

Two Degrees of Distinction

Something is different about the master's programs being conducted at two Massachusetts schools.

By GERALDINE SPRUELL

The school of thought that business should not take education too far takes a blow. Mega-corporation Arthur D. Little boasts a master's degree program that is not just accredited—it's esteemed.

The program is distinguished by the fact that it's offered from a school begun by big business. But in the eyes of higher education, this school is just one of the guys. Arthur D. Little (ADL) Management Education Institute passed its accreditation test 10 years ago. This Cambridge, Massachusetts school enjoys the same status with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges as Harvard.

ADL Institute's program, leading to a master of science in management, is quite different from a traditional MBA program. Its shtick is *international* management education. And its objectives, practices, students and faculty all go against the traditional MBA grain.

Some 30 miles from ADL Institute, in Tyngsboro, sits another school: Wang Institute of Graduate Studies. Dr. An Wang, of Wang Laboratories fame, founded this institute. Although its scope and atmosphere differ enormously from ADL Institute, one aspect binds the two schools: Wang Institute, too, is a corporate college. It has authority by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to grant the master of software engineering degree, and accreditation for the degree is expected.

Ties to the nest—ADL Institute

The most striking difference between the Wang and ADL institutes is in their relationships with their families.

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Twenty-one years old, ADL Institute still depends heavily on its corporate parent for support, and undoubtedly always will. The ties to ADL, Inc., the international consulting firm, are clear. One wing of one building in the corporate complex consists of the institute's classrooms, study areas, auditorium, computer room, labs and library. But students venture often into the parent halls, seeking more books, more information or food. The rest of the complex, devoted to ADL, Inc., comprises consulting offices, administrative offices, laboratories, libraries and a cafeteria.

"The institute draws on all the facilities of Arthur D. Little, Inc.," explains the institute's program manager, William Fish. He says that's the reason the school was placed at ADL headquarters. "The institute can tap the resources here. They're easily accessible to our programs, to our classes and to our participants."

Even with the accreditation status, it can be difficult to gain acceptance as a producer of quality education

ADL Institute does not try to play down its connection to ADL, Inc. On the contrary—the school, which is rather small (just 67 students enrolled), depends on the ADL name and reputation to attract students, student sponsors and job offers for graduates. Even with the accreditation status, it can be difficult to gain acceptance as a producer of quality education. "We're not the most widely known entity in the world," Fish says. "When you walk up to an employer and say, 'Hi, I'm a graduate of the Arthur D. Little Management Education Institute,' unless the employer knows Arthur D. Little through work the company did for their organization, the employer is not going to be flab-

bergasted. You have to do a sales job." ADL, Inc., with offices across the country and around the world, is well known for its consulting work in management, energy, agriculture, technology and more.

Fish says the institute's mission for the master's program is to attract people from around the world who fit a particular type. "We're looking for a certain kind of person, perhaps different from what you would find in a typical MBA program in graduate schools around the United States. We're looking for experienced mid- and senior-level managers who need a very practical, internationally oriented, short program. Their organizations want and need them back fast, and the organizations want them to have management tools that will help them be better managers."

Fish says that although there are other master of science in management programs—the one at the nearby Sloan School at MIT perhaps being the best

known—there is no other program doing exactly what ADL is doing. He points out three factors about the ADL program he believes separate it from all others: the faculty, program content and program direction.

"The faculty," says Fish, "are senior Arthur D. Little consultants, in the majority of cases—some 75 percent of the faculty in the master's program. The rest of the faculty consists of tenured teachers at other institutions who come to ADL Institute to teach the basic business courses, such as accounting. The person who runs our agribusiness section teaches the agribusiness elective. He spends most of the year working as a consultant on dif-

ferent projects; right now he's working on a large project for a number of Middle East countries, building a strategic food reserve for them. He then comes into the classroom and teaches. As someone who has worked in a number of the countries represented in the program [currently, the students are from 21 different countries], he can identify with some of the unique difficulties they may be faced with at home. We feel that is a tremendous advantage—to have someone who's actively working in a particular field to be teaching the particular subject."

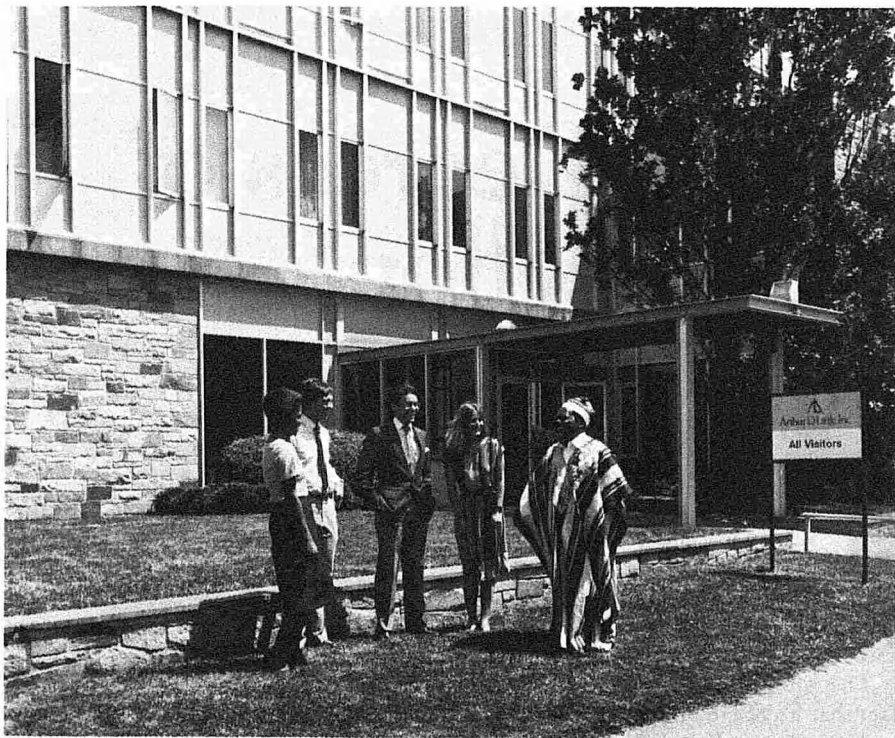
Fish says the faculty, for the most part, are Ph.D. level; a few are master's-level. "Most importantly, they have very, very strong practical experience in their fields, and experience not solely based in the United States, but internationally. And that's another unique part of the program: This is a program for international managers. It's not a program for someone who wants to be brand manager for 'Geo-Wiz' refrigerators in Iowa. That doesn't have anything to do with the rest of the world. It is a program for people who know they are going to be crossing borders as a life experience, and who need to know what is necessary to accomplish successful international trade, to get along in an international business community."

Independence rules—Wang Institute

An employee of Wang Labs would never teach a class at Wang Institute. And, no, Dr. Wang does not lecture.

Wang Institute is an independent, non-profit graduate school, chartered by Massachusetts as an educational corporation. "We are *not* part of Wang Laboratories," emphasizes the institute's vice president for development Jack Christensen, "and that is a very critical point to us. We have our own independent board of trustees. How we *do* relate to Wang Laboratories is through our founder."

Christensen describes the institute as An Wang's personal project—something he created out of his interest in advancing higher education. The benefits he derived from the success of Wang Laboratories, Christensen says, allowed An Wang to fulfill his philanthropic goal of establishing a graduate school. "But this is an independent organization," Christensen repeats, intent on getting this point across. "We are not in any way captive of Wang Laboratories. We are not a conduit for Wang Laboratories for educational purposes or for a source of technically trained people



It's tough enough to earn a master's degree, but more ADL Institute students face the added challenge of earning it in a foreign land: America.

in any greater sense than we are for Digital Equipment Corporation, Sanders, Raytheon or any other company."

The distinction between college and corporation is central to the success of the institute. To function, it depends on the support of Wang Labs competitors. The institute was placed purposely within their reach. "This site was chosen largely because it's relatively in the center of the computer companies we want to draw upon for our students," says Christensen. "This location is able to serve those companies in southern New Hampshire as well as those in the eastern part of Massachusetts."

Many of these companies—Wang Labs competitors—have sponsored students at Wang Institute. It's not hard to understand why. The master of software engineering program is geared toward the software professional who's been in the business at least one year and who wants to be a software expert. It's one of only three master of software engineering programs in the country, and it's the only one in the Northeast. The New England companies can sponsor an employee for part-time study (as most do) and still have the employee come in for a half day of work.

But why would Wang establish an institution dependent on the funds of competitors—an institution that teaches the Wang tricks of the trade?

Christensen corrects this false—and narrow—assumption. An overall *education*, he says, not *training* secrets, is gained at the institute. "We provide a broad, fundamental education—fundamental at a high level. We do not focus on any one piece of hardware, and we certainly don't focus on any one language." As proof, he later will provide a tour and point to a wide variety of equipment used by students on-site. Included are two Digital Equipment mainframe computers, one from Apollo and one from Prime, as well as one from Wang. IBM, Apple and Wang personal computers also are spotted. "Our students operate with a great range of hardware and a whole range of languages. And they leave here basically equipped, not necessarily with specific technology, but with an understanding of the philosophy behind software engineering."

If the institute works hard at disassociating itself from Wang Laboratories, Inc., it works even harder at keeping Wang Labs recruiters at bay. "Dr. Wang tells his personnel people, 'Keep your hands off the Wang Institute students.' And they have really been reluctant to come over here and talk to any of our students. We don't allow on-campus recruitment anyway. In fact, we try to de-emphasize completely the job-search business." This is an academic institution, Christensen says once again, and they make sure the stu-



Few roads lead to Wang Institute, tucked within the woods of Tyngsboro. But unbelievably enough, high technology hums not too far away.

dents know it from the start. "We tell our students during orientation their first day here, 'You are here to get an education. You are here to improve your understanding, to get new skills—we want you to focus on that. You are *not* here to find yourself another job."

This is, obviously, the only way an institution of this nature can function. If a sponsoring company loses an employee due to a job tip gained at the institute, the company's expectations for a returning expert are crushed and the company's out more than \$10,000 for the tuition.

"We do everything we possibly can to discourage a job change here," says Christensen, adding that he assumes the placement officer function to assist students who are "free agents." These students are not employed at the point of entering the program, and their fees are subsidized by the institute. Most receive graduate assistantships. Christensen spends half an hour a week on placement responsibilities, none of which he'll devote to company-sponsored students. "If a student who's employed by Digital Equipment or Data General or Wang Laboratories walks in that door and says, 'Gee, I'd like to think about some other companies,' I say, 'Go away; I won't talk to you.'"

Christensen notes the importance, too, of making sure all free agents aren't swallowed up by Wang Labs. "If Wang

Laboratories hired all of our graduates or even a sizable number, and if I were Kenneth Olsen [the founder] of Digital Equipment Corporation, I would say, 'Hey, don't send any more of our people over there. Don't pay for their tuition to go to Wang Institute, because we're not interested in filling Dr. Wang's company up.'"

Students do not have to go through Christensen to get a job. Likewise, he's not responsible for getting them jobs. If a company calls him with a job opening, he asks for a written job description and posts it. He holds infrequent job advisory meetings, and draws up a limited invitation list. Placement-eligible students only.

Studies in the big city

Anyone who's received nonstop correspondence from his or her alma mater can attest to the fact that schools believe alumni support to be vital. In this belief, ADL Institute is no different. It counts on its former students to do something necessary to its existence—to help recruit students.

"We have an extensive alumni network at this point," says Fish. "We count on them very heavily, and I'm happy to say that they respond very nicely. They're people who are in senior positions in, I think it's 70 countries around the world. They help refer people to us."

ADL Institute aggressively helps place its graduates by using its parent's good business standing. "We have an office of student affairs that includes job placement. While we don't have the fame that many other schools have, we have something that sometimes is better, and that is contacts. This is a large organization," Fish says, referring to ADL, Inc., "doing some \$200 million worth of work in a year, and we use those contacts extensively for people who are graduating from our programs—to help introduce them, to help get them in the door. And that helps."

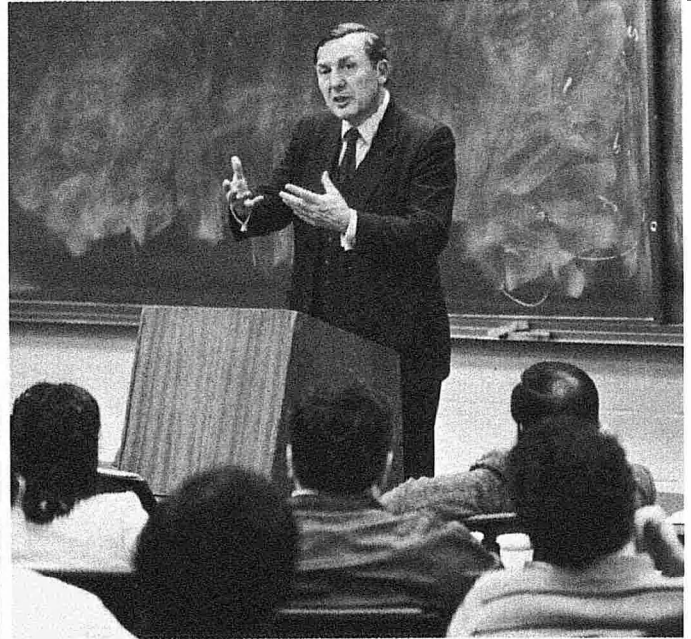
This placement assistance is reserved for the students who pay their own tuition and for those with third-party sponsors. Third-party sponsors are organizations that offer scholarships for international training. These organizations include the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank, the State Department, the Ford Foundation and the Organization of American States. The other sponsors are private companies that pay the \$12,000-tuition fees for each employee attending the 11-month master's program. If one of these students expresses disinterest in returning to the sponsoring firm, the institute tries to talk the student into going back. "We feel loyalty to our sponsoring organizations," Fish says. "We feel that if they're paying for someone's education and their salary for a year, they have a right to expect the person to return. And we do everything in our power to make sure that happens."

Fish says that people returning to countries overseas generally have a nice selection of employment opportunities, more than those offered candidates in the U.S. "I think it's getting more difficult for U.S. students; that's something that all MBA programs have found in the last few years." How much is an ADL Institute graduate worth in the American market? "Thirty-five to forty thousand dollars would be the norm."

Each year, the institute receives 200 to 250 applications and chooses 65 to 70 people for its master's program. They are measured primarily on their strength in work experience, then on their undergraduate transcripts. The youngest student the institute ever has had is a 24-year-old Colombian woman presently enrolled. She excelled at a top South American university, so even with her lack of experience, the institute let her in. "We want the senior manager," Fish says, noting that they've had students in their 50s, "but it's also very nice to have stars of undergraduate education come in. This young lady,



People incorrectly remark that Wang Institute resembles a private school. It *is* a school, chartered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



ADL Institute believes it offers a tremendous advantage: instruction by ADL, Inc. consultants, who bring practical experience to the classroom.

the best student in the class, identified very much with our program."

The degree of difficulty students face often depends on their cultural backgrounds, Fish says. Education outside of the U.S., he says, is more traditional, mostly lecture format. "We do not do very much of that at all. We're activity-oriented. We expect people to participate in class. They're graded on their participation, and that requires some adjustment from someone who's coming out of a traditional academic mode."

The atmosphere inside and outside the institute is all business. From classroom windows you can see the parking lot; there is no campus to speak of. Inside, students fill computer and study rooms, working in teams on their case studies. The students have their own lounge, their own mailboxes and cubicles, and in one large classroom they have nameplates at their seats. The intensity, Fish mentions, is much like that of any other graduate program. "You see people spending 99 percent of their time on the program, either here in class or at home preparing. It's not easy at all."

According to Fish, the master's program was developed to fill a gap in management education. "The institute's founders saw a hole, which I think the Agency for International Development *also* saw, in management teaching. A very practically oriented—not theoretically oriented—program for experienced managers—again, *internationally* oriented—was much

needed and not generally available. And that is what they designed.

"The program was developed in conjunction with other institutions of higher learning—Syracuse University, originally. I think a lot was taken from academia at that point, especially in terms of structure, titles of courses and such. And we looked at what we knew from working in different countries about what managers need to have to succeed."

ADL Institute, a for-profit institution, must not measure its success in dollars, because according to Fish, the profits of the master's program are "marginal at best."

In pursuit of greater profit will the institute add more master's programs or more students to its present program? "No, definitely no other master's programs, and there is no intention to change the size of the current program at all." There also are no plans to offer a doctoral program. "That would require something that I think is done much better at a traditional university."

Woodland setting

Some of the highest level high-technology teaching goes on over the hills, through the woods and within the granite walls of Wang Institute. One tremendous 60-year-old building, formerly occupied by the Marist Brothers and used as a junior seminary, sits on a 200-acre campus. It's marked by the elements retreat sites are made of: endless trees, picnic tables, lone

benches, and a pond for staring into while thinking deep thoughts.

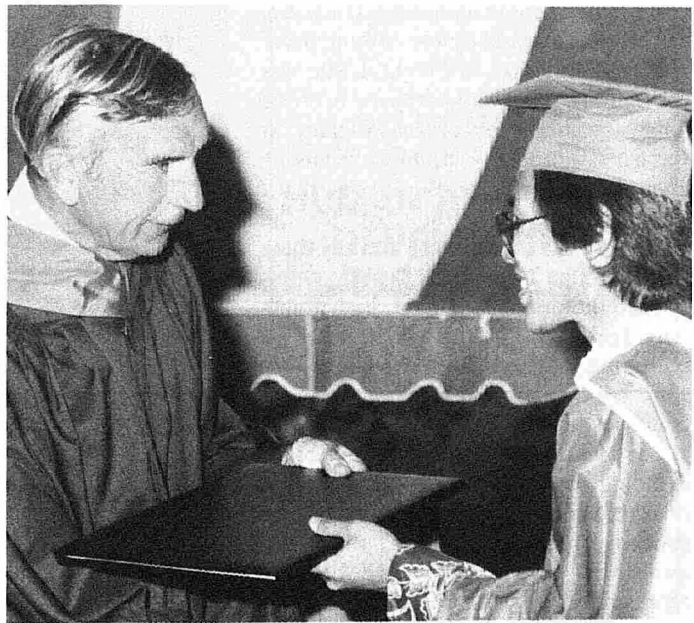
Heavy thinking's the rule once you step inside the school. Consider some of the master of software engineering program courses: computing systems architecture, expert system technology, system design algorithms, translator implementation. Program participants expect to return to industry as technological gatekeepers.

They come to the institute in the hopes of finding ways to perfect software solutions. "We surveyed our alumni, asking for example, 'Why did you decide you wanted to get advanced education?' and 'What did you expect to get by coming to Wang Institute?' As an almost universal generalization," Christensen said, "our students said when they were working in industry before coming here, they were somewhat uneasy about the way they were producing software. They were getting the job done, but they didn't feel they were going about it right. It wasn't a consistent, organized approach to developing software. They came to Wang Institute to learn a better way to do it."

Christensen says the institute has no trouble attracting faculty. Professors leave other schools and professionals leave industry to work at Wang Institute. They're drawn by the generally higher pay, the absence of a tenure program and the ability to concentrate on teaching. "Our faculty members place a very high value on teaching, and they don't want to teach 200 students in a class. They like a lot of close



Wang Institute students, who work to become masters of software creation, can clear their minds when needed by relaxing in their tranquil backyard.



ADL Institute graduates find the demand for their skills highest in countries other than the U.S.

interaction. They want to be able to respond to students' questions, to be involved with the students." Most of the classes at the institute have no more than 10 students.

Christensen mentions that a common gripe of teachers at traditional schools is having to fulfill publication quotas. "While they do some publishing and some research here, we have not really made that a requirement."

The institute presently employs 12 faculty members and has 51 students enrolled. It's a teacher/student ratio the institute is comfortable with, one Christensen says will not change much. "We might bring that up to 70 or 75 students, but that's probably as big as we want our master's program in software engineering to get."

The future may bring additional master's degree programs in other disciplines, Christensen says. "We're a very new institution [six years old], and we've focused all of our energies on developing an outstanding program in software engineering. We will, in time, develop other curricula that address different issues. I think in our early days we will maintain this strong focus towards the high-tech industry. But our charter will allow us to do anything except medicine and law."

Whether students participate in the master's program full time or part time, all attend during the day. And that is not likely to change. "We could make ourselves

more convenient for our students," Christensen says, "but we're reluctant to do that. And I think for a very good reason, because unfortunately there are many schools that offer part-time programs where they're not even using their own regular faculty. They're all adjunct faculty—people who work in industry and come in just to teach that course. Inevitably, the quality of the program is lower in the evening division than compared to the day. I don't see any imminent move even to offering a class on a Saturday." Christensen adds that although they currently do not videotape the master's program to make it available off-site, parts of the program—most likely the prerequisites—might be taped in the future.

Tomorrow may also bring some changes to the institute's trademark features—the no noise, the no parking problems, the receptionist who takes notes for students. "We're changing, we're growing, and some of those rather comfortable features will change in time."

Acceptance by academia

Accreditation for a degree program is difficult to attain. But, Christensen and Fish agree, it's well worth the trouble.

"The first thing they do is send you a kit, which they call their self-study package. It has very thick documents, and you go through them and answer all the questions." Christensen says the questions pertain not just to the curriculum, but to the

facilities, the institute's financial state and to the faculty. "They want to know what the faculty members' credentials are, what their experience is, what their formal education is."

The accrediting agency reviews the institute's answers. As is common in the first go around, Christensen said, "they found a number of issues where they felt that we came up short. One was our board of trustees. They thought it was not quite diverse enough. Dr. Wang, in establishing the board, naturally went to his associates and friends. There are several members of the Wang family on the board of trustees; there are some officers of Wang Laboratories on the board of trustees, as well as an outside attorney, an outside banker and so forth. The accrediting agency thought it would be better if that was even further broadened, so Dr. Wang broadened it further." Christensen says the institute added the presidents of Boston College, Northeastern University, the University of Lowell, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Encore Computer Corporation to the board as a result of issues raised by the agency.

What impressed the accrediting agency most, according to Christensen, were the curriculum and faculty. "They felt that we'd done a great job in structuring a curriculum that was very relevant to the issue, to delivering what we advertised we'd deliver. They were delighted with the qualifications of our faculty. We require all the faculty to have doctorates, and to have

some experience in industry and some in the academic world before coming here."

Fish thinks that Arthur D. Little was the first New England company to strive for an accredited educational program. "It was a major process—I think we're talking about five or six years. But it's one that I think is extremely productive for the school itself. It's a very, very healthy thing to go through."

Accreditation is important, Fish points out, to ADL Institute's success in recruiting students and obtaining sponsors. "Most important to us is that many countries have a centralized educational system, with a ministry of education really deciding what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. As international education exchange has increased over the years, ministries' governments have become more and more sensitive to the fact that an institution must be accredited to have some guarantee of quality. Many times a government will refuse to allow citizens of their country to attend a program that is not accredited."

Did having a corporate founder make it more difficult to gain academia's acceptance of the institute?

Fisher nods yes. "I think there was a good deal of skepticism on the part of traditional academia about what was going on over here. And I think there was even some reluctance on the part of the company to get *into* something such as an accredited program, because that is a *big* commitment.

"I think it all worked out very well in the end, though, for both parties involved."



Threatening Tradition?

Corporate colleges strike fear in the hearts of traditional educators.

It's a fear rooted not only in the forest-surrounded Wang and the city-based Arthur D. Little, both traditional-college-like institutes. ("You can't even tell the business campuses and the real campuses apart!") This fear springs, too, from the campus-less NTU—National Technological University, a corporate college attended strictly via satellite.

This pioneer school, developed by educators with a different idea about how higher knowledge should be transmitted, challenges the traditional education delivery system. It does not, however, pose a threat, says economist Anthony Carnevale, vice president of government affairs at the American Society for Training and Development. "The traditional educator sees those people as competition—and rightly so, because those are the entrepreneurs and they're expanding in a different format. And the old fogies want to make sure that these young pups don't go too far with this. They want to make sure that, you know, Harvard will always be there. Well, Harvard will always be there.

"What's happened," he continues, "is that the entrepreneurs have figured a way to eliminate huge amounts of overhead by utilizing alternative technology. As a result, their sales—that is, their clientele, their students, who are among the adult population—are growing at NTU."

Satellite study is not aimed at the entire student body. There will always be a demand, Carnevale says, for the traditional four-year institution and its lavish activities, which create high overhead. "The people coming directly out of high school will continue to go to traditional four-year institutions. There's a lot more involved here than education. There's psychosexual development, which is a major reason why they go. They go together; it's a generational experience."

He distinguishes the needs and expectations of the typical college-bound high-school graduate from those of the college-bound adult. "Adults are going to be the ones attracted to these new institutions, because they are focused more on the learning experience. Because the quality is higher and the cost

is lower. Because the delivery of the education is more flexible in terms of time and location."

Adults are interested in transfer of information—period. "A 45-year-old engineer who's worried about CAD/CAM in his factory doesn't need to hear Norman Vincent Peale. He needs to learn about CAD/CAM. And he doesn't need to go to basketball games, or to join a fraternity, or get teachings in moral philosophy, English literature and so on. He wants a very specific course, and he looks at the higher education institutions that provide it. He looks at a traditional institution—at the course and the books, and sees who the professor is and sees when he's got to be there—and he looks at NTU and he says, "This is better. It's a better course, it's more flexible, I can take it here at the plant or I can take it home, I can get it on videotape, I can interact with the professor, the professor is more prestigious in my field. This is better."

"This is not a *threat* to higher ed," Carnevale says. "This *is* higher education."

Is it a threat to *traditional* higher ed? Carnevale believes not. "Young people, traditionally, have been given a short period of time where they're allowed to think differently and act differently and dress differently—although they think differently from the larger society but they all think, act and dress alike. They sort of separate themselves from the larger social system. That process won't stop."

So why all the fuss over adults attending corporate colleges, which stick closely to business?

Carnevale says the country is running out of kids and, more and more, traditional colleges will need adults to fill their classrooms. "The traditional colleges are losing money among the young kids and they have to replace that, so they want to get the adults. Higher ed is downsizing. *Radically*. And will over the next 20 years. The size of the higher education system was increased radically to accommodate the baby boom and because expectations for education increased. Now the baby boom is in its adult years, and higher education's going to slim down. And they're scrambling around and worrying about that. And that's what this issue is all about."

Carnevale estimates a reduction to the size higher education was in the early 1960s, which he says is still quite big. "Higher education is larger than any other major industry in the United States in terms of the number of people it employs. It's going to get a little smaller, but it's still going to be among the biggest industries in America. I don't see the institution at risk. I don't think any *sane* person thinks it's at risk. I mean, take a look at the size of higher ed—it's a big, big institution, worth 94 billion dollars a year."

Still, there is a lot of nervousness, Carnevale says, that as higher education downsizes, people will lose jobs. And that nervousness has unleashed a lot of attention on corporate education and training. Corporate education and training amounts to more than \$30 billion annually, according to Carnevale's calculations, and that money has caught traditionalists' eyes. But, the key words to keep in mind are *and training*. Training, which is not the mission of higher education institutions, accounts for 99 percent of that \$30 billion. Corporate education, which refers to corporate colleges, makes up a miniscule part of the amount.

This is not just a small, but an insignificant proportion of corporate training and education dollars, says Carnevale, and it's not likely to grow much. "The basic employer mission is to provide job-specific training. That's got nothing to do with providing accredited courses. If you believe that employers are going to get into the business of supplying accredited education in a big way. . . I think that's nonsense."

Go for the gold

Traditional higher education people, Carnevale notes, "see this big piece of money in corporate training, and they want to get some of that. They're saying they ought to have that money, and they're saying the corporations are competing. Well, the corporations are *not* competing. Traditional higher ed people are pretending that the \$30 billion is a threat to them. They want a piece of the \$30 billion, so they talk \$30 billion. But the accredited corporate institutions are way less than one percent of that."

Tax laws are thrust in the limelight by educators looking for a way to get corporate training dollars. Carnevale says the traditionalists in education believe training belongs to the public and the public has the right to control it. These beliefs stem from the fact that training is not taxed—businesses can take a tax subsidy for it. Therefore, according to the traditionalists, the public pays for training. Traditionalists want to regulate training or to enact laws to encourage employers to do their training through the schools.

Adult wars

"The *real* competition is *inside* the higher education community," observes Carnevale. "There's an adult market out there and the question is: Who in higher education will win that market—the traditionalists or the entrepreneurs at places like NTU?"

In its 1984 edition of *The Condition of Education*, the National Center for Education Statistics reported steady growth from 1970 to 1982 in the higher education enrollment of students 18 to 24. Projections show a drop in their enrollment from 1982 to 1992. However, the enrollment of students 25 years old and above grew from 1970 to 1982, and is projected to grow through 1992. In 1992, of all higher education students, the age group expected to be the biggest is the one 35 years and over.¹ Adults.

Carnevale says higher education institutions are already competing with each other. "It's just like with lawyers—they're starting to put ads in the paper, and that's what higher ed's doing. In New York now you can pick up the *Times* and find ads for Columbia in which Columbia tells you why you shouldn't go to New York University."

Referring to the intramural nature of the competition among higher ed institutions, he says, "There may be some benefit in that. Competition may make them more effective."

Reference

1. National Center for Education Statistics. (1984). *The Condition of Education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



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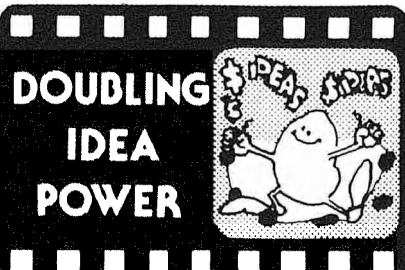
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