

Strategies for Including a Psychodrama Course in an Undergraduate Curriculum

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ABSTRACT. This article reports on strategies for including a psychodrama course in an undergraduate curriculum. The two authors, one a faculty member and the other an administrator, suggest six important factors for successful acceptance. A clear, organized case must be made for program enhancement, including demonstration of direct benefits for faculty, students, and the institution.

IN A PREVIOUS ARTICLE, Kranz and Houser (1988) described the successful inclusion of psychodrama in an undergraduate curriculum. In their review of the literature, they found little mention of other formalized efforts within a college or university setting. This lack of documentation in the literature may result from a variety of factors; however, rather than speculating about the reasons for omission, we present strategic considerations that may lead to successful adoption of a psychodrama course into an institution's curriculum.

We offer the following suggestions to foster the development of a successful inclusion strategy. We devised this strategy after extensive research. The suggestions we present should be organized into an overall acceptance plan that has been tailored for the individual institution by the psychodrama faculty member(s). This phase should be complete before there is extensive discussion with other campus individuals.

1. One must define psychodrama as a formalized therapeutic discipline and explain its benefits as an important addition to the curriculum of the institution. Informal, one-on-one discussions should be held with the individual faculty members and administrators who are most likely to be involved in the program's acceptance. These discussions should focus on psychodrama's benefits for the department and for other programs. It is very important to have informative, nonthreatening discussions with the

faculty and key administrators to gain their support for the course's inclusion. We recommend that for procedural matters one should actively solicit the suggestions of the key people.

2. Those proposing the program should demonstrate the cost effectiveness of the psychodramatic approach and focus on the qualifications of the potential psychodrama faculty. This focus should include mention of certification levels and approved training programs.

3. We recommend conducting a careful survey to find the "best fit" for a psychodrama course within the curriculum. Such a fit often depends on the nature of the curriculum organization of the institution. This survey requires careful planning and preparation and should include discussions with administrators, chairpersons, and a variety of faculty members across disciplines. The focus should be on how the proposed course would interrelate with other courses and programs.

4. Special demonstrations and presentations can develop direct student, faculty, and administrative interest. Other steps for developing interest in psychodrama include an initial elective offering or special seminar that is well planned and implemented. It is important that this initial focus be received positively. The presentations can also be given off campus in a therapeutic setting and can include practicing professionals. One should solicit the support of local professionals for both demonstrations of psychodrama and future course offerings.

5. Presenters for the project should document the use of psychodrama in a variety of therapeutic settings. They can show its strength as a therapeutic focus useful in group settings. They should also indicate that there is an established professional psychodrama organization, code of ethics, set of training standards, rules for certification, and a highly regarded professional journal for psychodrama.

6. Documentation should also be presented about employment opportunities in a variety of settings for those trained in psychodrama.

It should be noted that adoption of courses in an established curriculum is not an easy task because of budgetary limitations, current faculty teaching responsibilities, and department policies and procedures. Change must be viewed as an enrichment to the established curriculum. Thus, a clear, organized case must be made for program enhancement, including direct benefits for the faculty, students, and the institution.

REFERENCES

- Kranz, P. L., & Houser, K. (1988). A psychodrama course for undergraduates. *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry*, 41(3), 91-96.