high profile to a lower profile, it is still an open question how steep, or gradual this should be, and over how long.

Aids to learning

Aids for learning about confluence and the political dimension of IDHP course remain scarce. Work on emotional distress supports effective and authentic learning within each dimension and about their interaction. What we also need, I believe are conceptual models to highlight the two dimensions, which is one of my reasons for writing this article.

SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT
AND ACCREDITATION

by Mike Eales

Assessment and accreditation have become a focus point for the growth movement in the 1990's. For the past fifteen years the IDHP has been using and developing Self and Peer Assessment and Accreditation both in its selection of course facilitators, and in the ongoing and final assessment and accreditation of course participants. I would like to outline briefly some of the background and some of the learning we have gained from this approach.

From the outset, one of the main objectives of the IDHP was empowerment, defining an 'educated' or 'professional person' as "an awarely self-determining person, in the sense of being able to set objectives, to formulate standards of excellence for the work that realises those objectives, to assess work done in the light of those standards, and to be able to modify the objectives, the standards or the work programme in the light of experience and action; and all this in discussion and consultation with other relevant persons" (J. Heron 1974).

Widespread Authoritarianism

... professions acknowledged the case for acquiring self-determining and co-operative skills but the educational system from which the professions emerged was highly authoritarian

The founders of the IDHP believed that if this were a valid definition of an educated person, then the educational process in most institutions of higher or professional education did not prepare students to acquire such self-determining competence, as staff unilaterally determined student learning objectives, student work programmes, assessment criteria, and then unilaterally did the assessment of students' work (Heron 1981). There seemed to be a classic anomaly where professions ac-

knowledged the ideological case for its members acquiring self-determining and co-operative skills but yet the educational system from which the professions emerged was highly authoritarian and unilateral in its processes. This developmental stalemate still persists in many cases.

Self and Peer Assessment and Accreditation was therefore seen as a corner-stone of an educational process that directly addresses this anomaly, and also as a method of assessment which elicits the maximum learning from experience, i.e. focusing on the process as a basis of product; developing self-criticism; developing the skills of giving and receiving honest and direct constructive feedback; developing the ability to set realistic goals; and understanding group dynamics.

Selecting Criteria

The Self and Peer Assessment process is carried out in small groups or the whole group, with each person having a set time for uninterrupted self-assessment, and then receiving an equal time for feedback. Assessment is based on criteria selected prior to the self and peer process, and should reflect the scope of the assessment and the time available. These could be: a fixed set of criteria applicable to the whole group; key criteria applicable to all with options to be chosen by individuals; or a free choice by individuals. Where participants choose their own selection of criteria, then that choice is also up for assessment (e.g. too easy, too hard, irrelevant). Participants are encouraged to balance negative and positive in their self assessment.

The peer-assessment is also based on the criteria selected. A clear distinction is made between the criteria for assessment and the 'whole person'. This is not an occasion for generalised criticism of another group member or for dumping previously undealt with feelings. The peer assessment may include clarifying and/or drawing out questions, negative feedback (including devil's advocate), and positive feedback. A subsequent review of the whole process could focus on contribution rates in the feedback process, the quality and balance of feedback, and such things as gender issues and competitiveness.

The final accreditation is through a formalised process of written self-assessment, which is then reviewed and revised in the light of peer feedback. It is important that participants receive feedback from all group members. This feedback may be focused through an elected 'rattle and shake' person for each person, to support them in drawing up the final self-accreditation.

..final accreditation is through written self-assessment in the light of peer feedback

From this outline model various adaptations are possible, but the basic principles are central to current IDHP practice.

Facilitating Peer Success

Certain issues have clearly emerged from our experience of using the model.

I will summarise some of them as follows:

1) The demands of the self and peer assessment process connect with the process of the whole course. The facilitators have to be clear about the aims and objectives of the course as a whole and of individual strands. The facilitators also have to be clear about standards, and need to be prepared to model, train and confront on these issues throughout the course.

2) The facilitators need to support participants in defining their individual learning needs, and relate these to their development throughout the whole course. In this respect the facilitators are not simply 'peers', they have responsibilities which they are paid to carry out. 3) The facilitators need to trust in participants ability to become self-determining, and be prepared to work on their own issues of letting go of being inappropriately hierarchical as the course progresses. They also need to help foster a self-accepting atmosphere, and be willing to work with the feelings generated by the process.

4) Personal and interpersonal skills development needs to begin early in the course, and in activities not directly related to assessment. It is important for the facilitators to model giving clear and direct feedback, both negative and positive.

5) Facilitators need to maintain an ongoing commitment to their own development, i.e. having encouraged participants to set and monitor their own learning they need to be open themselves to feedback and change.

I personally have a lot of experience of both self and peer assessment and of traditional assessment as a lecturer in higher education. I have no doubt that self and peer assessment is more challenging to the facilitator than traditional forms. The facilitator needs to be clear about when the role of hierarch is appropriate, knowing when to support and challenge, or when to disclose, share or confront as a peer. The traditional hiding place of the unchallengeable authority is gone. I am also sure that the continuity of the process is also rigorous for course participants, and means that the final accreditation can at last become a celebration of a whole process, rather than a disembodied, disempowering ritual which can do no other than assert the power of the unilateral authority.

The facilitator needs to be clear about when the role of hierarch is appropriate, knowing when to support and challenge, or when to disclose, share or confront as a peer

For further reference I recommend

Heron J. (1974) The concept of a Peer Learning Community, University of Surrey

Heron J. (1981) "Assessment Revisited" in Boud D. (ed.) Developing Student Autonomy in Learning, Kogan Page.

Kilty J. (1979) Self and Peer Assessment and Peer Audit, University of Surrey.