

# IDHP PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES

by John Mulligan

The IDHP emerged from within the "Growth Movement" in the mid seventies. As you would expect, it embodied many of the values associated with it, both the aspiration of developing human potential and its antipathy to the reductionist tendency of Freudian and Behaviourist psychologies.

## Education not Therapy

The Human Potential philosophy, like that of many humanistic and transpersonal therapies, from which it draws many of its frameworks and techniques, takes the normal person as its point of departure. Many therapies, however, tend to offer help when the individual is in some difficulty and in order to restore normal functioning. The Human Potential approach, in contrast, tends to place greater emphasis on personal fulfilment and on helping the individual to develop their capacities beyond that normally demanded to function in society. The IDHP, through its greater emphasis on the educational rather than the therapeutic approach to personal development, falls firmly within the latter value.

The Human Potential philosophy of the IDHP has been apparent from the outset in its commitment to an eclectic approach to human development. This view maintains that the complexity of human functioning is unlikely to be honoured fully by any single theory of human nature and functioning, but that most if not all theories, together with their assumptions and practice, (including the Behaviourist and Freudian ones) have a contribution to make in the development of human potential.

*... emphasis on the educational rather than the therapeutic approach to personal development*

To this extent, the IDHP may have created for itself a procrustean bed in that it has existed uneasily at the fringes of educational endeavour while at the same time being unwilling to commit itself fully within the therapeutic mode. The two year part-time Diploma in Humanistic Psychology is clearly not a therapy training but one for the human potential educator/facilitator who may be operating in a diverse range of settings. Notwithstanding the implicit tension, this position could with mutual benefit be more fully represented within A.H.P. and A.H.P.P.

## Peer Learning Community

At the heart of the commitment to an eclectic approach is a willingness to experiment with and test out the value and short-comings of various approaches. The main criteria are usually practical e.g. does it work? how? for whom / in what circumstances might it be beneficial? etc. Courses validated by the IDHP therefore are committed to engaging in co-operative inquiry/action research into participants

own development, that of the group, and a variety of predetermined and self-determined approaches to developing human potential. Participants are thus encouraged to take a multidimensional outlook rather than becoming adherents of a particular approach with its attendant limited worldview.

This open-mindedness and reflective experimentation flourishes within the peer-learning community format adopted by the IDHP Diploma courses. This valuing of peer authority was in part a reaction to prevalent autocratic behaviour within education, training and some psychotherapy. It was felt that unilateral or autocratic decision making by the trainer/facilitator in regard to the content, methods, assessment and accreditation was inappropriate if not counterproductive in relation to personal development and the training of facilitators. This philosophy is adhered to within IDHP to the extent that course participants have the power to use prescribed procedures to bring about change in the course facilitation self and peer assessment and accreditation procedures required for IDHP validation.

### **Authoritative not Authoritarian**

The early devotion to the peer principle brought with it difficulties to which the Human Potential approach is vulnerable i.e. it laid itself open to criticisms of lack of depth "jack of all trades and master of none" and also to the tendency for participants and facilitators alike to avoid facing the more difficult developmental challenges. e.g. social change. The peer principle has, as a result, been balanced in the mid eighties with a greater recognition of the genuine authority and expertise of the facilitator. This is reflected in current course contracts through the non-negotiable elements and descriptions of the facilitator role.

#### *... balance between the hierarchical and peer principles*

While attempting to strike an appropriate balance between the hierarchical and peer principles, the IDHP has been more committed than most to ensuring that the autonomy of the individual and the independence of the various courses was maintained. These values are apparent in the assessment, accreditation, monitoring and supervision practises adopted. Considerable discretion is allowed to facilitators and groups once they meet a set of requirements set out in the guidelines for course organisers. The IDHP committee, which monitors and supervises courses, ensures that quality and standards are maintained through the ongoing review of the processes of learning and facilitation, assessment and accreditation, while retaining no control whatsoever over learning outcomes or the award of the diploma to individuals.

It is felt that the imposition and measurement of pre-ordained goals by an external body based on non-negotiated criteria would undermine the learning process and philosophy of empowerment to which the IDHP was committed. Clearly, the emphasis on trust and the limitation of control measures to achieve course aims could be abused by unscrupulous individuals but, on the whole, it would appear that integrity has prevailed and learning has been enhanced through greater participant control and the resulting openness and honesty. As a last resort it has always been

open to the group to encourage a member to leave or to the IDHP committee to refuse to validate a course.

### **Rigorous Self and Peer Assessment**

The key method which has been chosen to ensure high quality courses is the same method used to identify and accredit participant learning, i.e. self and peer assessment and accreditation. Each time a submission is made to run a new Diploma course the prospective facilitators have to undergo a rigorous process of self and peer assessment in relation to their personal development, their facilitators skill and the course contract they are putting forward, before their application can be accepted. This happens whether or not the prospective facilitator has already run a previous Diploma course. This selection process together with supervision, support of facilitators and monitoring through course reports has maintained quality without undermining autonomy or integrity.

The IDHP has from the beginning been committed to the development of human potential. However, it has just as strongly maintained that personal development which is unconnected to social reality is likely to become narcissistic and of lesser value than when socially linked. It has therefore been a requirement that each course be committed to exploring some dimension of social action/change as part of the non-negotiable programme. The linking of personal development with professional development, social action and change in this way highlights the holistic underpinning of IDHP philosophy and values.

These various value positions, some of which were declared openly by the founding members, others which emerged through collective consideration of ideology, have given the IDHP considerable cohesion despite the geographical spread of locations at which courses were presented. The current confederation of IDHP centres offering courses has represented interests in education, organisational change, management developments, therapy, research, etc. This diversity of interest and background has resulted in the richness on which an eclectic approach thrives and draws its sustenance. However, it is probably in the education of practitioners from these various fields that the values and philosophy of the IDHP have had greatest impact. This is less surprising when one remembers that most of the early directors were committed educators in advance of their engagement with therapy.

### **Not a gatekeeper for professionalism**

While those of us who have lived and grown with these values and philosophy over the years can bear personal testimony to their potency in bringing about worthwhile change, I suspect that the full impact would be very difficult to record much less evaluate. Perhaps the greatest value of the IDHP may be the very one which has kept it from receiving the accolade it undoubtedly deserves. I refer here to the fact that it has never tried to become a gatekeeper for professionalism. Many IDHP graduates have asked searchingly of themselves "what should I call myself?", "what does this qualify me to do?". A challenging question given the current struggle for

professional identity and legal recognition. Or will those who need the enabling role most be deprived of its benefits by further professionalisation?

## CONFLUENT AND POLITICAL LEARNING ON IDHP COURSES

by John Heron

IDHP courses can be seen as having two primary dimensions: a confluent dimension and a political dimension. Confluence is about interweaving, intellectual, emotional, interpersonal and other learning. The political dimension is about balancing and integrating the decision making - of the IDHP committee, the course facilitator, the course participants as peers and individuals - with respect to the content, timing, method and assessment of learning. This article outlines the issues that arise around these two dimensions for participants and facilitators on all our courses.

My sense of these issues comes from a combination of perspectives. As a founder member of the IDHP I attended all committee meetings for nine years. I formulated a lot of its initial ideology and methodology. I facilitated the first IDHP course at the University of Surrey, I have provided peer supervision for facilitators of two other IDHP course and have run workshops of one sort or another for participants on most courses.

### A conceptual model for the Confluent Dimension

To aid discussion I use a parity model of the psyche: the soul has co-equal capacities for understanding, feeling and choosing; capacities that are interdependent, mutually enhancing and in relation to other persons similarly endowed. So intellectual, emotional, decision-making and interpersonal development go hand in hand, each depending for adequacy and integrity, on each other. This leads to the notion of confluent education in which, in the long run, the four strands are fully honoured in the curriculum, serially, in parallel or integrated together.

Within IDHP courses these four strands of development extend into six like this:

intellectual	1. theoretical understanding
	2. written work
emotional	3. personal growth
decision-making	4. political skills internal to the course e.g. peer decision-making
	5. social change competence outside the course
interpersonal	6. facilitative skills