

THE JARRETT TEACHER CORPS: AN EXPERIMENT IN COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY INTERACTION

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The rising inventory of social maladies that have become part and parcel of the parameters of education has made it necessary for educators not only to look at more effective and efficient classroom strategies, but also to look at expanded notions of what education, as a social institution, should be. The concept of "community education," in particular, has come to command increasing regard among educational and lay leaders as an enterprise promissory of educational reform and potentially efficacious of totally mobilized educational effort.

The rhetoric of optimism, however, which attends the notion of community education is perhaps most indicative of the fact that communities are by and large disenfranchised from having any direct sense of agency over the educative processes that presumably serve their needs. And, the major appeal of community education as a process seems to lie in precisely the fact that "(i)t puts meaning into the notion that people can and should make an input into the educational system that serves their community."

In Hawaii, especially, with its state-wide public school system, the political nature of education is rather apparent. The monies for fiscal livelihood are legislated; the School Board is elected; the Superintendent of Instruction is appointed; and "District" and "State" level Department of Education administrators barter continually for shares of the available resources. In short, the communities being served are woefully uninvolved in the very processes which determine what in substance is being taught. Bureaucratic pronouncements serve the priorities of a generalized agenda of needs, and thereby serve no one community in particular. In this context, no doubt, the appeal of the concept of community education is its promise of a more intimate relationship between the community and its educational resources.

It is the ambition of this article to present a description of a modest effort at establishing the kinds of "changes" that would mobilize the

community into stronger positions of advocacy and provide for features in the institutional structure more accommodating of community input. It should be noted that while the project to be described did not in specific intent aim at establishing "community education" per se, it did very assuredly intend to improve the delivery of educational processes by utilizing community resources. That is to say, it wholly intended to deal with education in a "community" way.

The Jarrett Teacher Corps Project

The Jarrett Teacher Corps Project was a two year program funded by both State and Federal governments and sited at both the Division of Field Services in the College of Education of the University of Hawaii-Manoa and the Jarrett Intermediate School (grades 7-9) located in Palolo Valley. Palolo Valley is a middle-income suburb of the city of Honolulu and is located approximately two miles from the University. Jarrett met HEW funding criteria since approximately one-third of its student body comes from two low-income housing complexes that are contiguous to the school. The project was begun on July 1, 1976, and ended on June 30, 1978, and involved approximately 650 students, 32 teachers, 12 support and administrative staff personnel, 9 graduate and undergraduate interns from the College of Education, faculty members from the College of Education, and parents and community persons from Palolo Valley.

In execution, the major objective of the project was to expand and improve the general strategies for the delivery of instruction to the students of Jarrett Intermediate through the conjunctive professional development of nine interns and the entire faculty and staff of Jarrett. The accomplishment of this endeavor was to be framed in a context which would exploit the collaborative efforts of three categorical role groups: 1) the educators and administrators of the College of Education-

University of Hawaii (COE), and the State of Hawaii Department of Education (DOE); 2) the project teachers and interns; and, 3) the parents of the Jarrett student body in particular and the community of Palolo in general. In terms of the students of Jarrett, the specific outcomes toward whose accomplishment the collaborative efforts were organized were identified as:

- the improvement of student attitudes toward school;
- the improvement of reading skills.

A more covertly intended outcome, however, was to facilitate the dynamics of change within the conceived roles of the identified target groups primarily through the process of collaboration. By specific design, thus, the project's administrative and decision making process was to affirm and establish a collaborative model. (See figure for elaboration of the project design process.)

The major responsibility for achieving the project's goals lay with the project staff which included:

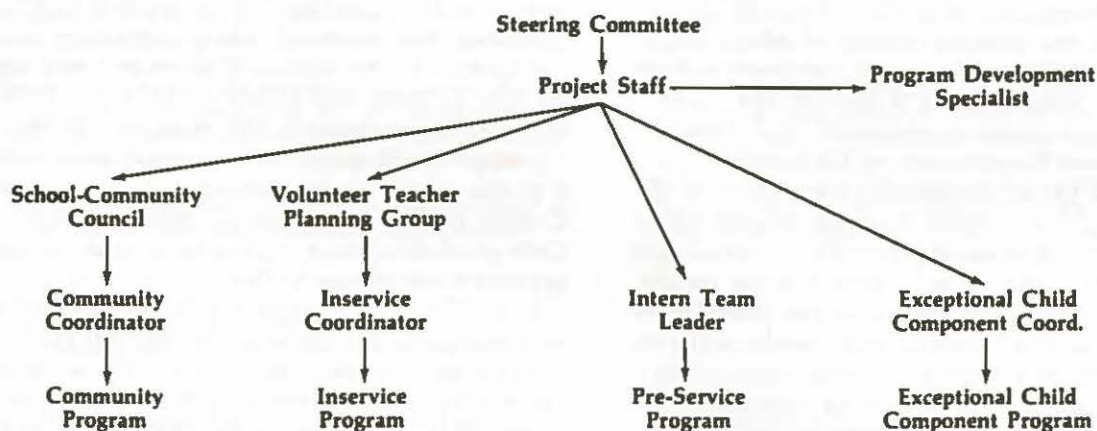
- a project director;
- a program development specialist;
- a site coordinator (the principal of Jarrett Intermediate);
- an inservice program coordinator;

- an intern team leader;
- a community coordinator; and
- an exceptional child component coordinator (a Special Education teacher at Jarrett).

The project staff, however, operated under the direct sanctions of a steering committee whose composition made it a collaborative vehicle rather unique to education in Hawaii. The project steering committee included:

- the project staff;
- the Associate Dean of the College of Education, University of Hawaii;
- the Director of the Field Services Division of the College of Education, University of Hawaii;
- a Department of Education administrator;
- a Department of Education curriculum specialist from the Honolulu District Office;
- two teachers, the counselor and the librarian from Jarrett;
- the Director of Health and Community Services Council of Hawaii;
- two parents; and
- two project interns.

The steering committee served to screen and approve all project activities as depicted in the following sequence of responsibilities:



Despite the seemingly distinct programming indicated by this diagram, extensive coordination was achieved. A program of integrational responsibilities was, in fact, created as a part of the project.

The Collaboration Model

Perhaps the most significant strategy by which the project was to achieve changes in the educational institution and the manner in which education itself

is institutionalized was the process of "collaboration." It underlay all the project efforts and was the one strategy that the staff was determined to see actualized.

"Collaboration" was singularly important because it exemplified an attitude that "change" is not instituted, but provisioned for. The avowed project task was to "provision" the target group participants for change through training and participatory experiences. Simply speaking, the project encouraged teachers, interns, educators, and parents to reconsider their traditional notions about their respective roles in the process of education.

To establish the collaboration model and the processes of communication and decision making, two important organizational vehicles were established: 1) the project Steering Committee, and 2) the School-Community Council. Both bodies operated collaboratively with diverse constituencies to function in decision-making capacities.

The Steering Committee, however, functioned to give direction and support to the community component. Its membership included: the community coordinator, the school counselor, five parents, one intern, one teacher, and one student. In design and function, the council served as a liaison and screening body for school and community interaction. The council, for example, was instrumental in developing and implementing the following types of activities:

- a community needs assessment;
- a "Family Educational Fair;"
- workshops for parents and community members; and
- a "Parent School Involvement Program."

In addition to these two bodies, a Volunteer Teacher Planning Group was formed to institute the process of collaboration within the inservice component. This group assisted the Inservice Coordinator in:

- planning and implementing the school inservice program;
- communicating with the school faculty/staff;
- serving as an advisory council for all matters pertaining to staff development of the Jarrett faculty; and
- developing and testing a prototype inservice program.

This group also participated in extensive training in the development of leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills.

The Community Component

In coordination with the other components, the community program supported the general objective to strengthen and expand the educational opportunities available to the students of Jarrett. In this regard, the organizational objectives were to:

- expand the physical plant usage of Jarrett;
- complement the pre-service and inservice programs; and
- empower parents with the opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes.

Consistent with the last objective and with the overall project philosophy, collaborative decision making served as the major vehicle to identify goods and conceptualize programs. The School-Community Council served in an advisory capacity to the community coordinator who was the facilitator for the overall program.

A school is in the business of education and a primary objective of the community component was the expansion of that "business" to include community members as well as students. One of the first accomplishments of the program was to secure and establish a "parents room" at Jarrett. From this central location parents and community members conducted their activities within the school and participated in classes and workshops.

The workshops and classes conducted at Jarrett during the project's tenure spanned a wide variety of interests. However, they were generally of either of two categories: 1) educational, in terms of self-development, and, 2) crafts. A partial list of the types of workshops conducted includes the following:

- educational workshops:
 - reading;
 - parenting;
 - study skills;
 - income tax information; and
 - Hawaii English Program.
- arts/crafts workshops
 - batik;
 - Christmas decorations;
 - graphics/visual arts;
 - leather crafts;
 - Hawaiian crafts;
 - sewing—silk screening—feather lei making;
 - massage; and
 - ceramics.

These workshops and classes usually were conducted during the school day. However, a few activities were conducted during the evening in

consideration of the availability of resource people and the preference of the participants.

An objective of the pre-service and inservice programs was the expansion of traditional teaching strategies to include community resources. In support of this objective parents and community members also participated in:

- serving as classroom aides;
- supervising students on field trips;
- advising, organizing, and providing instruction for student interest groups (in particular, the "Na' opio Polynesian Group," a musical/cultural performing group of Jarrett students); and
- conducting workshops and food demonstrations.

In addition, the community component was designed to encourage greater independence within the participants of the program. For the community component, a corollary objective to the proposition of collaboration, was to encourage initiative, which would then become a firm foundation for the mobilization of community resources. For example, in addition to their participation on the project Steering Committee and on the School-Community Council, parents also attended Teacher Corps sponsored workshops and conferences on community education in Phoenix and Scottsdale, Arizona. A positive outcome of this was the intent of a group of parents, at the end of the project, to form a Parents' Club and to continue sponsoring activities at Jarrett.

Conclusion

This has been but a cursory profile of the community involvement of a relatively short-lived experiment in education. Many of the implications, however, that might be gleaned from the project data are significant if only for the immensity of what was attempted. In effect, the Jarrett Teacher Corps Project attempted to coordinate the resources of three of the major elements of the educational "pie": the Department of Education, the University of Hawaii, and the community of Palolo. In doing so, it demonstrated to a modest extent that:

- "collaboration" can prove to be a successful model for expanded relationships between the institution of education and the individual communities;
- schools can constructively accommodate expanded usage in the context of the expanded availability of community resources; and
- parents can make contributions to the educational processes beyond the mere "assistance" level.

In terms of community education, the project favored the strategy of coordinating the available resources rather than that of instituting something new. This seemed to be the more reasonable since the community of Palolo already seemed to possess a rather distinct profile of available resources.

The key to coordination itself was perhaps found to be the process of collaboration. Collaboration is particularly attractive in this regard because it encourages contribution and contribution is the essential element to the feeling of ownership. An individual feels he owns a process only when he can contribute to it. In addition, collaboration suggests a specificity that is important to successful school-community relationships. Collaboration upon specific issues insure successful relationships. One of the most successful Teacher Corps undertakings, for example, was an "Activities Program" conducted for the entire student body of Jarrett. Over thirty types of interest oriented activities were offered to students on two Fridays a month. The facilitators for these activities included:

- the faculty and staff of Jarrett;
- Department of Parks and Recreation personnel;
- resource parents and community members;
- the project staff;
- University of Hawaii students; and
- Honolulu Community Action Program personnel.

The program was able to be coordinated largely because specific responsibilities were the immediate priorities.

Finally, it should be noted that, in matters where the community is the determinant, "follow through" is the only feature of consequence. Only time will select what remains of the effects of the Jarrett Teacher Corps Project. "Follow through" in some small measure might have implanted that which is undeniably in the spirit of change.

References

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