
herdsa newsletter

Higher education research and development society of Australia vol 1, no 1

Why HERDSA is needed

When Mayhew, in 1967, entitled his anthology *'Higher Education in the Revolutionary Decades'*, he could hardly have foreseen that in the ensuing decade higher education would itself undergo a revolution. In 1973 very few persons would argue the proposition that higher education, in Australia, as elsewhere, is facing major challenges and undergoing major change.

The development of an active Society dedicated to the study of higher education, and to the facilitation of improvements, can help to ensure that those involved in higher education will have opportunity to participate in meeting the challenges of change. It is for this reason that some persons have strongly supported the formation of yet another society – HERDSA.

We believe that there is a real need in Australia for a Society which is specifically oriented to encouraging research and development. We believe that there is a real need for expanded effort in the study of institutions of higher education as a basis for informed decision-making. We believe there is a real need to support those who would wish to initiate change and development. We believe that a Society which comprises all who live and work within the higher education industry – staff and students from Colleges of Advanced Education, Universities and Teachers' Colleges – can provide a major focus for facing and meeting the challenges of higher education, in Australia, in the coming decade.

Fred Katz, President, HERDSA.

Open universities and opening up universities

Universities have, for a long time, been the almost exclusive preserve of the well-to-do, upper-middle class. This is certainly true of 'egalitarian' Australia – as Tom Roper has shown. Limited evidence suggests that it is increasingly becoming the case in CAEs – they too are becoming the preserve of WASPs. The picture in New Zealand and in teachers' colleges is less clear. If academics and students believe that this is unjust then they must do something about it. The options are, I believe, quite limited.

The 'open university', as in Britain, or its antipodean equivalent, is one option: increasing the quota of those students allowed in under the grandfather clause (i.e., over 25 or over 21) is another. Arguments favouring and opposing the open university proposal have been canvassed in the recent, well-publicised document by Barbara Falk and John Anwyl, of Melbourne University.² Data in favour of and opposed to the grandfather clause approach seem to be not so well known. This approach needs a similarly detailed appraisal.

I have only come by snippets of information – and these may well be unreliable. 'Bits' gleaned include: (i) Of the grandfather (and, presumably, grandmother) students admitted to La Trobe University in 1972, all students passed all subjects.³ Not a bad result when compared to the norms!! (By the way, what *were* the criteria for selection – they might have wider application?) (ii) Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, has been admitting a quota of over-age students for many years. I understand that about 20% ultimately graduate – this is not as bad as it sounds since many students, in the first few years, study on a part-time basis. What may be surprising is that of those who do graduate, a relatively high proportion gain First Class Honours degrees, and ultimately post-graduate qualifications.

I make these notes since, if we are serious about the reduction of educational inequalities, then we must explore all means of reducing inequality. The La Trobe data, if accurate, suggest that the adventure of admitting grandfather clause students is fraught with success. Perhaps we should all give it a try? P.J.B.

¹ The opinions, naturally, are those of the writer, not the policy of HERDSA.

² Falk, B. and Anwyl, J.: *The Desirability and Feasibility of an Australian Open-Type University*. Report to FAUSA, February 1973.

³ La Trobe have increased the entry of grandfather-clause students to 40 in 1973.

Brief items of information

Trigger films

These are films which last no more than two or three minutes. They depict teaching situations which are as close to reality as possible. A set of five films on 35mm has recently been produced at the Tertiary Education Research Centre (TERC): these were scripted by Susan Hayes, and the direction was by George Pashuk. This, and a previous set of trigger films, are available to others, on request to the Director of TERC, Professor F.M. Katz.

W.H.O. monograph

In June of this year the W.H.O. published a Report (Technical Report, Series No. 521, 1973) on 'The Training of Teachers for Schools of Medicine and Allied Health Professions'. This document is in many ways invaluable to those interested in the training of personnel in other facets of higher education. It covers such aspects as the need for training, the scope of training programmes, types of training activities and evaluation. It is available from the nearest branch of the Australian Government Printer.

For those interested in research

Combing all of the relevant educational and other Journals can be very wasteful of time. A short-cut for those interested in higher education is the Society for Research in Higher Education's *ABSTRACTS*. This is published frequently, and abstracts from over 160 journals. The SRHE also publishes a register of ongoing research.

Regional teacher training centre for the health sciences

This organisation was set up through the joint efforts of the World Health Organisation (Western Pacific) and the Commonwealth Government. It has already sponsored on Workshops, of two-weeks duration, for the Deans of medical schools within the Western Pacific Region. Other seminars/workshops are in the pipe-line. If you want to find out more, contact the Director, Professor F.F. Rundle, RTTC, University of New South Wales.

more items page 7

Some issues of major importance

The development of teaching and learning research centres

Australasia is experiencing a rapid growth in teaching and learning research centres in institutions of higher education. Six Australian universities have such centres, and one has recently been set up in New Zealand at Victoria University. Increasingly, Colleges of Advanced Education are creating units — e.g. R.M.I.T., Mitchell College, NSW Institute of Technology. Many other CAEs and Universities are in various stages of creating such centres.

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) recently commissioned a Report on the existing centres. This Report is due to be made available in mid-September. It is understood that it will provide documentation on such issues as: (i) The organisational framework of such centres; (ii) The functions they ought to perform; (iii) A complete description of the physical and human resources that are used; and, (iv) A rather briefer section on the problems which have been encountered. This Report will be available from the Secretary of the AVCC, Box 1142, Canberra. It should be of considerable value to those institutions who are presently considering setting up teaching and learning research centres. (Also see item on W.H.O. Monograph, page 3.)

Programmes in the up-grading of teachers in higher education

The up-grading of teaching is high on the list of priorities of many teaching and learning research centres. Programmes vary widely in their length, depth of coverage, and the task audience — e.g., 'all staff' or 'new' members of staff. Some institutions (e.g., Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education and Monash University) have already developed Degree and Diploma programmes.

In order to facilitate development of these programmes, it would be very useful if readers could send the Editor (a) Any syllabi which are available; (b) Any evaluative data that have accumulated on the success of such courses. These data can then be made available to others who are presently developing courses of this nature.

Promotion through teaching: the need for some criteria

One of the principal forces acting against the improvement of teaching in higher education is that many members of staff believe that teaching is not as highly rewarded as is research. This may be more true of Universities than it is for Teachers' Colleges or CAEs. One of the principal reasons for this state of affairs is the absence of criteria which might be used to lock teaching into the 'reward structure'. Part of the difficulty has been resolved.

The University of New South Wales Staff Association has developed a set of operational criteria. These centre on the dimensions of the teacher as: (i) An innovator; (ii) As an evaluator of his own teaching; (iii) As a student of teaching and learning; (iv) As a researcher in teaching and learning; and, (v) As a worker in teaching. Each of these broad categories has been spelled out with the use of 43 discrete criteria. This document, which may assist to lock teaching into promotion, and thus enhance the status of teaching, can be obtained from the Executive Secretary, University of NSW Staff Association, Box 1, Kensington, Sydney.

The evaluation of teaching by consumers -- i.e. by students

Somewhat surprisingly, the evaluation of teachers by their students is still a contentious issue in some quarters. This is in spite of the fact that (a) Such judgements appear to be reliable and stable over time; (b) Seem to be relatively independent of characteristics that might be thought to bias clients' judgements -- e.g., actual and expected grade, grade-point average, etc; and, (c) Such ratings seem to be positively correlated with the amount of student learning.

One of the critical questions is, of course, the use of an objective, reliable, valid, easily available, practical to administer instrument. Readers are referred to three possibilities (cf. Purdue Rating Scale; Hildebrand and Wilson, 1970; McKeachie, 1969¹).

¹ Hildebrand, M. and Wilson, R.: *Effective University Teaching* . . . Center for R. & D. in Higher Ed. Univ. of California, Berkeley. McKeachie, W.: *Amer. Assoc. Univ. Professors*. Bulletin, December, 1969, 439-44.

Brief items of information continued

Education technology

Many institutions which have teaching and learning research centres, have, as part of these centres an 'audio-visual aids' section or a section devoted to improvements in the use of educational technology. The University of Melbourne has, since 1969, been publishing a Newsheet entitled 'Educational Technology'. It summarises the current uses of technological hardware at that institution. If any of the Teachers' Colleges or Colleges of Advanced Education have similar (regular or irregular) publications, could they send them to The Editor. This will enable us to pass on to readers items of major significance in the development of educational technology.

On medical education

This is clearly a growth-point in the context of professional education. The year-old Australasian Association for Medical Education now has a membership in excess of 200. It holds its annual conference in Canberra in August, at which 15 papers will be presented, discussed and formally evaluated. A number of these relate to the use of educational technology — and to the integration of software and hardware. Of signal interest will be the paper of Dr. Ilma Brewer, Sydney University, who has pioneered the successful development of audio-visual carrel learning in this country. Other papers relate to the general theme of the Conference which is 'Assessment': aspects covered include self-assessment, continuous assessment, how best to provide feedback to students, etc. While the context of the Conference is principally medical, the issues being discussed have implications for all teachers in higher education. (The person to contact is Dr. W.H. McCarthy, School of Surgery, Sydney Hospital.)

Overseas news and views

A great many publications on higher education emerge from Europe, North America, Canada and elsewhere. In each issue of the 'NEWSLETTER' I will try and provide a lead-in to some current issue in higher education. It is intended that the contents will be sufficiently thought-provoking so that readers can follow through some of the relevant literature. *Editor.*

Co-ordination in higher education

Any society which provides for a multi-stranded system of higher education — as is the case in, say, Britain, the United States or Australia — must provide for co-ordination between the various strands. Co-ordination, or rather the need for it, springs from a variety of sources such as increasing differentiation and specialisation of functions, the rapidly mounting costs of higher education, the reliance on public funding, and the increasing extent to which higher education is subject to external influence and control. This of course means that Universities and (to a much lesser extent) CAEs and Teachers Colleges will have to modify their instinct for autonomy.

In the interests of the community and in the interests of students and staff within higher education, Australia will soon have to make a firm choice as to the type of co-ordinating, umbrella authorities that are best suited to its needs, this choice will also have to be made with a full recognition of the decisions that individual institutions are prepared to vest in these external authorities. If Universities, CAEs and Training Colleges shrink from making these decisions they could well be made elsewhere — as is currently occurring in Great Britain.

For those interested in these issues, the following volumes might prove useful:

Perkins, J.A. and Israel, B.B.: *Higher Education: From Autonomy to Systems*. Internat. Council for Educ. Development, N.Y., 1972.

Palola, E.G. et alii: *Higher Education by Design: The Sociology of Planning*. University of California, Berkeley, 1970.

Smelser, N. and Almond, G. (Eds): *Public Higher Education in California*. (Forthcoming).

Herdsa Application form

Mr. A.J. Lonsdale, Hon. Treasurer, HERDSA, c/- Educational Development Unit, Western Australian Institute of Technology, Hayman Road, Bentley, W.A. 6102. I wish to join HERDSA as a Foundation Member (\$5)/Foundation Student Member (\$1)* and have enclosed the appropriate joining fee. Please send me HERDSA publications and details of forthcoming activities.

*Delete where inapplicable.

Title

Name

Position held

Institution

Address for correspondence

Areas of special interest

The Newsletter

This is your 'NEWSLETTER'. It does not belong to the Executive. The Executive, and I as your (temporary) Editor have worked out a set of ideas as to the purposes and contents of the 'NEWSLETTER'. These ideas are set out below, and are hopefully embodied within this first issue. If you are dissatisfied, or think that improvements can be made, then please write to me making specific suggestions.

In the meantime, we offer the following policy for your consideration: We believe that the 'NEWSLETTER' should :-

- 1 Reflect as closely as possible the widespread interests and composition of HERDSA. That is, it should report on matters of significance to staff and students in all areas of tertiary education throughout Australasia.
- 2 The contents of the 'NEWSLETTER' will relate to innovations, research and development in teaching: primary emphasis will be placed on developments within Australasia, though this will not preclude the inclusion of relevant data from overseas.
- 3 The 'NEWSLETTER' will be limited to a maximum of eight pages, and it is intended to produce an issue every two months. Because of limitations of space, matters of importance will not be treated in depth - that is the province of other publications. Items will be included as 'triggers', i.e., to stimulate the readers' interest and trigger-off independent enquiry.
- 4 Finally, the 'NEWSLETTER' will be used as a vehicle for relaying to Members decisions made by your Executive, and also for notifying you about forthcoming events.

Peter J. Blizard, (Temporary) Editor, Tertiary Education Research Centre, University of New South Wales.