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THE INFLUNTIAL LEADER: WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER

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INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

BY

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ABSTACT

The American Education System is at a time period in its technological history where many traditional educators have been asked to develop courses that will benefit those who may be looking for a web-based education. To be an effective distance learning educator, one must possess the adequate knowledge of course content, the experience to utilize the correct technological tools and understand the various distance learning pedagogical approaches to effectively facilitate an online course of instruction. This study evaluated student achievement among 37 multimedia media students who participated in one of three different delivery methods at a community college in Northwestern Ohio. During the four-week study each section was administered the same content through either a traditional seated class, hybrid based instruction, or online environment. The student achievement score was a combination of the average of four project scores and an assessment score. The results of the study showed that there was no significance between the three methods of delivery. Several recommendations are made for future studies.

Young Man in a Hurry

William Rainey Harper, arguably one of the most influential leaders in the history of education, impacted the field of education by his various contributions to his discipline area of religious studies and languages, as well as his impact on the formation of distance education and the concept of community colleges in America. Widely known for his leadership as the first president of the University of Chicago, Dr. Harper has influenced several different areas of higher education, many of which are still highlighted in the constant evolving face of educational technology. As author Milton Mayer simply put it, William Rainey Harper was “Three men disguised as one” and his contributions to education were from a man who created the University of Chicago, a man who influenced others to study the “deadest of dead languages” and a man who persuaded the “Oil King” John D Rockefeller to invest in education (1957, p. 3).

Harper was a man who not only envisioned the perfect university, but acted upon it by involving himself in every aspect of developing the University of Chicago. From the design and architectural buildings, to the structure of new and innovative opportunities for learning, Harper revolutionized the university concept which is still evident in the modernization of college campus life and the resources needed to not only obtain knowledge, but understand the knowledge and how it is to be used. Because of Harper’s ambitious approach to higher education, and his inability to simply take a break, he had become known as the “young man in a hurry”

Early Childhood & Education

William Rainey Harper was born on July 24th, 1856 in New Concord, Ohio. William’s father, Samuel Harper and his mother, Ellen Rainey were among the few hundred from Scotland who settled in New Concord and established Muskingum College in 1837. As the age of three,

William Harper was able to not only read, but had difficulty putting down the books he read. Specifically, he enjoyed reading the New Testament for countless hours, often being punished for spending his late nights engaged in the stories of the Bible (Mayer, 1957, p.6).

Harper's desire to learn and his early reading capabilities evidently lead to his accelerated learning ability over the average student in New Concord. At the age of ten, William was admitted into the freshman class at Muskingum College. Despite the college administrations fear of jeopardizing the credibility of the college, a "not brilliant and erratic, but consistently good" 13 year old Harper graduated with a degree from Muskingum College (Mayer, 1957, p.7).

Professional Career

For three years after he completed his coursework, Harper attempted to reclaim his life as a child, and worked with his father at the local general store. As this was not Harper's true passion, he was offered his first educational job teaching elementary Hebrew at Muskingum. A year later, Harper began his graduate work at Yale and graduated in 1875 as a specialist in the Hebrew language obtaining his PhD in Pedagogy at the age of 18 (Ohio History, 2012).

In 1875, Harper married Ella Paul who was the daughter of the president of Muskingum College. Shortly after, they moved to Macon, Tennessee, where a 19 year old Harper became the principal of small Masonic College. Confident that he had much more to accomplish, Harper soon took a decrease in rank and accepted the position as a tutor at the preparatory school of Denison University. Not long after, Harper was promoted to principal of the preparatory school in 1876 and convinced the school to allow him to organize a class in Hebrew, in addition to his responsibilities of instructing Latin and Greek (Mayer, 1957, p. 10-12).

A vital point in Harper's career occurred when he left Denison to become Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the Baptist Union Theological Seminary of Illinois. It was around

1880 that Harper was recognized as one of the foremost scholars of Hebrew in the United States. It was also at this time that Harper envisioned an opportunity for students to learn year round, and began offering his courses during the summer months (Mayer, 1957, p.14). Only a few years later, this unconventional method soon became an educational phenomenon.

Yet another opportunity arose when Harper acknowledged that students wanted to learn but could not afford to travel to the school for the coursework. According to Mayer's book, *Young Man in a Hurry*, it was at this time that many believe the birth of distance learning in America had occurred. Harper's system was to teach by correspondence. He mailed out mimeographed lessons to students who completed the assignments, and then mailed the papers back to him for grading. Because of this correspondence concept, Harper was able to instruct thousands of students in the Hebrew language. As a result of this need for additional content and resources, the creation of textbooks and journals became a priority for Harper's newly founded American Institute of Hebrew (p 14-15).

In 1885 Harper was acting Dean of Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts in New York (Ohio History, 2012). Mayer explains how it was during this time that Harper had an "audacious" vision of the "Great University", which would rival such schools as Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Oxford, and Cambridge. A struggle to retain Harper's service at Morgan Park failed when Harper became chair of the Semitic Languages Department at Yale University in 1886. Harper's ability to effectively teach Hebrew in such a concise manner became desired by students throughout the university. His passion for teaching the Bible at Yale became such a popular topic that Harper was asked to repeat his lectures at places such as New York, Philadelphia and Boston (p.27).

Mayer continues to explain that in months to follow, Harper would be involved in yet another life changing event as he persistently attempted to pursue the financial support of John D. Rockefeller, the Oil King, to invest his money in a “University like no other”. Rockefeller no doubtingly wanted Harper to be president of a college, but concerns about locating the college in Chicago instead of New York created much controversy. The other factor was Rockefeller’s generosity to start a college, but Harper didn’t just want a college, he wanted the “Great University” – one that was new and innovative. One possible factor that motivated Harper during this time was when his superiors at Yale found out that Harper has been considering this opportunity in Chicago, they remarked that he could not “honorably leave Yale” (p.44).

Once Rockefeller had committed to the obligation of a \$600,000 pledge, in addition to \$400,000 raised by the city of Chicago, he named Harper as president, but Harper did not officially accept the position. According to Mayer, in order for Harper to take on such a task, he had to be sure that Rockefeller indeed was planning to support the creation of a university and not just a college. Harper, with the assistance of Reverend Fredrick T. Gates, created a list of eight stipulations that would need to be acknowledged before Harper would accept the position of president. The main point within this list requested that an additional million dollars be donated by Rockefeller. Because Rockefeller believed Harper was the best man for the job, he yielded, and Harper would get his university (p.45). While still employed at Yale, he accepted the position of president at a board meeting on September 18, 1890.

During his tenure at the university, Harper accomplished much as an influential leader, including the university extension of five divisions, which was the first of its kind in America. This extension division was then separated into five departments which included: lecture study, class study, correspondence teaching, library and training. Specifically, the correspondence

study was supported by 125 instructors who taught 350 courses that included 3000 students (Simonson, 2011, p.38). It was unfortunate that this program declined in strength, partially because of funding. Harper remained at The University of Chicago for the rest of his professional career until he died on January 10th, 1906 from a battle with cancer.

Most Significant Contributions

During Harper's career, he published several influential works such as *An Inductive Greek Method*, *Eight Books of Caesar's Gallic War*, and *Religion and the Higher Life*. His published work however did not impact education as much as his contributions to the concept of the university and its distinction from a college. His leadership in the creation of The University of Chicago was the gateway for his major contributions to the modern concept of educational technology. The University of Chicago, still one of America's most reputable universities was the first to implement a series of unconventional strategies that eventually set the standard for today's major universities.

William Rainey Harper was considered one of the pioneers of distance education when he utilized the correspondence concept of education to help educate those who were unable to travel in order to complete coursework.

Harper also was one of the first to conceptualize the separation of education into components that would feature the idea of the junior college. Harper believed that students should narrow the field to a specific set of course, versus the large range that students traditionally had to endure while studying in higher education and graduate work. It is evident that the concept of junior college was a success, due to the vast amount of community colleges found around the United States. Harper (1905) states in his book, *The Trend in Higher*

Education, that “The student of the small college, it is urged, has an advantage in that he comes into closer contact with the officers of the faculty” (p.350-351). This argument still exists to this day, and it is a valid point made by recruiters of smaller technical and community colleges around the nation.

Harper (1905) continues to discuss the advantages that one may have within a junior college by stating his belief that “the student of the small college, it is urged, had greater opportunity to develop responsibility; the number of students being small, each one stands out more definitely and receives greater recognition, while at the same time, he actually counts for more in the various activities of the college life” (P. 252). Harper for the most part, provides a strong argument for the junior college concept, however notes that there is no guarantee of this with every student. Many students who attend larger universities have also had opportunities to gain closer working relationships with faculty members, as well as be recognized for their efforts (Harper, 1905, P.351-352). Regardless of the specifics, Harper’s focus was on that of academic quality, and understood that students have diverse needs, some of whom would benefit from a large university, while others within a junior college setting.

Harper also believed that students needed more opportunity to take courses. Not only did he allow the acceptance of women into the university setting, he believed students should not be accepted based on grades, but their ability to learn in their chosen field of study (Mayer, 1957, p.54). Harper’s contributions to the university setting involved an organization of administrative changes which included the structure of four executive officers: a president, an Examiner, a Recorder, and a Registrar (Clifton, 1933, P.269).

In addition to the introduction of corresponding classes, Harper utilized the quarter system to allow for more use of the university facilities and accommodate those who had work

schedules or other commitments that would otherwise keep the student from completing coursework. Harper believed that people wanted to learn during the summers, just as much as they did another time of the year. He also understood that students should benefit from the University of Chicago, even if they lived too far to attend the university (Mayer, 1975, P.55).

Harper also was recognized for his ability to rekindle the interest in languages, especially of Hebrew and the studies of the New Testament. It was this interest that lead Harper to begin the correspondence classes that eventually opened up doors for other disciples.

Harper's Impact on Education

Mayer believes that William Rainey Harpers vision on the new University of Chicago was that of innovation. When Harper began to plan the new education establishment, he separated the institution into three parts, “The University proper, the university extension work, and the University publication work” (p.52). Harper’s correspondence school, along with nighttime courses downtown and library services, ensured that everyone could be educated anywhere.

During Harper’s tenure at the University of Chicago, many contributions were made to the field of education that had a profound impact on today’s visualization of educational technology. Among these influences was Harper’s concept of a “research driven” university, where faculty teaching loads were reduced in order to allow for time to conduct educational research in their given discipline (Mayer, 1957, p.53). This would provide an extensive knowledge to the professor, hence allowing them to expand on their basic lecture and offer a more meaningful delivery of instruction. This may be one of the first instances where professional development was offered to enhance professor effectiveness in the classroom.

Harper also found himself in the position to increase faculty wages, almost doubling them in most positions.

Another influence Harper made was in regards to the structure of education and the levels at which students would learn. Until the time of Harper's "great university", students would engage in a broad range of subjects, typically five or six, which resulted in the diffusion of knowledge among the students. Harper's intention was to limit the range and create a focused plan of work where students would concentrate on two or three subjects that were of importance to the specific track the student had interest in (Mayer, 1957, p.53). Today's modern college allows students to choose a given field and focus on particular courses that will offer specialized education and prepare the student for such a career. Mayer remarks, "The learning of learned men was useless unless they were equipped to analyze it; mere fact-finding, purposeless or repetitious, would not pass for research in Harper's university" (1957, p.54). This fundamental concept is now a key component of contemporary instructional strategies that are used in both traditional classrooms, as well as distance education methods.

Mayer describes how Harper's unorthodox methods stretched far beyond that of simply reorganizing how students learned. Challenging the tradition of education, Harper was the first to admit women as both faculty members, and as students. Harper also redirected the concept of college sports by promoting the idea of sport for the student, not for the entertainment value if provided to the spectators. This was evident when coaches were simply tenured faculty members and not solely employed to produce a winning record for the team (p.54).

Another impact Harper had on higher education was the acceptance of students into his university, not by way of grades, but by way of learning ability and the interest of the student. The university would benefit everyone, not just students that were focusing on a particular

discipline. This was evident by Harper's vision of the universities library system, in which anyone could find what they needed, not just particular subjects that were traditionally found in other universities.

One of the most significant contributions Harper had towards education was his vision of a junior college. Harper believed that the junior college concept would offer more diversity in the field and better prepare the student for a college education. The evolution of junior colleges, technical colleges and community colleges have introduced more specific hands on skills practice and training, which is very beneficial to a majority of students. The concept has now stretched beyond its origin to include smaller classroom environments that welcomes students of all ages, and offers flexibility for those who work full time, or are required to return to school to learn new skills and remain competitive in our vastly growing industry of change.

The idea of correspondence work had developed due to recent technological advancements, yet the concept has not deviated from the original intentions, to communicate between students and teachers. Harper predicted, "The day is coming when the work done by correspondence courses will be greater in amount than done in the classrooms of our academics and colleges; when the students who shall recite by correspondence will far outnumber those who make oral recitations" (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, Zvacek, 2011, p.38).

Many may argue that now more than any other time in our history, we have as many online (corresponding) students as we do in the classroom. The Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) released information that stated, "In 2007–08, about 4.3 million undergraduate students, or 20 percent of all undergraduates, took at least one distance education course. About 0.8 million, or 4 percent of all undergraduates, took their entire program through distance education" (IES,

2012). It should be noted that these statistics do not include corresponding classes, only distance learning course that use the Internet.

As Harper had believed, it is vital to offer students an education from outside the classroom. One key difference from Harper's era is the popularity of interactive audio and videoconferencing, pre-recorded instructional videos, and computer-based systems. The introduction of social media interaction is also more widely accepted and used by students who are willing to engage in distance learning to complete their coursework.

Harper pioneered the distance learning concept during his early career with his influence at Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts. Between 1883 and 1891, the state of New York accepted the education gained by students who completed work by both correspondence course and summer school (Simonson, 2011, P.38). Today, thousands of students receive their education from an accredited program at a major university without even stepping foot on campus. Even though the means of learning has changed, one primary benefit of distance learning is that students who may not be able to attend traditional courses can still have the opportunity to learn, just as Harper had believed.

Harper's Influence on the Future of Education

As president, William Rainey Harper continued to influence the field of education at the University of Chicago for the remainder of his career. In 1901, J. Stanley Brown and William Harper founded the nation's first public community college in Joliet, IL. The concept of the junior college began with only 6 students and offered the same academic quality and content that would have been received in the first two years of a major university. This experimental post-

high school college would accommodate those students who lived locally and was officially named Joliet Junior College in 1916 (Joliet Junior College, 2012).

In 1966 William Rainey Harper College was named in honor of the first president of the University of Chicago and the originator of the community college concept. 1967 Harper College opens its temporary facilities campus in Palatine, Ill with 1,725 students

In 1973, The William Rainey Harper Educational Foundation was established to offer scholarships and special projects to students at Harper College (Harper College, 2012).

In 2001, William Rainey harper was inducted into the National Educator's Hall of Fame. In Von Pitman's (2001) article taken from A Century, PLUS – Independent Study in the American University.

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Born July 24th, 1856 in New Concord, Ohio

1866 Enrolled at Muskingum College in New Concord

1870 Graduated with an A.B. degree at the age of 13

Worked with Father at General Store to purchase and sell wool

1872 Taught elementary Hebrew at Muskingum

1873 Enrolled in the Philology Department at Yale University.

1875 Graduated from Yale with a PhD in Pedagogy at the age of 18.

1875 Taught Greek, Latin, and Hebrew at Masonic College

1876 Taught as an Instructor at Denison University in Granville, Ohio

1879 Promoted to Principle of the Granville Academy, (preparatory school for Denison)

1880 Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the Baptist Union Theological Seminary of Illinois.

1885 Dean of Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts in New York

1886 Became chair of the Semitic Languages Department at Yale University

1891 Assisted John D. Rockefeller in organizing the University of Chicago

1892 Became first president of the University of Chicago

1896 Assisted Lydia Moss Bradley in developing the Bradley Polytechnic Institution

(Currently known as Bradley University) in Peoria, Ill and became its first president. (The Founding of Bradley)

1901 First Junior College established (Joliet Junior College) by Harper and close friend, J. Stanley Brown.

Died January 10th, 1906

1966 William Rainey Harper College named in honor of the first president of the University of Chicago and the originator of the community college concept.

1967 Harper College opens its temporary facilities campus in Palatine, Ill with 1,725 students

2001 Elected to The National Educator's Hall of Fame