreign countries and his understanding of the basic principles and the current problems of American foreign policy are inadequate for the performance of his responsibilities, either as a plain citizen or as a community leader". . . (p. 69).

. . . .

> . . . This includes not only study abroad but also community involvement projects in which students work in another American subculture (p. 71).

Finally, the problem of evaluation has received some attention from educators seeking to assess the consequences of the search for relevancy. Hartnett (1972) spoke of the difficulties of evaluating nontraditional programs:

> The evaluation of traditional educational programs and students in them has for years been giving educators headaches. Non-traditional programs have all of the problems of evaluation in the more typical setting, plus a whole set of difficulties all their own. . . . While the usual goals of evaluation in education --improvement of the educational program, clarification of the purposes of the curriculum--apply, one other purpose seems to loom extremely important in the evaluation of non-traditional programs--namely, establishing credibility.
>
> Essentially, there are two problems of evaluation here. The first has to do with the assessment of individual student growth and development (the readiness of individual students to receive the degree, to proceed to more advanced courses or reading lists, and the like). The second problem of evaluation has to do with the quality and effectiveness of the non-traditional program (whether students' growth and competence at the time of graduation is comparable to that of students who graduate from more traditional institutions);. . . Essentially, this greater flexibility would be an expression of awareness that learning can and does take place in different ways for different people and that to continue to provide only one form of instruction and recognition is to be wasteful of the country's richest resources (pp. 31-32, 37).

Homes (1970) summarized the search for relevancy as described in the literature:

> Experimentation with paracurriculum will not be without its problems. While some of these activities will help to break down certain barriers between town and gown, others may sow suspicions and generate hostility, which presents obvious public relations problems for the college. Some projects will be rewarding to students while others may be depressing and discouraging. But the

> paracurriculum will have the long-run effect of making study courses more relevant, building bridges of correlation between them, providing avenues of "now response" to the world that is, and in that way conferring meaning on both the individual and the community (p. 161).

The present writer is compelled to add that the literature on relevancy discloses considerable confusion about the definition of relevancy, a notable lack of consensus about the desirability of the search for relevance, a large measure of support--possibly majority support--for the idea of relevancy, and a wide variety of proposals and programs seeking to achieve a higher measure of relevance. Yet, like Stephen Leacock's famous horseman, the search for relevancy has galloped off in all directions. It would appear that, as "relevancy" became an "in" concept, virtually every educator felt a need to say something on the subject. The result has been a veritable flood of commentary that is, on the whole, discursive, contemplative, and analytical rather than systematic and synthetic. Thus, one of the purposes of this study is to determine what educators have actually been _doing_ under the banner of relevancy.

CHAPTER III

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE STUDY

In preceding chapters the need for the study was outlined and the literature related to relevancy was reviewed. This chapter contains a discussion of the design of the current study, the college population from which the data were gathered, the methodology used, and the organization of the collected data.

Population of the Study

The college population for the study consisted of the following types of institutions: (1) public two-year community colleges; (2) private two-year community colleges; (3) a long-established four-year public university with a residential student body; (4) a relatively new four-year public university with commuters as well as residents; (5) a four-year, long-established private liberal arts college; (6) a four-year, large, private and urban university with a commuter student body; and (7) a four-year, public urban university with a commuter student body. All Michigan colleges and universities used in the study were included in the above categories.

The "Division of Social Sciences" was chosen as the area in which to search for responses toward relevancy in a college or university setting because it appeared likely that an awareness of a need for change toward relevancy would more likely occur first in disciplines dealing with the social sciences. A second reason is that those experts in the field of social science whom the writer consulted believed the study would be more appropriately completed in this area. A third reason for limiting the study to the field of social science is that this was the writer's major field of study.

Judgment by Presidents

For purposes of the study, it is assumed that the presidents questioned were able to relate accurately the disposition of curriculum responses toward relevancy within their own institutions. Their judgment was involved to this extent.

A judgment, as defined by Shelly and Bryan (1964) "refers to any verbal reaction (or its equivalent) that is the direct product of the individual's processing his sensory inputs in combination with his memories of stored experiences" (p. 7). The respondents in this study, because of their unique positions as the ones in charge of the total institutional structure, should be the most appropriately equipped individuals, with the necessary "stored experiences,"

to make such a judgment. Good, Barr, and Scates (1936) commented on judgment in educational research:

> For those who feel that all is lost whenever a research worker allows judgment to enter his data, it should be pointed out that social scientists are confronted with problems which differ fundamentally from those of the physical scientist, and they must utilize procedures which are appropriate to their problems (p. 410).

Since it was essential to employ the judgment of someone at each college or university, and it seemed likely that the president would be most fully aware of the total program of the institution, and furthermore that he is accustomed to inquire of subordinates when he lacks detailed information, it was concluded that the president would be the person best qualified to provide the desired facts and judgments.

Questionnaire Method

After identifying the population for the study and consulting with professors in the area of social science and divisions therein, the questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate instrument to use in collecting the necessary data. The questionnaire procedure was chosen rather than the interview approach because, according to Moser (1968), the questionnaire method is superior when:

> 1. . . . Questions [demand] a considered rather than an immediate answer. In particular, if the answer requires--or would be more accurate as a result of--consultation of documents, a questionnaire filled in by the respondent in his own time is preferable (p. 177).

2. . . . the population to be covered [is] so widely spread, and the time or funds available so limited, that the mail questionnaire is the only feasible approach.
3. . . . the questions to be asked were simple and the respondents an educated group. . . . [In this case the questionnaire was directed toward the college or university president and his advisory staff.]
4. The mail questionnaire does . . . avoid the problems associated with the use of interviews. . . . There are several sources of interview errors which may seriously undermine the reliability and validity of survey results. . . (p. 176).

Mawdsley (1968) noted: ". . . The interview technique actually forces the interviewee to concentrate on the question at hand, rather than allowing him to glance ahead. . . " (p. 77). On the other hand, in this study the questions were chosen to present a total picture. It was felt a more thorough response could be given if the subjects were able to read all of the questions before responding.

While observing the many advantages of the questionnaire techniques, it is quite often possible to overlook the fact that the method also has certain hazards. The user needs to be aware of these weaknesses, especially the potential problems inherent in the word usage itself. Moser (1968:177), Parten (1950:383), and Hillway (1969:33) recommended posing the questions in such clear language that they cannot be misunderstood, and avoiding unusual words. In an effort to eliminate pitfalls of ambiguity or misunderstanding, a pilot study was conducted with three administrators, using the questions and revised questions; word changes and interpretations were requested.

An additional drawback of the questionnaire may be as Hillway (1969) indicated: "Even when questionnaires go to a representative sample of respondents, those actually completed and returned may come from an unrepresentative sample of the population" (p. 34). This did not become a problem in the present study, since a 100 percent response was obtained.

The Instrument

The instrument utilized in the study was constructed by the writer, with the assistance of a consultant in the Office of Research Consultation, College of Education, Michigan State University and the Department chairmen of Social Science, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Michigan State University. Institutional anonymity was assured, because it was believed the respondents would be more cooperative in giving their true feelings about existent conditions at their colleges or universities if their responses were anonymous. The instrument is reproduced in full in Appendix B of this study.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The initial section, which is intended to gather factual information concerning what was actually taking place, consists of open-ended questions, such as: How has your institution responded to the demand for relevance?

The second section of the instrument was sent one year later to assure that the new programs indicated in the

first response had been in operation at least one semester. This section is an evaluation, in the administrator's opinion, of the success of the programs he had indicated in the first section. Many administrators indicated programs already in existence and evaluated the programs' success, in which case the second set of questions was not sent. The questions included an opinion of the degree of success and the reactions of the groups most directly involved--the administration, the faculty, and the students.

Trial Questionnaires

Hillway (1969) suggested, "To determine whether a questionnaire has been properly constructed, the scholar may give it a test run by administering it orally to several respondents" (p. 35). The writer orally questioned one college president, one professor of social science, and one assistant consultant in the Office of Research Consultation, and mailed seven trial questionnaires to presidents of colleges or universities representative of the types to be surveyed in this study. Each respondent was asked to criticize the questionnaire constructively. Subsequently, the final questionnaire incorporated all of the positive suggestions made by the respondents.

Collection of Data

The questionnaire was mailed in October, so the respondents would already have completed the multitudinous

duties that take first priority at the beginning of the fall semester. Also, the length of time of the study was long enough to assure a greater percentage of respondents' returns. No deadline was given for the completion of the questionnaire, to allow the respondent time to mull over his answers to the questionnaire and possibly to seek other information from his advisory staff. All of the questionnaires were returned.

Approximately one year following the first questionnaire, a second questionnaire was mailed to those respondents who in their original responses had not given an evaluation of their previously initiated programs or had indicated future programs responding toward relevancy.

In both sections of the mailed questionnaires a cover sheet explained the purpose of the study and requested any additional information the respondent felt would be beneficial to the study, thus eliminating a "one-way street" approach. In addition, each respondent was assured his identity would not be revealed; a more personal approach would serve as a handicap rather than an asset.

Presentation of Data

Data from open-ended questionnaires do not readily lend themselves to quantification or tabular presentation. Thus in Chapter IV the responses are presented, either in the exact words of the respondents or in a slight paraphrase

thereof, in order of their frequency. An attempt is made to categorize the responses, wherever possible.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Through an open-ended questionnaire, responses were obtained from the presidents of twenty-nine Michigan colleges and universities. Their responses are classified under five headings: (1) the definition of relevance as perceived by the respondent to the questionnaire, (2) identification of the group or groups that initiated the pressure for change toward relevance, (3) identification of the group or groups that offered primary sources of resistance to the change toward relevance, (4) identification of the tactics used by the initiators of the change toward relevance in the social science areas, and (5) the respondent's appraisal of the change toward relevance.

The responses, whether in the exact words of the respondents or in a slight paraphrase thereof, are listed according to declining frequency, with the number of responses given at the left. The following responses are a presentation of the raw data; as indicated previously, an analysis of responses is given in Chapter V.

Definition of Relevance

"Relevance is . . ."

(6) provision of an educational experience which prepares the individual student for life including a job, meeting the continual changing society, current social problems and issues, and personal problems--time dimension
(3) that which is meaningful--between what the students study and how they live
(2) a relationship to societal problems
(2) a college or university experience of a student's relationship to his total experience
(2) pertinent issues of the times
(1) that which in some way relates specifically to economics, moral and/or social issues and problems of the day
(1) seeking solutions to existing problems
(1) a sign of frustration bottled up inside our society, but not necessarily a real demand for a change in the basic course of the institutions
(1) a characteristic of any program which gives promise of positively improving the quality of life for both the individual and his society
(1) problems and concerns similar to the past but raised again in the light of new circumstances
(1) short run focuses on current social problems and issues; long run focuses upon the individual and their outlooks about themselves and their society
(1) bridging the gap between ideal and real and existing and operative
(1) undefinable
(1) calling for direct experience rather than books or lectures
(1) a course for majors as well as outsiders
(1) to aid in solutions to current problems as well as train in disciplines
(1) related to the quality of life
(1) a fad
(1) the obviousness of the immediate application of any project
(1) suitable for and meaningful to all groups, circumstances and situations
(1) operationally defined as consisting of whatever the educator using the term conceives it to be

Identification of the Pressure Group or Groups Responding Toward Relevancy

"The demand toward relevancy came from . . ."

(14) the students
(13) the faculty
(8) the administration
(8) an unawareness of any pressure group or groups which make a driving force on the department
(4) the demands and needs of the vast community the institution serves
(3) minority groups
(2) driving forces within, since the establishment of the institution
(1) registration and what the students signed up for
(1) pressures from different directions with no one pressure being the dominant one
(1) political demands
(1) all segments of the institutional community
(1) the need to justify federal government grants

Identification of the Pressure Group or Groups Resisting Responses Toward Relevancy

"The resistance toward relevancy came from . . ."

(11) nothing that we are conscious of
(8) faculty that are traditionally oriented
(6) fondness for tradition
(5) a concern for the budget
(4) none--the reason for being is to provide a relevant education
(2) those in charge that are ill prepared, and also the unknowledgeable public
(2) universities that accept for credit only those courses labeled transfer--by university definition
(2) alumni away from the institution
(2) lack of staff available to offer new courses
(1) students committed to the idea, but more committed to the structure involved to be graduated
(1) the inherent human fear of the unknown
(1) misunderstanding
(1) threats to stability
(1) inability to define
(1) the difficulties of making the change
(1) lack of the time to think through the entire idea
(1) need for making sure a certain request is legitimate
(1) need for making certain that other courses are not disrupted

(1) the Board of Trustees
(1) the "education world" which forces the innovator to develop a justification for such innovations which is far beyond that required in industry
(1) lack of interest by a great majority of students and faculty
(1) registration and what is signed up for

Methods Used by the Initiator in Securing Change Toward Relevance in the Social Sciences

The administrators' responses concerning their appraisal of the change toward relevance were broken down into the following categories: (A) changes in course content or emphasis, (B) changes in teaching or pedagogical methods, and (C) institutional and/or structural changes. Many of these categories overlap one another; therefore, the following categories are not mutually exclusive.

(A) Changes in course content or emphasis:

(12) introducing new courses
(8) revising existing courses
(4) placing urban emphasis on courses--societal problems, urban sociology, inner city
(3) having a program of specific speakers and special programs
(3) introducing several short courses--Tax Help, Consumer Beware, ADC Child Care, etc.
(2) maintaining theory and introducing practical application in class
(1) constantly adapting existing courses to contemporary problems
(1) focusing on the life of a particular person as opposed to man in general
(1) using open labs
(1) using learning packages
(1) conducting seminars on current issues
(1) phasing out irrelevant courses
(1) increasing integrated courses
(1) maintaining an experimental dimension to as many of our department offerings as possible

(1) working with social service agencies
(1) introducing urban studies program
(1) granting credit for practicum experiences if properly analyzed
(1) providing work study programs
(1) changing extension of curricular experiences
(1) spending the summer traveling the United States studying small towns
(1) changing course titles; for an example, Home & Family Living is now titled Marriage & Human Sexuality--its relevancy is unquestioned
(1) experimenting with a United States history course taught by three professors; one taking the viewpoint of the British Crown, one taking the viewpoint of the Colonies and one asking questions of the other two
(1) using a course advertisement change; for an example in history, "Would You Like to Examine a Bygone Era That Has Relevance Today?"

(B) Changes in teaching or pedagogical methods:

(2) introducing new facilities for teaching
(1) diversifying the teaching-learning approach to gain relevance
(1) scheduling more informal faculty presentations using examples of everyday life
(1) training the teaching faculty--Psychology of Learning for Teachers, faculty workshops of various types, and continuous communication regarding new procedures
(1) providing instructors who are available to students--a special assignment instead of teaching a course
(1) maintaining a faculty with a personal commitment

(C) Institutional and/or structural changes:

(14) providing student parity in decision making and evaluation
(5) developing off-campus programs--field experiences, community involvement, and community outreach
(4) introducing minority group programs--involving exchange programs
(3) making it possible for each student to create with his advisor a curriculum which is uniquely suited to his needs and objectives
(3) continuously revising objectives and restating the mission as an institution of higher education
(2) continuing evaluation through the process of annual letters to all past recipients of graduate degrees, and the evaluation of students, faculty and administration currently in operation

(2) offering interim terms (three weeks in one course)
(2) increasing availability of independent studies
(1) providing for greater flexibility in scheduling
(1) introducing new degree programs
(1) instituting the REAP program (Relevance, Experimentation in Academic Programming
(1) increasing library collection and audiovisual areas
(1) maintaining standards for our traditional transfers
(1) increasing freedom of choice regarding student curriculum
(1) training programs for preparation of youth service associates and specialists--apprentices
(1) developing three inner colleges--a field semester for all the students, community service courses and part-time jobs
(1) adopting the proposal for School of Community Services and Resources--structured around the social sciences and to train for careers in government, social work, etc.--community-related careers
(1) development of "interest majors" (tailor-made programs embracing the entire four years)
(1) development of tutorial projects
(1) development of cluster college--each has a separate emphasis with particular relevance to students who can best grow academically under conditions of maximum freedom
(1) use of Project Make-It & General Academic Program to provide relevance in higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
(1) proposal for University Year for Action Program--under this program, students spend a year in community service and earn an academic year of credit
(1) introducing a School of Community Services (school of human and community development)
(1) development of one-year certification programs
(1) setting of new goals in terms of outcome rather than process
(1) setting aside such arbitrary traditions as need to be, which served to impede rather than further
(1) maintaining continuous contact with the community--high school teachers, business, industry, etc.

The Respondents' Appraisal of the Change Toward Relevance

"Our efforts to increase the relevance of our program have been . . ."

(1) Highly successful
(1) Very successful
(20) Successful

(1) Successful and unsuccessful
(1) Fairly successful
(2) Least effective and satisfying
(1) Unsuccessful
(1) Unable to answer
(1) No response

The explanations of success, when indicated, were as follows (one each):

1. Student participation in the new programs.
2. Attractive program to certain donors--fund "futuristic" activities.
3. Unable to say there was a connection between what we did and the outcome.
4. Programs that were added not a substitute for the fundamentals of a broad education.
5. The majority of our courses make application at every possible point--they are not "ivory tower" explorations of knowledge without concern for the "world of affairs."
6. There may be particulars in each program which prevent it from being totally relevant.
7. Other colleges soon felt the "pressure" to adopt some of these effective techniques.
8. All the programs have been effective to the degree anticipated and for the purposes for which they were intended.
9. Our efforts to maintain relevance.
10. We could even be more successful.
11. The continued process which becomes an everyday task for instructors to keep their material relevant.
12. Great support but limited by the budget.
13. It is as successful as can be expected.
14. Based on enrollment support and absence of criticism.
15. Best evidence is the growth of the institution while many institutions are holding their own or losing enrollment.

The explanations for lack of success in programs toward relevancy, when indicated, were as follows (one each):

1. Conservative and nonexploratory character of a great many students.
2. Misunderstanding of the term relevance to mean instant job opportunities, expecially since many of these jobs will not exist in twenty to thirty years.
3. Inappropriate to discuss failure.

4. More time (years) to obtain an accurate analysis.
5. The difficulty which we experience in defining clear "performance objectives."

Respondents' Appraisal of Reactions of Administrators, Faculty, Students, and Others to the Demand for Relevance

Administrators' reactions, as reported by respondents:

A. Supportive or cooperative:

- (5) support but limited by the budget
- (1) firm believers
- (1) most supportive
- (1) realize the importance of relevancy responses; without it the school would have lost its value to the community and the region
- (1) responded positively and affirmatively
- (1) unanimously adopted
- (1) most receptive to change
- (1) whatever makes good educational sense is supportable as long as it can demonstrate enrollment support
- (1) continued cooperation and communication results in support of those participating
- (1) must react; it would be foolhardy on our part to ignore the process

B. Resistant or indifferent:

- (1) increasing quandry followed by several attempts to increase interest
- (1) as with any change, there is a certain amount of resistance

C. (12) No reaction mentioned

Faculty reaction, as reported by respondents:

A. Supportive or cooperative:

- (2) programs were put into effect through cooperation and supported in the same manner
- (1) clearly attempt to minimize the totally irrelevant and maximize the totally relevant
- (1) the majority respond positively because they are all intimately involved
- (1) endorse the administration's belief of importance and without relevancy responses the school would have lost its value to the community and the region. The faculty also seek new avenues on their own and as a group.

(1) general procedures acceptable, although many faculty have experiences in adjusting their thinking to this approach
(1) firm believers
(1) responded positively and affirmatively
(1) must react

B. Resistant or indifferent:

(1) most conservative
(1) reaction of inertia
(1) more traditional; they are concerned but act with the most careful assessment
(1) move cautiously--professional interest in preserving current programs
(1) a large majority display a lack of interest
(1) there is a certain amount of resistance, but for the most part I am amazed at how quickly such changes are absorbed

C. (8) no comment
(2) run the gamut
(1) some resist while others support

Student reaction, as reported by respondents:

A. Supportive or cooperative:

(1) enthusiastic about it and its possibilities
(1) relevant
(1) respond positively because they are all intimately involved
(1) expression of satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment, yet only 40 out of 17,700 took the course--may be due to the time involved with no monetary compensation
(1) support
(1) firm believers and demand the change
(1) various elements have responded positively and affirmatively
(1) pleased, but a small number participate

B. Resistant or indifferent:

(1) changes are questioned by those students who plan to transfer
(1) somewhat conservative--concerned with ability to earn a living and contribute to society
(1) as with any change there is a certain amount of resistance, but for the most part most changes are absorbed and accepted

(1) respond favorably with some hesitancy--concerned with the transferability of these offerings despite clear assurances
(1) the programs were put into effect through cooperation; as a result they are accepted, but when people are involved many hangups occur which tend to be a deterrent to change including job security, achievement recognition, finances, etc.
(1) less quick to lend support because of weaker peer group influence and other interests such as full-time jobs
(1) feel we don't respond rapidly enough to their perception of what is relevant. Strong feeling ideological and verbal but not in action or when it conflicts with self-interest
(1) run the gamut; a large majority disregard interest

Reaction of additional publics, as reported by respondents:

A. Supportive or cooperative:

(1) trustees, alumni, donors, neighbors are all for a forward-moving college, one that keeps up with the times
(1) other publics pleased
(1) publics--best evidence is through the growth of the institution; while many institutions are holding their own or losing enrollment, the past two years have indicated a growth of nearly 1,000 students per year
(1) relevant
(1) respond positively because they are all intimately involved
(1) publics are firm believers
(1) various elements have responded positively and affirmatively
(1) whatever makes good educational sense
(1) as with any change, there is a certain amount of resistance from various constituencies. However, for the most part, I am amazed at how quickly such changes are absorbed and accepted by the university community.

B. Resistant or indifferent:

(1) townspeople want a practical education--training ground for future employees
(1) parents are interested in the potential income value of an education

C. Ask the people directly who had been involved

Responses to open-ended questions are very difficult to analyze and classify. From the above data, it would appear that supportive responses outnumber indifferent or resistant responses by about three to two. "Relevance" is definitely "in," and receives, at the least, strong verbal approval from most of those who are engaged in the educational enterprise.

It is impossible to determine from these data how far beyond lip service this support extends. One response reported "satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment" after 40 of 17,700 students enrolled in a "relevant" course, but this is not very convincing evidence of resounding accomplishment. Yet, if the search for relevance is successful, its success would be measured not only, or primarily, in the popularity of new courses, but in the changes in content, emphasis, and direction of existing courses. It would be exceedingly difficult to measure such change in any objective manner. In the absence of such measures, it is significant that most of the respondents in this survey reported a definite belief that the search for relevance has resulted in an improvement in the quality of education.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was undertaken to inform administrators about the variety of current responses to the demand for relevancy and to interpret the data and their implication with the idea of making further recommendations of how administrators in higher education may respond to the demand for relevancy.

In studying the problems, an attempt was made to answer such questions as: (1) What has been the perception of "relevance?" (2) How have colleges and universities responded to the demand for "relevance"? (3) Which pressure group or groups have constituted the major driving force for relevance? (4) What have apparently been the principal sources of resistance to the changes proposed in the name of "relevance"? (5) How have the changes, if any, been implemented as colleges and universities have sought to respond to this demand?

Where significant changes have been introduced, the writer sought to determine: (1) Is the program of "relevancy" in operation successful, in the opinion of the respondents?

(2) Which plan, program, or operation in progress is considered the most effective? The least effective? (3) How does the administration react to the various responses toward relevancy? The faculty? The students? (4) How have the changes in curriculum been received by the several "publics" of the institutions?

The study acknowledges the delimitations and limitations encountered in such an undertaking. They are as follows: (1) What worked well in one setting may not necessarily be transferable in its entirety to another setting. (2) Each institution has certain uniquenesses--this means that the findings of the research must be broadly interpreted in terms of their application to a specific institution. (3) The students' perceptions and demands toward relevancy change rapidly, and the findings must be reassessed in the light of student perceptions and demands at the time any policy implications of this study are used in administrative decision making. Thus the findings of research conducted in the 1960's may not be applicable to the 1970's. (4) This research may not be "relevant" to disciplines other than social science. (5) Questionnaire responses reflect the usual weaknesses: (a) possible biases, (b) the respondents' unfamiliarity with what actually occurred at the institution or the topic involved, and (c) possible misinterpretation of some of the respondents' answers. (6) No evaluation of

alternative programs was possible within the confines of this study.

Upon reviewing the literature, it was found that the subject of relevancy has been very much in evidence since the age of Plato, although until recently it was not identified by that term. The "cry for relevance" arose in the 1960's, and it has subsequently produced a flurry of articles concerning relevance in higher education. Some authors felt the topic itself to be irrelevant, but the majority of collected citations revealed that the current demand for relevancy has recently been pressed with a directness that makes temporization or evasion unsuccessful.

In the most recent literature, the responses toward relevancy fell in three categories: student-, faculty-, or administration-initiated changes toward relevancy within the existing structure; modification of the existing structure initiated by the aforementioned groups or by external pressure groups; and finally the abolition of the traditional structure and its replacement by an experimental structural model.

The college or university population from which the data were gathered was limited to institutions of higher learning in the state of Michigan. Institutional anonymity was assured to gain greater acceptance of the project by the respondents. The "Division of Social Sciences," a representative division within the colleges and universities, was

chosen as the division in which to study the responses toward relevancy because it appeared likely that an awareness of a need for change toward relevancy would be more likely to occur in disciplines that deal with the social sciences.

The questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate instrument to use in collecting the necessary data. College or university presidents were chosen as the source of information. The questionnaire method is not without certain hazards; therefore, a pilot study was conducted by sending a preliminary questionnaire to three presidents of institutions of higher education for their constructive criticism. After refining the questionnaire, seven trial questionnaires were mailed to presidents of colleges and universities representative of the types to be surveyed in the study. Each respondent was asked to criticize the questionnaire. Since no substantive criticisms were received, the questionnaire was sent to twenty-nine college and university presidents. All twenty-nine presidents completed the questionnaire.

The analysis of the data from the questionnaire was subdivided into five categories: (1) definition of relevance as perceived by the respondents to the questionnaire, (2) identification of the group or groups that initiated pressure leading to the change toward relevance, (3) identification of the group or groups that offered primary

sources of resistance to the change toward relevancy, (4) identification of the strategy used by the initiator of the change toward relevance as related to those changes in the social science areas, and (5) respondents' appraisal of the change toward relevance. Each question was analyzed according to like and different answers. A summary of the answers to the questionnaire is as follows:

1. The definition of relevance, as perceived by the respondents, related relevance to the purpose of the college or university--preparing the students for life. A minority of the respondents gave differing definitions of relevancy, including such things as undefinable, as a sign of frustration of our society without necessarily a real demand for change, the bridging of the gap between the ideal and the real and the existing and the operative, and operationally defined as consisting of whatever the educator using the term conceives it to be.

2. The pressure group or groups responding toward relevancy were identified as the students, the faculty, and the administration. A significant minority identified "the demands and needs of the vast community the institution serves" as an additional significant pressure group. One respondent listed the federal government grants as a pressure factor. It was indeed a surprise to learn that fully one-fourth of the respondents stated they were unaware of any pressure group or groups that constitute a driving force on the department of social science.

3. In like manner, approximately one-half of the respondents were not able to identify any pressure group or groups that were resisting the responses toward relevancy. A little fewer than one-half of the respondents identified resistance toward relevancy as coming from traditionally oriented faculty, students, the board of trustees, and other external college or university publics. Two respondents labelled as a form of resistance the lack of interest on the part of the faculty, the students, and the public.

4. The respondents listed the changes toward relevancy as occurring in three categories: changes toward relevancy within the existing structure, modification of the existing structure, and finally the abolishment of the traditional structure and its replacement by an experimental structural model. The respondents gave specific examples of how their institutions were responding toward relevancy. Those that appeared to be representative examples of the majority of the thinking or unique examples not found in the literature were chosen for further amplification.

Examples of changes within the existing structure were the following: the training of the teaching faculty in the Psychology of Learning for Teachers, including faculty workshops of various types and continuous communication regarding new procedures; the changing of a course title from Home and Family Living to Marriage and Human Sexuality; having a United States history course taught jointly by three

professors; changing the course emphasis to relate it to today's urban city problems; and continuously getting an evaluation of the course from all past participants and present students, faculty, and administration.

Examples of modifications within the existing structure were listed by the respondents as follows: modifying the course to include an experimental dimension to each course whenever possible; adding new courses including "mini" courses such as "Tax Help," "Child Care," "Consumer Beware," etc.; rethinking the goals of the course in terms of the outcome as opposed to the process; allowing the students, with the aid of their advisors, to work out a unique program designed for their needs or goals; allowing the students to have equality in the decision-making process concerning many of the functions of their college; and planning off-campus programs to include field experience, community projects, and community outreach.

Examples of the abolition of the traditional structure and its replacement by experimental structural models were cited: development of the REAP program (Relevance, Experimentation in Academic Programming), experimental courses, off-campus programs, regular curriculum revisions, outside speakers, and specially developed programs for the students, the college, and the community; development of three inner colleges dealing exclusively with a field semester for all students, community service courses, and

part-time jobs; and development of the cluster college concept, in which each college has a separate emphasis with particular relevance to students who can best grow academically under conditions of maximum freedom.

5. The writer sought to determine the respondents' own opinions regarding the changes toward relevancy in their own institutions. Twenty-one of the twenty-nine respondents indicated their changes toward relevancy had been successful. Two more stated that their programs had either been very successful or highly successful. Of the six remaining respondents, one indicated fair success, two indicated their changes had been least effective and satisfying, one indicated that at his institution the changes toward relevancy had been unsuccessful, one respondent indicated he was unable to answer, and one gave no response.

Explanations of success were listed by the respondents as follows: The institution has continued to grow in enrollment while many similar institutions are decreasing in enrollment or just maintaining their same enrollment, increasing student participation in the new programs, and the changes toward relevancy in the programs were attractive to certain donors to the institution.

An example of an unsuccessful change cited by one respondent was that he felt in each program there were particulars that prevented it from being totally relevant. Another respondent stated he was honestly unable to say

there was a connection between what they did and the outcome. The respondents ventured explanations for the failures of some of their programs. Some of these explanations were: A great many students were conservative and nonexploratory; it was difficult to define clear "performance objectives"; and some students tended to misunderstand the term relevance to mean something they could use instantly in job opportunity. Some respondents felt not enough time had elpased to give an accurate appraisal of the programs.

Twelve of the respondents mentioned no reaction on the part of the administration to the various responses toward relevancy. Five respondents said their administrations supported the changes toward relevancy but stated also that administration support was limited by their budgets. All but two of the remaining respondents intimated that their administrations responded positively and affirmatively to the changes toward relevancy. Resistance was indicated by two of the respondents.

In answer to the question of how the administrators viewed their respective faculties' responses to changes toward relevancy, eight of the twenty-nine made no comment, nine stated that their faculties favorably endorsed the changes toward relevancy, six stated that their faculties tended to try to preserve the traditional programs, and three said their faculties were split in opinion.

The respondents' views of how their students reacted to the changes toward relevancy were as follows: Seven of the twenty-nine stated their students enthusiastically supported the changes toward relevancy; nine said their students approved the changes in principle but very few acted upon their convictions; and one stated that part of the students supported the changes and the other part of the students showed little interest in the changes toward relevancy.

The respondents' beliefs concerning how different publics responded to the various changes toward relevancy are as follows: Nine of the twenty-nine believed the various publics were highly supportive of the changes toward relevancy; two stated that the publics were only interested in the changes toward relevancy if the changes benefited their own interests; and one stated that one would have to question each group directly to ascertain their true feelings; thirteen of the twenty-nine did not respond to the question.

Quite naturally, a study such as this leads to many varied conclusions, and at the same time suggests innumerable implications. Caution must be exercised in distinguishing between the two categories.

Conclusions

1. The most striking conclusion of this study is that the idea of relevancy receives overwhelming attention from almost everyone queried. The term relevancy has become an "in" word, one that receives recognition.

2. There is wide disagreement about the meaning of relevancy and the effective ways of achieving it. Disagreement among educators regarding the objective of responding toward relevancy perhaps has no more of an impact on the various reactions toward relevancy than it might have for any other goal of education. It is characteristic of the field of education that its goals are variously defined by different educators (and others), while the approaches and procedures for attaining these goals continue to have almost endless variations.

3. The majority of the respondents consider their programs of responding toward relevancy successful. However, the interpretation of the data by an unbiased person might easily lead to a different version of the success rate.

4. The quality of the response toward relevancy made a greater impact on the students participating than did programs renovated by attempting to change quantity factors. For example, attendance dramatically increased when a course title was changed from "Home and Family Living" to "Marriage and Human Sexuality." On the other hand, one institution of higher learning set up a school of community services within the existing structure and found, much to its chagrin, that student participation was sadly lacking.

5. Although the study was begun in the area of social science, both the literature and the questionnaire respondents indicated a more general approach toward relevancy.

Implications

In addition to providing a basis from which to reach certain conclusions, the findings of the study suggest a number of implications--some of a general nature regarding responses toward relevancy, and others that deal more specifically with the actual structural changes themselves. The following implications seem apparent:

1. Any program responding toward relevancy requires funds for its implementation; therefore, the institutional budget must reflect the need for these funds prior to initiation of the program.

2. The search for relevancy cannot be mandated by the administration alone; it must be shared by the faculty and the students as well. Instances were cited in which one of the three groups involved did not endorse the response and as a result it was not very successful.

3. Courses initiated as a response toward relevancy are most successful if they are universally accepted; therefore, credits should be given for the course and should be transferable to other institutions of higher learning.

4. Tradition was one of the factors that stood in the way of progression toward relevancy.

5. To achieve greater success, the various publics of the institution of higher learning should be well informed about the responses toward relevancy.

6. The newness of the responses toward relevancy may be handicapped by the limited number of people capable of implementing such responses.

Recommendations

Upon completion of the investigation and a review of the findings, conclusions, and implications, the following general recommendations in relation to the topic are offered:

1. The first recommendation, which flows directly from the implications stated above, is that personnel engaged in efforts to promote greater responses toward relevance should make these responses a cooperative endeavor, seeking to enlist the participation of students, faculty, and administration.

2. Persons engaged in planning responses toward relevancy should make the quality of their response rather than quantity the paramount feature.

3. Individuals involved in responding toward relevancy would do well to establish communication with other institutions of higher learning to profit from the successes and failures of these institutions in similar endeavors.

4. Initiators of changes toward relevance should seek universal appeal to assure transferability of course credits among the institutions of higher learning.

5. The responses toward relevancy may have greater appeal if they supplement the traditional position rather than attempt to substitute for the entire past practices.

6. A comparative study should be conducted, in which the student, faculty, and administration responses toward relevancy within a single institution are studied.

It is hoped this study will contribute to the improvement of administrators in institutions of higher education. As a result of the investigation, the information gained might have specific implications for: (1) improving administrative responses regarding relevancy; (2) improving the insight of the administrator about what other administrators are doing when faced with the same "cry for relevance," but operating within similar or different structures; (3) aiding in building a more effective curriculum; (4) providing insight into the administrative decision of whether to adhere to curriculum change toward relevancy or continue within the existing framework; and (5) reviewing plans for responding toward relevancy--tradition, modification of tradition, or departures from tradition.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SELECTED RESPONSES OF EDUCATORS TOWARD RELEVANCY

APPENDIX A

SELECTED RESPONSES OF EDUCATORS TOWARD RELEVANCY

1. <u>Educators who question the search for relevancy</u>

William F. Henry (1969) approvingly quoted Barzum as feeling that "relevancy" is a label for triviality and sloppy scholarship:

> . . . Another important concern of the student and faculty is relevancy. What is meant by relevancy? One of the major reporters of the current academic scene, Professor Jacques Barzum, has a great deal to say about relevancy in a recent book. He was for many years Provost of Columbia University, leaving that post in 1967 just prior to the Columbia confrontation. He believes that relevancy is "the love of the mishmash, the passion for dissolving unities." He says this "is only another label for dissolution, and it is important to recognize that teachers share the blame for aiding this subversion, by their easy compliance with external demands." Finally, he says that "the relevance question is indeed a clue to the whole degeneration of thought and language from which the academy now suffers"(p. 25).

Jacques Barzun (1968) elsewhere criticized the idea of relevancy in the words:

> The belief that a curriculum can be devised and kept relevant to the present is an illusion: whose present, in the first place, and relevant for how long? Students differ in tastes, knowledge, and emotional orientation. What concerns (or "excites") one four-year generation will bore the next, as anyone can verify by reference to popular music. And so it is with literature, politics, and the current view of creeds and crises.
>
> If a university is not to become an educational weather vane, a sort of weekly journal published orally by aging Ph.D.'s, it must avoid all "relevance" of the obvious sort. The spirit of its teaching will be

relevant if its members are good scholars and really teach. Nearly everywhere there is enough free choice among courses so that no student is imprisoned for long in anything he cannot make relevant, if he will only forget the fantasy of instant utility (pp. 71-72).

2. Educators who support the search for relevancy

Earl J. McGrath (1972) stated:

Two eminent scholars, one in philosophy and the other in psychology, have spoken out strongly against the over-specialization which now exists in their disciplines and the devitalizing remoteness of learning from life. Abraham Kaplan, professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan, in an article for this magazine ("The Travesty of the Philosophers," January, 1970), observed, "the gap is widening in our time between professed philosophies and the philosophies men live by. . . . The disinterested pursuit of understanding for its own sake is surely the very essence of the philosophical quest. But, though the motivation is admirable, the subject matters in which it finds expression often reduce philosophy to what is at best a harmless pastime and at worst a trivial mental exercise." The late Abraham Maslow, former president of the American Psychological Association, in reviewing the relationship between the corpus of learning in his field and the activities of ordinary men, observed that "much of the substance of teaching and research in psychology, while not untrue, is trivial, and of little help to anyone wishing to come to grips with the major human problems of the day. . . . That students have sometimes mistaken immediacy for relevance cannot be denied. For example, some have failed to see that a study of John Stuart Mill's On Liberty may be more relevant and practically useful to a consideration of students' rights of free expression than the impassioned complaints of contemporaries whose intemperate utterances on social issues offend the establishment. Through the efforts of a teacher accustomed to exposing the broad human significance of historical events, what occurred at Runnymede in 1215 may be shown to be acutely relevant to current discussions of representational democracy. Nevertheless, despite some student misconceptions about relevance, I, unlike some critics, do not consider their ideas irrelevant to the purposes and substance of learning. . . ." It is undeniable, however, that they are arguing for a hierarchy of values in the body of knowledge determined by relevance to the problems of life rather than to the rest of the body of knowledge (p. 8).

Rodney T. Hartnett (1972) defended the search for relevance against its critics:

> Much of the preceding argument or defense of the need for non-traditional study programs is based on the inflexible nature of the higher education system--particularly its inability to respond to the needs of students who do not fit the mold. . . .
>
> Some of those reluctant to endorse the concept of non-traditional study are concerned primarily with the problem of maintaining quality, or preventing a deterioration in "what the degree stands for." . . . Though there is an appealing logic to the quality-control argument--and it should not be lightly dismissed--there is a major flaw. . . . Course performance resulting in a "A" grade at one institution would result in failure at certain other colleges. Because of this great difference across institutions--a diversity we have always cherished--it is simply foolish to argue that a traditional college degree has uniform meaning or connotes some minimal educational standards.

Daniel Bell (1966) dismissed a false dichotomy:

> . . . is not the specious one of "breadth" versus "depth", which implies a nonsensical choice between superficiality and competence. The central problem is rather relevant breadth versus a limited and dangerously irresponsible competence. Such personal competence may be equivalent to social incompetence; it may either ignore the moral and political consequences of what the specialist does or may permit him to make decisions on behalf of the society for which he is in fact unequipped (p. ix).

Michael W. Apple (1971) expressed a fear or overkill in observing:

> "Relevance" is by now so overused that it is in danger of losing its meaning and usefulness. . . .
>
> An aversion to the term "relevance" itself is now a possibility. This is a pity since the problem it speaks to is significant. One would hope that linguistic overkill will not lessen the sense of urgency (p. 504).

Earle H. West (1969) summed up what appears to be the majority view of educators in saying:

> Throughout the questioning of institutional forms and the challenging of accepted modes of interpretation, the notion of relevance has had wide currency. It has become a powerful term--so powerful in fact that it can make or break an educational program (p. 1).

Plans, Changes and Evaluation Programs in Operation

1. Student-, faculty-, administration-initiated changes within the present structure

Newsweek (1972) described another example of faculty-initiated change:

> If these courses in winemaking, folk singing and yoga give Mankato State an aura of radicalism, the image is misleading. For this erstwhile teachers' college, now a strapping institution of 12,000 students, still reflects the sober background of its rural setting in southern Minnesota. And the courses themselves, far from representing any attempt to turn Mankato State into a counterculture "free school," merely reflect an inventive brand of oldfashioned school spirit.
>
> Mankato's mini-courses originated in reaction to a decline of some 600 students in the college's total enrollment. Because state aid funds are based on the number of credit hours taken by students and the tuition fees they pay, it appeared that the reduced enrollment would cost 36 faculty members their jobs this year and next. Then a solution occurred to James Andersen, an associate professor of mathematics. "I knew we couldn't just go out in the street and pick up more students," he recalls. "So it seemed that the only way to save those faculty jobs was to have every student carry two or three more credits." The problem was handed over to a student "Crisis Campaign for Education Committee," which developed the mini-course concept. At the committee's urging, the 700 faculty members dreamed up no fewer than 744 one-credit courses, and a prospectus was circulated among the students and the 38,000 residents of the Mankato area itself. . . . Ultimately, more than 2,500 prospective students signed up, including 600 from off-campus.
>
> Although few of the mini-courses would ever see the light of day in a traditional curriculum, most of them have considerable practical value.

> The mini-courses are proving so successful that a Mankato State faculty committee, which will evaluate all the courses at the end of the term, is expected to install many of them in the official curriculum (p. 44).

2. <u>Interdisciplinary programs searching for relevance</u>

Interdisciplinary change toward relevancy, under the term general education, has been summarized by Douglas Dunham's (1971) plan for the future when he said:

> The students are demanding more flexibility in curriculum, more "relevancy" in subject matter content and a wider range of choice. And therein lies the opportunity. To be sure students do not call what they are asking for "general education" but the essence of the general education philosophy is nonetheless there. For general education is not hamstrung by the demands of the academic tradition which so tightly binds the specialized disciplines (unless it perceives itself to be or lets itself be so bound). It is further not restrained by the need to train individuals for vocational competency or even for entrance to a graduate program (although it does contribute in a meaningful way to both). Thus the general education program is in a particularly advantageous position to respond to student demands for change and to respond in a respectable --if not in a traditional way. Student appeasement is not envisioned here nor is it contemplated that general education faculties engage in a popularity contest or pandering. It does mean that general education almost alone can respond meaningfully--free from the constraints that bind the traditional departmental curricula of the college or university. Such constraints as there may be--and only the unrealistic would suggest that there are none in general education--are more structural than philosophical, more professoral than educational.
>
> Three characteristics ought to dominate any proposed program geared to the new opportunity for general education: one quite traditional, a second a modification of traditional and the third and perhaps most fundamental departures from tradition--a totally new look in curriculum building.
>
> First, the traditional competencies and intellectual skills which we have come to expect as goals and outcomes of a college or university education would continue to prevail. This is simply a "means" question rather than an "ends" question.

Second, traditional modes of structuring would not be completely abandoned. The complementary curriculum would still have to "add up to something." Intellectual dilettantism or fadish eclecticism would have to be avoided. Freedom of choice should not be equated to the total absence of structure. Careful advising and tailoring a meaningful program for the student would be essential and critical for the success of the program. But modifications contemplated would provide for a "structured flexibility." Prerequisites for admission to courses would be kept to a minimum; credits would not necessarily be geared to a specified number of contract hours for a specified number of weeks over a span of four years. For some students this may be the most feasible course of action and they could plan accordingly. Flexibility in pedagogical techniques would also be of fundamental importance, including but not limited to independent or directed study, seminars, off-campus experiences, team teaching plus utilization of various instructional media. Open course numbers for the occasional student-planned-and-structured course might also be considered. But these matters are largely mechanical and only partially philosophical. Since so few of today's professors seem to read in matters of educational philosophy or curriculum building possibilities (if it is not directly germane to their disciplinary orientation) mechanics may constitute a problem. But by and large most faculty can come to terms if reluctantly with some of the mechanical items

But the third characteristic is the heart of the matter and the key to the opportunity for general education. It might also be the storm center of faculty opposition. The substantive content would not necessarily "fit" any particular field. Certainly it would not look like anything that professors have come to associate with college or university curricula. Thus all general education courses with the new look would scrupulously avoid the traditional departmental tag. They might be labeled Comprehensive Studies--or University Studies--. . . . The point should be that these new courses would not be the "property" of a given department or of a given professor. They would belong to the "college" or the "university." Even the interdisciplinary courses offered on some campuses tend to be too restrictive and for the most part are bound by the departmental disciplines where taught or administered.

. . . Our stand is not on specific substance so much as it is on approach to substance. If we take this position, then the new look curriculum can provide a real opportunity to achieve something both for ourselves as

> faculty members and perhaps more importantly for our students which we heretofore have been unable to accomplish. . . (pp. 10-12).

Earl J. McGrath (1972) indicated some interdisciplinary changes already in his description:

> If I understand what students mean by the term "relevance," they, too, are advocating exactly the kinds of instruction some of us had in mind a generation ago. As we did, they reject the idea that one must pursue long sequences of esoteric specialized instruction in each of the related disciplines in order to come to grips with the sociological, political, psychological, and ecological problems of our times. They want to attack these problems by bringing knowledge to bear on them in a unified and integrated rather than a fragmented manner.
>
> The method of approach to curriculum construction that I am proposing--organizing study around the problems to be solved, rather than making up patchwork courses from whatever bits specialists think are necessary to know about their subject--is by no means novel. It derives from John Dewey's ideas that education should begin with real situations, . . . Some institutional units at the General College of the University of Minnesota were based on these theories, and the entire program developed by W. W. Charters at Stephens College was based upon a detailed analysis of the everyday activities of women.
>
> Evaluated only in terms of the systematic mastery of a formal body of knowledge represented by the subject matter of the several disciplines, this type of educational experience may be considered superficial. However, appraised as the application of an integrated body of fact and theory to an understanding of genuine human experience, such an approach is richly rewarding. The long-run influence of pollution on the whole human enterprise can be used as a typical or problem area. A knowledgeable person in each related field could, without too much effort, make a catalog of the existing problems. Only after this had been done should the relevant subject matter be brought to bear on them. Hopefully scholars could prune away all the esoteric material only remotely related to the topics under consideration, . . .
>
> If one accepts this approach, the general education program would consist of matters with which all thoughtful citizens must be concerned. . . . These would

> provide the essential substance of a general education regardless of students' various other interests (pp. 8-9).

3. <u>New structural models</u>

Fred A. Nelso (1972) commented upon the growing interest in the "Open University":

> Despite these early efforts and programs (The University of London has been awarding a degree by assessment or examination since 1936, and Harvard has provided degree programs for part-time students through its Commission on Extension Courses since 1913), the creation of Great Britain's Open University in 1969, perhaps more than any other single event, galvanized American interest in external degrees, continuing education for adults, and the education potential of technology. This remarkable American fascination with the Open University, in my view, is based on triple hopes: the hope of effecting economics in higher education, the hope of serving new student clienteles, and the hope of interjecting genuine innovation into higher education through new curriculums, the media, and other instructional technology (p. 11).

Samuel Baskin (1969) concluded a discussion of the "Open University" with a plea for open-minded evaluation of educational innovation:

> In short, my fundamental conclusion is not for or against, . . . but a plea to pay close attention to developing a better methodology than we have now for understanding the process of education innovation and curriculum development. By this I mean an effort to be much clearer about what our objectives are in undergraduate education, to work much harder to find ways of measuring and evaluating the innovations that we develop, and to study more closely the process of change and the institutional architecture that is needed to make enduring change really possible (p. 7).

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE LETTER

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE LETTER

October 15, 1972

Dear ______________:

In the past decade on college and university campuses there has been a demand for "relevance." It is with this thought in mind that a pilot study is being conducted in the Social Science area. For our purpose we would appreciate your response from your institution concerning the departments of Anthropology, Economics, History, Psychology and Sociology. Your cooperation in obtaining answers to the following questions will be appreciated.

1. The definition of relevance as perceived by the reader.

2. How has your institution responded to the demand for relevance?

3. Which pressure group or groups constituted the main driving force?

4. What, in your estimation, have apparently been the primary sources of resistance to the change toward relevance?

5. How were the changes, if any, implemented or ways sought to respond to relevance at your institution in Social Sciences areas mentioned in the first paragraph?

Your identification or your college will not in any way be revealed, as it is the total picture in which we are interested.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Marylou Robins

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

October 15, 1973

Dear ________________:

After spending a considerable amount of time mulling over your correspondence of _________ in reply to my letter on relevance, and my subsequent thoughts in response to it, my first wish is to say "thank you" for your answers to the questions asked and to say thank you especially for your additional comments which were, in most cases, very enlightening and informative. The purpose of the project is to learn as much as is possible, in the amount of time allotted, about the topic "relevance" in higher education. Your opinions have helped the reader a great deal.

The changes in response to "relevance" (under many names) have been taking place for many years--they became more identifiable under the term "relevance" in the 1960's and, as indicated by many of you, this term is fading out but the process is not.

Several of the administrators and faculty have indicated an interest in learning the outcome of this project. This reader will share with those interested the final data and their possible implications when the project is complete.

This letter contains two messages: The first message thanks you with most sincere appreciation for your help; and the second is a request for an answer to the following question: In your opinion . . .

> How does the administration react to the various responses toward relevancy? How do the faculty, the students and the several "publics" react to the various responses toward "relevancy"?

The reader realizes that to be most accurate a representative of each of these groups would have to be asked directly each question, BUT IT IS YOUR OPINION THAT IS DESIRED AT THIS TIME.

Thank you again for your help to this reader and for courtesies extended in behalf of this project.

Sincerely,

Marylou Robins

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