

The Listening Post

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The Growth of Intergroup Workshops

THE GROWTH of summer workshops in intergroup education and human relations is a major, significant—and unheralded—development of the past ten years. In the face of mounting pressures for conformity and retrenchment in a time of insecurity, American education has moved steadily forward in providing opportunities for teachers and others to become better prepared to work for improved interreligious, interracial and intergroup understanding through the schools.

Workshops have been the largest single vehicle of this advance. Each year in the past decade, more and more colleges, universities and school systems have offered summer workshops in intergroup education and human relations. The figures assembled for the summer of 1952 by the Commission on Educational Organizations of the National Conference of Christians and Jews suggest the scope and impact of intergroup workshops. These figures do not tell the whole story of intergroup workshops in 1952. Because of important workshop activities encouraged by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and other agencies, it can be assumed that the total 1952 workshop development was even more substantial than reported here.

Campus Workshops

In the summer of 1952 over twenty colleges and universities in the United States conducted intergroup workshops with the cooperation of NCCJ's Commission on Educational Organizations.

These institutions represented nearly every region of the nation. Workshops varied in length from two to eight weeks. Very nearly all offered credit at the graduate level.

NCCJ secured comprehensive evaluations of these workshops in 1952 from over 500 participants. The total participant group numbered well over 750. This record shows that participants in 1952 came from thirty-one states, the Territory of Hawaii and the District of Columbia. Of 510 workshopers reporting, 359 were teachers, 16 were college professors, 58 were school administrators, 7 were school counselors, 8 were police officers and 62 were PTA leaders, social workers, etc. Over 40% of the nation-wide group had previous workshop experience. Of the whole group 127 were men, 383 women. While 181 of the group had lived in rural surroundings as children, only 40 of the group were from rural areas in 1952. Workshopers included persons of Negroid, Caucasoid and Mongoloid backgrounds; Catholics, Protestants and Jews were well represented. The largest single age-group was in the 40-50 year bracket, with nearly 50%, however, in the 20-40 age range.

Content, Progress and Evaluation

Well over one-half of the total group of participants received scholarships to aid them in paying tuition and housing costs. Many workshopers came to the summer experience in teams of three or four.

Planning for the 1952 intergroup

workshops was assisted by a two-day national conference of workshop directors held April 18-19 in Detroit, Michigan, under sponsorship of NCCJ's Education Commission. Twenty-five workshop staff members exchanged ideas and discussed basic approaches with Dr. Herbert L. Seamans, director of the Commission, acting as informal moderator.

While workshops varied widely in structure, content and teaching style, they generally operated to develop learning of concepts, information and techniques. Many of the workshops could be considered to be orientational or introductory in character. From the evidence of evaluation, most workshops did a better job at the concept and information levels than at the level of technique and curriculum development. The workshops did much, however, to reshape attitudes about the proper function of education generally and of intergroup education in particular.

As nearly as one can tell, all workshops operated on the assumption that intergroup and human relations should be seen as an *integral functional emphasis* in teaching-learning situations. None approached intergroup education as a subject-matter addition to the curriculum.

At their best, the 1952 workshops gave careful attention to process management and effective group procedures. Staff pre-planning, reliance on participant planning groups, frequent group evaluation of growth, utilization of participant leadership, and non-staff consultants were in evidence.

Only a few workshops operated under optimum "live-in" conditions where the opportunities for informal interaction were at their fullest. To approximate "live-in" conditions as nearly as possible, most workshops sought to provide for interest-group work meetings

in the afternoon, for group dining, for organized field trips and sports, and for social recreation. The majority of workshoppers expressed approval of these arrangements.

In addition to intra-workshop evaluation, the nation-wide group of workshops participated in completing the standard workshop questionnaire provided by NCCJ. This was completed at the end of each workshop during the summer, and repeated by mail again in November in order to obtain assessment of the experience from a perspective of several months. A complete analysis of both sets of returns is planned for publication in the spring of 1953.

An Experimental Workshop

A special experimental two-week workshop was held at the University of Michigan, August 4-16, directed by Stanley E. Dimond. This workshop had three purposes.

First, it was designed for special emphasis on intergroup problems of school and community faced by school administrators and others. It was felt that earlier workshops had largely failed to involve school administrators as participants. The group at Michigan totaled 70 persons of whom 28 were school administrators, 31 were teachers, four were police and four women civic leaders.

Second, the 1952 Michigan workshop was designed as an in-service training laboratory for a group of workshop directors drawn from various parts of the country. Thus the staff under Dr. Dimond was a sizable one including Prudence Bostwick, Deborah Elkins, Stewart Cole, Deborah Partridge, Louis Radelet, Frederick Routh, Herman Weil and the present writer. The staff accepted a special responsibility to study itself *in action* looking toward greater competency in workshop leadership.

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Third, the Michigan workshop was designed to test the effectiveness of a short-term "live-in" workshop as against workshops of longer duration. In this effort, Bertram Raven of the Research Center for Group Dynamics conducted an over-all evaluation of the workshop to be reported in early publication. Evaluation techniques were designed in staff pre-planning sessions, and were used and studied by staff and participants.

As a result of special efforts mentioned above, the Ann Arbor experience was perhaps one of the most thoroughly studied and evaluated intergroup workshops of 1952. Evaluation conclusions point up the following tentative observations:

(1) That a two-week "live-in" workshop can have substantial impact on the lives and outlook of participants;

(2) That group process development in such a workshop is accelerated as

compared with the experience of longer workshops;

(3) That an intensive short-term workshop poses different problems of structure and procedure from those encountered in longer workshops;

(4) That a short-term workshop appears to require a higher degree of pre-structuring than a longer workshop.

The intergroup workshop movement will develop further in the summer of 1953. Present plans look toward a small number of advanced "national" workshops in addition to a larger number of orientation workshops. At this writing, plans have been crystallized for advanced-level workshops, several of them short-term, on the following campuses: University of Michigan, University of Kentucky and Stanford University.—Franklin K. Patterson, Director, Greater New York Area, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Inc., New York 16, New York.

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