

# New Careers in Action

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PASADENA City College stumbled onto "New Careers" quite serendipitously. We started out doing our own thing only to discover that it was "New Careers."

It all began in the fall of 1965 with a concerned faculty member's recommendation (mine!) that a community development curriculum be included in the 1966-67 catalog. At that time—and for that matter, it is still true—community development was five or six disciplines searching for an identity.

Spinning off from the behavioral and social sciences including the gloomy one, economics, community development sought to be the science of social change. The Watts disturbances had just made social change a grim reality. The new discipline suggested one way a community college might go in efforts to cope with the urban crisis.

As a *modus operandi*, community development had yet another appeal. It lent itself to the educational theory that the way to train for work in the community is through community involvement.

The proposed curriculum was designed around four semesters of community experience, for which academic credit would be granted. Community experience would serve a dual purpose: it would provide the basic training tool, and it would give immediate relevancy to newly designed, and to-be-designed, job-related theory courses. After four semesters of work-study classes, plus required

general education, students would qualify for the AA degree and for employment as middle-level human service technicians in health, education, welfare, and community action. In common with other curricula, its focus was on preservice training. The employment goal categorized the curriculum as vocational/occupational.

By the time the curriculum was activated in the spring semester 1967, it was caught up in the momentum of antipoverty programs mandated to achieve maximum feasible participation by the poor. Right from the start, 85-90 percent of the students enrolled in the new work-study classes turned out to be a new kind of student: adult poor employed as nonprofessionals in antipoverty agencies. These new students were seeking the kind of career education they needed to climb the career ladders being conceptualized in task force reports and field-tested in federally funded pilot programs (for example, New Careers through the Scheuer Amendment, Economic Opportunity Act).

When it came to career education, nonprofessionals were, and still are, far ahead of their employing agencies. Such agencies have a long way to go before retooled professionals and job redesign can make career

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ladders a reality. Nonprofessionals have also been ahead of educational establishments. The avidity with which the "poor" took advantage of the new work-study classes startled the college staff, even this community oriented instructor. We proceeded to learn by doing, and the nonprofessionals became our teachers. One thing we learned, for example, was to try to cease and desist in bureaucratic practices that made it "simpler to stay stupid." That was the way one disgruntled nonprofessional put it as she reacted to the college's persistent and, for that student at that time, the completely meaningless request for a transcript.

Another thing we were learning was that the focus of the community development curriculum was shifting from pre-service to in-service education. In effect we were field-testing the three basics of New Careers:

*The basic purpose:* provide an alternate route into the credentialed society aimed at those now locked out: the minorities, the poor;

*The basic strategy:* hire first, train later, with the job itself serving as the primary training tool;

*The basic concept:* build in career development with well defined career ladders into the credentialed society.

## **Federal Funding Is the Name of the Game**

By the spring of 1968 it was evident that more was needed than just the college's willingness to learn by doing. This instructor, if not the college, was beginning to reel under the impact of a program that was going off in all directions at once.

In one semester the number of students had tripled. That was worry enough. Work-study classes are expensive. Assignment of adequate faculty time to coordination of community experience lies at the heart of any valid cooperative education program. Yet such assignment tends to lower the student-faculty ratio while budget-minded board members and administrators are trying desperately to raise this ratio. That community

experience makes the community the classroom, ultimately lessening the demand for more laboratory and classroom facilities, has yet to be grasped. This is a realistic *quid pro quo*.

The problem of staffing was further compounded. Three semesters of experience with the program revealed that still more and more assigned faculty time would be needed if the college were to take seriously the new urban extension role being thrust upon it. Career development and/or New Careers, it turned out, was a beautiful manpower concept but only the poor were in step. Agencies lagged behind. They were seeking help from college coordinators/instructors on two nitty-gritty problems: (a) resolution of professional/nonprofessional role conflicts; and (b) job redesign.

The college found itself bringing up the rear. Among other things, the college was finding that educational needs of nonprofessionals could not continue to be met with just the one new curriculum. For example, Head Start and ESEA teacher aides were filtering into the program. Meeting their needs was bringing the college into confrontation with the compensatory education establishment. The college needed help, and fast. It yelled "Uncle!"

Project Upbeat was designed in May 1968 in a strained effort to secure EPDA funding for the teacher/educational aide facet of the college's exploding program in community development. EPDA (Education Professions Development Act) had been legislated into existence during the summer of 1967. By spring of 1968 its major implementing agency had been created and was beginning to function within the U.S. Office of Education, the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development (BEPD).

At first glance BEPD's FY 1969 guidelines were discouraging. The college needed help in its efforts to provide career education for educational/teacher aides. Such an approach would bring about institutional change from the bottom up. BEPD guidelines, however, were quite to the contrary. Their approach sought institutional change from the top down. Their theme song was

differentiated staffing with the spotlight on the professional. They were silent on New Careers.

As far apart as they seemed, the college's community development program and EPDA still had one thing in common: educational personnel development. Upbeat proceeded to read its own ideas into the guidelines. Duly funded, it enabled the college to activate a much needed Teacher Assistant curriculum.

Through its focus on the nonprofessional and its emphasis on New Careers, Upbeat anticipated EPDA's 1970 priority, the Career Opportunities Program (COP). Upbeat became a kind of model for COP 1969-70; it is one of 130 approved COP projects 1970-71.

The college has three other federally funded projects based on its community development program. One enables the college to activate the Government Assistant curriculum 1970-71. The Urban Education Institute (EPDA/E) uses community development work-study classes to retrain experienced community college personnel. The third project enables the college to strengthen its cooperative education efforts in the human services.

## **The Medium Is the Message**

Woven throughout this saga are a few answers to two important questions:

● *What is the object of the career ladder approach?* It is simply this: to provide an alternate route into the credentialed society aimed at those now locked out: the minorities, the poor. And let us not overlook another group so effectively locked out in our headlong dash into professionalization over these past two decades: disaffected, alienated youth.

● *What are some constructive results with minority groups?* Two only are given here, both in terms of New Careers. First, Pasadena City College's experience attests to the validity of New Careers' basic strategy: *hire first, train later*. At least in the human services whose target groups are the poor,

it is possible to develop low-skill, no-skill entry jobs that capitalize on the unique qualifications of the poor and at the same time improve the delivery of services by the agency. Job-related theory classes are a necessary corollary; without them the strategy fails.

Second, the college finds that the concept of career development is valid and sound. The career ladder is the crux of career development. Differentiated staffing is one necessary sidepiece of the ladder; career education is the other. They are interdependent. As for career education, it cannot be just more of the same. It must be new and different, as well as job related at each rung of the ladder. Without valid career education to buttress a New Careerist's performance on the job while providing him with the college credit needed to boost him into the credentialed society, differentiated staffing results in little more than dead-end jobs. Witness, for example, what happened to nursing for too many years.

The educational establishment is involved in New Careers in two ways. As a manpower utilization concept, New Careers is as applicable to education as it is to other human services or to private industry. The nonprofessional has been a fact of life in education for half a decade, but education is a Johnny-come-lately to career development. Gradually the establishment is beginning to face up to the challenge of utilizing New Careerists across the board, even in the highly sacrosanct areas of instruction and counseling, as well as in the new grey area of interpreting the community to professionals.

The educational establishment also has no choice but to be responsible for providing the requisite career education not only of aides employed in schools and colleges, but of New Careerists employed in other human services and in private industry. If the community college did not exist it would have to be invented to do this job. To quote Robert Finch, also President Nixon, career education makes the community college the capstone institution in any projected career policy for all Americans.

## Selected Sources

*New Careers.* Many organizations have mushroomed over the past five years as part of what Congresswoman Edith Green (D-Ore.) dubs the "poverty-education-industrial complex."

Whether or not the organizations listed below appreciate identification with such a complex, they do admit to being in the funded business of explaining and promoting New Careers:

National Institute for New Careers  
University Research Corporation  
4301 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20008

New Careers Development Center  
New York University  
Room 238  
239 Greene Street  
New York, New York 10003

Social Development Corporation  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Institute for Local Self Government  
Hotel Claremont Building  
Berkeley, California 94705

Social Action Research Center  
Room 203, 1013 Harrison Street  
Oakland, California 94607

### *Pasadena City College*

Ruth Macfarlane. "The Name of the Game Is Urban Community Development." *Some Who Dared.* Institute for Local Self Government, 1969.

Ruth Macfarlane. *Director's Report, Project Upbeat '69.* June 30, 1970. Two copies on file with ERIC, 1156 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 □

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