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Editor: Anthony Dare, C/- Education Unit, RMIT, PO Box 2476, GPO Melbourne, Vic. 3001.

Committee: Andrew Bain, Felicity Beighton, Barbara Falk, Norman Henry, Jacqueline Lublin, Tom Tescher.

D esign by David Spratt. Printed by the Australian Union of Students, 97 Drummond Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053.

Our lead story this issue is a report on the Regional Colleges Project, commissioned by the previous government and being undertaken by the Education Research Unit of the Australian National University. The project leader is Dr D S Anderson. It is obvious that the government was concerned with the future of country or regional colleges, many of them living under the threat of universities and the prospect of non-viability. The Minister's letter of invitation to the University stated: "The research project will concern itself with a number of aspects and issues related to smaller regional colleges and will select several particular institutions for close study. It will study aspects of the cost-structures of colleges, their organisation and their relationship to their local communities and their actual and possible roles within the college system and within the areas where they are located." Here, Dr Kevin Batt, member of the Regional Colleges Project team, gives some details about the progress of the project.

Regional colleges project

In October 1972, the then Minister for Education and Science invited the Australian National University to undertake a major research project on the regional college and its environment.

The invitation was accepted, and the Regional Colleges Project is proceeding under the general direction of Dr D S Anderson, head of the ANU's Education Research Unit. The two Co-Directors, responsible for day-to-day operations on the Project, are Dr G S Harman and Dr C Selby-Smith.

Interim reports are being prepared, and the final report is scheduled for completion by the end of 1974. This will enable the Commission on Advanced Education to take account of the findings in making recommendations to the Australian

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government for the 1976-78 triennium.

The concern of the CAE on matters relating to the smaller colleges was expressed in 1972 in the Commission's **Third Report**:

"The Commission is aware of the wide diversity that exists within the college system. At one end are the large multi-discipline institutions and at the other end are the small single-discipline colleges. The former show the characteristics of a mature tertiary system: a large student body, a large staff covering a range of disciplines and the ability to offer a wide choice of courses. This comment is not meant to criticise the ability of the staff in the smaller institutions, be they single or multi-discipline institutions. However, it is clear that the large institution can, with little extra cost, offer courses which are beyond the capacity of the smaller college. In brief, they demonstrate the advantages of scale of operations. The problem is to maintain the balance fairly among the types of institutions to the advantage of students and the community." (p. 8)

The Commission noted that a number of regional colleges are located close to other colleges, and then added:

"We realise that some of the country colleges have a lively tradition which links them with their historical background. While fully approving of the enthusiasm of the community interest in these small institutions we realise, nevertheless, that they present economic and educational problems which need attention." (p. 9)

A central policy question, on which the Project report will provide information, requires the balancing of the educational and social contribution of regional colleges (including their contribution to decentralization) against costs. However, the Project has been broadly conceived and is in sum an interdisciplinary study of the whole role of regional colleges of advanced education within the developing system of Australian post-secondary education.

Most members of the ANU Education Research Unit are involved in the Project, and some other members of the University's Research School of Social Sciences are working with the Project team. Members of the team have undertaken field work in all states. Regional colleges are defined as institutions funded by the Commission on Advanced Education which are not located in cities with a population of more than 100,000. For comparison purposes, however, data have also been collected on a number of metropolitan institutions.

Background data have been collected on all regional colleges, but more intensive studies have been made of selected institutions, different samples having been drawn for different purposes. Surveys were made in 1973 of matriculating students and their parents, and these students are being followed-up in 1974. Surveys have also been made of college students, academic staff, staff associations, college libraries, of colleges as institutional units, and of members of college councils. In addition, in a number of colleges, the principal and other members of staff and students have been interviewed in depth.

These data are being analysed and integrated, and during 1974 a small number of colleges are being investigated in greater depth through institutional case studies. In these case studies, special attention is being given to the interrelationships of the colleges with their local communities.

The Project team hopes that it will be able to provide evidence on alternative policies that may be useful to the co-ordinating authorities and colleges faced with making policy decisions.

It is anticipated that the final report will be published early in 1975 in the Education Research Unit's Occasional Report Series.

The Australian government is making $45,000 available to ANU for the conduct of the Project. The University is also making a considerable contribution. The University has engaged two additional post-doctoral fellows to work full-time on the study during 1974.

Further information about the project is available from the Co-Directors, Regional Colleges Project, Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, PO Box 4, Canberra City, ACT 2601.

Kevin Batt, Senior Research Fellow, Education Research Unit, ANU.

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Ontario CAATs

The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (the CAAT's) are of interest to Australia because they bear resemblances to both technical colleges and colleges of advanced education. Here our reviewer, Jim Hurley, explores the implications of a report prepared by the Systems Research Group, Incorporated for the Ontario Commission on Post-Secondary Education (the so-called Wright Commission whose report **The Learning Society** *appeared recently).*

The Commission obtained the services of an independent organization, the Systems Research Group, in order to describe the system of twenty Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) and to make suggestions for the future. In brief, their suggestions were as follows :
(i) The CAATs are providing alternative programs to those of universities. Establishment of transfer programs would destroy their unique character.
(ii) The establishment of graduate programs should be studied further. Perhaps one institute (Ryerson) should be designated.
(iii) Post-secondary, retraining, apprenticeship, and training in business and industry programs should be integrated.
(iv) Universities and colleges should be administered as two separate and distinct systems.
(v) A Commission of Higher Education should be established to co-ordinate all aspects of post-secondary education.
(vi) There should be periodic revision of the formula financing scheme to ensure that weighting factors do not have an undue influence on the internal resource allocation process of the colleges.

In the report's discussion of the CAATs as institutions, a number of points arise which have relevance for Australia. The following appear to be the interesting aspects :
(i) There is a repudiation of university dominance and of the notion of an hierarchical system of tertiary education. For example, college consultative committees do not have provision for university representatives. The program structure of the colleges reflects "a government policy of providing a respectable, even prestigious, kind of education that does not mean that a person has dropped out if he does not achieve a university degree" (p.58).
(ii) There is an emphasis on planning and an attempt to come to grips with thorny issues such as rationalisation: in Canadian terms, the avoidance of competitive program offerings. Nevertheless, reading between the lines, one can detect the usual tensions, that is, attempts to protect vested interests in the face of economic and community needs and fears of loss of autonomy.
(iii) The report recognizes that resource allocation is a process rather than an event. There is an awareness of the implications of any given system and the need for constant review. There appears to be a positive attempt to simplify administrative procedures to avoid a multiplicity of referral bodies and to avoid the undue growth of bureaucratic structures in the administration of the system.
(iv) The colleges are community-based and their programs reflect a regional impact in response to a need for education that varies from place to place. This is seen as a distinct feature which distinguishes CAATs from universities, CAATs being oriented towards specific communities while the universities are oriented towards society at large.
(v) There is a great variety in the number and nature of programs offered by CAATs, including a proportion catering for very low numbers or short-term demands. There is a strong trend towards business administration.
(vi) In contrast with Australia, the CAATs do not appear to have recognized that the basis for degree work can be shifted from traditional university assumptions. In this respect, Australian CAEs seem to have made a significant contribution.
(vii) Data on the socio-economic background of CAATs students show that the colleges have a significant function in facilitating upward mobility. The report does not, however, reveal whether the problems raised by this phenomenon have been explored, for example, the differences in social background of staff as compared with students.
(viii) There appears to be a definite staffing policy aimed at attracting a relatively young staff and a 50-50 balance between those with academic and industrial backgrounds. Furthermore, there are attempts to accept that an academic qualification is not a necessary condition for teaching in a CAAT.

In general, the CAAT system is of interest as an example of a viable alternative to universities. It could well be, as Dr. Douglas Wright proposed during his recent Australian visit, that the CAATs have been free to explore and pursue their own role in post-secondary education because free access to Ontario universities removed any pressures upon them to attain prestige in terms of the university sector. In fact, the reverse would be the case: that is, having attracted students to an alternative form of post-secondary education, they have been encouraged to further develop their unique characteristics.

J.K.Hurley, Senior Lecturer, Department of Administrative Studies, RMIT.

Systems Research Group, Inc. **The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology** *(Toronto, 1972), available from booksellers, including James Bennett (Library Suppliers) 78 Auburn Parade, East Hawthorn, Victoria, 3123, about $3.50.*

Non-traditional studies

With the Draft Report of the Committee on Open University now available, interest in the Open University and other forms of non-traditional education is rising. The following three items explore aspects of this subject. *(see also review on p. 6)*

Commission on Non-Traditional Study

'Non-traditional studies' is a term being used widely of late to group together a wide range of innovations in higher education. A recent OECD Conference devoted considerable attention to this area, while the US Commission on Non-Traditional Study has recently issued its final report, **Diversity by Design** (Jossey-Bass, 1973, $US7.95).

The Commission considered that non-traditional study is more an attitude than a system and thus can never be defined except tangentially. This attitude puts the student first and the institution second, concentrates more on the former's need than the latter's convenience, encourages diversity of individual opportunity rather than uniform prescription, and de-emphasizes time, space, and even course requirements in favour of competence and, where applicable, performance. It has concern for the learner of any age and circumstance, for the degree aspirant as well as the person who finds sufficient reward in enriching life through constant, periodic, or occasional study.

"This attitude is not new," the Commission continues; "it is simply more prevalent than it used to be. It can stimulate exciting and high-quality educational process; it can also, unless great care is taken to protect the freedom it offers, be the unwitting means to a lessening of academic rigor and even to charlatanism."

The Commission's main recommendations were:

1. Life-time learning has a new appropriateness today and requires new patterns of support.
2. Colleges and universities must shift emphasis from degree-granting to service to the learner "thus countering what has become a degree-granting obsession."
3. Faculty understandings and commitments must be reoriented and redirected, particularly through in-service development, so that knowledge and use of non-traditional forms and materials will increase.
4. Educational technology must acquire an intelligent and widespread usage.
5. New agencies must be created to disseminate information, to perform guidance and counselling services, and to be assessors and repositories of credit for student achievement.
6. New evaluation tools must be developed to match the non-traditional arrangements now evolving.

This advocacy of non-traditional studies should not be simply equated with the British Open University. In the first place, these innovations are prevalent on many conventional campuses, where independent study, self-paced learning, portfolio assessment, credit for work or life experiences, and other innovations are gaining acceptance. The American University Without Walls is one example of a consortia of colleges sharing their resources and those of the community, while utilising such an educational approach.

The other major departure from the British Open University lies in the great diversity of ways in which degrees may be obtained by off-campus students. The New York Regents' External Degree, for instance, is a degree "awarded by a non-teaching university for knowledge gained elsewhere", regardless of the manner in which the knowledge may have been acquired. The College-Level Entrance Program conducted in the United States by the College Entrance Examination Board, offers general and subject examinations designed to assess competence of a tertiary standard. The program is used to obtain credit or advanced standing at colleges for new students, both young and old, to assist transfers, and, in some cases, to assess students in non-traditional courses. Recent Canadian reports have favoured the incorporation of similar features in the "Open Academies" which they have proposed.

The accreditation of American non-traditional study programs has been eased by the cautious approval recently given them by the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education. (The full text of their statement is on page 8 of the 7 May 1973 issue of **The Chronicle of Higher Education**).

For those wishing to read further in this area, the following are the best references: **Diversity by Design** (cited above); **College Board Review**, no. 85, fall 1972. Articles by Valentine and Nolan; Lewis Mayhew, "Can undergraduate independent study courses succeed?", in **College Board Review**, no. 79, spring 1971, pp. 26-30; Paul Dressel and May Thompson, **Independent Study**, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1973; Ann Heiss, **An Inventory of Academic Innovation and Reform.**

Andrew Bain, Personal Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor, Murdoch University.

Open Tertiary Education

The Draft Report of the Committee on Open University dated April, 1974, has now been released and should be available from government printing outlets shortly. As the inclusion of two members from the College of Advanced Education sector on the Committee suggested, the Draft Report has taken into account the whole tertiary sector of education, not just the university sector and the possible impact of the British Open University, hence the title of the Draft Report, **Open Tertiary Education.**

Press reports indicated that the Committee had opposed the establishment of a British-style open university in Australia. While this is true, it did in fact endorse the aims of that institution, that is, to make education more open as to people, places, methods and ideas. The Committee has come to grips with the diverse programs in Australia, such as external studies provision in various colleges and universities and the widespread facilities for part-time study (in which Australia leads most of the world), by proposing the establishment of an *agency for innovation* which is to encourage the development of more open forms of tertiary education: the proposed National Institute of Open Tertiary Education (NIOTE). The following extract from **Open Tertiary Education** sets out the objectives of this body:

(a) A National Institute of Open Tertiary Education should be established as a statutory body, with the general objective of expanding opportunities in tertiary education for all sections of the community;

(b) the functions of the Institute should be :

(1) in consultation with the Australian Universities Commission and the Commission on Advanced Education, and by initiating collaboration amongst existing tertiary institutions and others that may be established in the future :

(i) to facilitate entry of students of demonstrable capacity, but not necessarily with formal qualifications, to tertiary institutions;

(ii) to maintain and expand opportunities through part-time study;

(iii) to maintain and expand opportunities through off-campus study;

(iv) to arrange surveys of needs of the community generally and of special clienteles for degree and diploma programmes and for continuing vocational and non-vocational education of tertiary level, and to identify gaps in present offerings;

(v) to offer advice on the provision of a network of off-campus courses and the establishment of study centres, in order to provide an overall coverage of appropriate courses and facilities while avoiding duplication.

(2) to collaborate with existing tertiary institutions and others that may be established in the future in establishing procedures for the transfer of students between institutions and the acceptance of credits among institutions;

(3) to make awards on the basis of credits earned in more than one tertiary institution;

(4) to provide information services on opportunities for higher education;

(5) to investigate the need for providing bridging and threshold courses for those students for whom such courses are necessary and, by collaboration with appropriate institutions, to arrange for the establishment of such courses;

(6) to encourage the development of new programmes of study, of innovation in teaching and learning methods, and of the use of technological aids; to make grants to particular institutions or to teams working on research and development for specific projects; and to disseminate information;

(7) to arrange the investigation of social, cultural and economic barriers to access to higher education and the means by which such barriers may be lowered;

(8) to issue reports on its activities.

The Committee has proposed that the NIOTE receive $1.8 million during the next triennium for its own operation plus $2.0 million to make grants to institutions. These grants would be in the form of seed money or pump priming for special developments. When these developments had proved themselves, they would be funded on application through the normal channels (either the Australian Universities Commission or the Commission on Advanced Education).

Further proposals include the funding of certain colleges and universities in 1975 to provide for 1,500 more external places as an interim measure. It is also proposed that the new university at Albury/Wodonga should embark on external programs in 1978.

While the Draft Report seems to have been welcomed by most people who have had an interest in this field, two reservations have been mentioned: that the level of funding is insufficient and that the NIOTE should not be empowered to issue its own academic awards. Discussions with members of the Committee have shed more light on these matters. The proposal to make the NIOTE an agency for innovation with funds for terminal developments only, overcame the difficulty of overlapping responsibility for funding with the established bodies. It would also remove the danger that the NIOTE would become enmeshed in routine administration connected with year-by-year funding of the established activities of institutions. Concerning awards, it was the Committee's aim to have a "last resort" provision for those few students who might have achieved, in NIOTE's eyes, degree standard but had found that no institution would grant an award, even after representations from NIOTE. The Committee believes that such occasions would be rare.

It seems clear that the Draft Report goes far beyond what it might appear at first sight, that is, a resolution of the question of a British-style open university for Australia or not. The philosophy underlying the report (set out in Chapter 2: "Aims and Objectives") suggests that the NIOTE could become an agent for change which, if successful, could influence the development of the entire tertiary sector in the long run. The trend towards recurrent and life-long education and the possible decline in full-time, sequential education, both of which imply a more open, flexible structure of education could mean that the NIOTE might become the vanguard of tertiary educational development, not, as might appear at first sight, merely a worthwhile but secondary provision for people not accommodated by the system as it has traditionally developed.

The main danger is the possibility that the NIOTE, being far less spectacular than an Australian open university, might not commend itself to the Australian Government which is committed in its education policy to the establishment of an open university along British lines. It is to be hoped that the force of argument will be with those who favour the far less spectacular but in the long run, potentially more subtle and effective alternative proposed in the Draft Report.

Editor

Members of the public are invited to comment on the Draft Report by 31 July, addressed to The Executive Member, Committee on Open University, Australian Universities Commission, P.O. Box 250, Canberra City, A.C.T. 2601.

Editor

The West Australian Open Learning Project

Early in 1973, the Assistant Director (Administration and Finance) of the West Australian Institute of Technology, Mr H Peters, talked to a group of Rotarians, giving his impressions of the British Open University and his ideas for an Australian operation. Present was Mr Peter Wright, of Hancock and Wright (the iron ore magnates), who after the talk said that if WAIT could come up with a genuine alternative to campus-based education, then he might be prepared to provide seed money in the early stages.

A working party on open learning was convened, under the chairmanship of Mr A Lonsdale who was then Acting Head of the WAIT Educational Development Unit. Using a variety of methods, such as the DELPHI technique, the problem was defined. When it came to devising a workable scheme it was realised that progress would be quicker if one person could work full time on the task.

Dr M G Walker, a lecturer in biology who was interested in industry-based ecucational schemes, was therefore seconded to the Educational Development Unit as Special Research Fellow for four months to write a report on the topic and propose a pilot scheme. The report was completed at the end of November and copies sent to the Committee on Open University, amongst others.

The pilot scheme has been running officially since 1 January 1974 and was featured in **The Australian** on 24 January. It is being funded during 1974 by a donation from Mr Wright and a grant from the Director's reserve. A full progress report will be presented by Dr Walker at a residential conference to be held in April, 1975, at the Hotel Parmelia entitled "Learning in the Community". This conference will be attended by representatives of the American University-Without-Walls system.

Essentially the scheme is an inversion of the existing campus system – courses are completely individualised for the student in terms of content, place, time and pace of learning. Learning consultants are hired locally, and Dr Walker is co-ordinating the overall system, using a light aircraft where necessary. Although funds are only available for 15 – 20 students, already 40 applications have been received, mainly from women in isolated areas.

If the project is successful, it is intended to approach official sources for funds to continue the scheme.

Review

Houle, Cyril O. **The external degree.** A publication of the Commission on Non-Traditional Study, San Francisco 1973.

In fairly large measure **The external degree** gives an overview of the history and philosophy of tertiary awards gained as a result of external study, concentrating mainly on recent developments in the USA.

In the USA there was no real development of university external studies until 1970, although the Open University in Britain developed from the 1963 "University of the Air" concept and the Universities of London and South Africa go much further back.

There are three main types of procedure enabling persons to qualify for degrees internally or externally. Firstly, the university may examine students who have acquired their knowledge elsewhere, for example the University of London, and we should even note that Oxford and Cambridge conduct examinations for students taught by the colleges.

Secondly, an independent body, for example the Council for National Academic Awards in Britain, issues degrees in respect of courses taught and examined by other bodies. It may be noted that the proposals for the Australian National Institute for Open Tertiary Education envisage a similar operation.

Thirdly, most universities teach, examine and make awards, as do the British Open University (although it employs external examiners) and the three Australian universities which grant external degrees.

In America the economic factor gave considerable impetus to the investigation of external study which appeared to be cheaper, particularly with regard to capital expenditure. However, it is being increasingly appreciated that external study, properly controlled, need not be cheaper. The basic requirement is to deal with the scarcity of educational opportunity and to consider not so much the immediate cost as the ultimate gain.

External students come from a number of areas and include those who grew up when educational opportunities were far more restricted than they are at present. This situation is expected to continue and there will always be potential tertiary students who for some reason did not attend or complete college.

There have been considerable developments in America in terms of achievement testing at tertiary level, it being thought

important to assess not only as a result of formal examinations, but also to assess the value of certain types of experience.

Many American external degree programs are the exact opposite of much present certification in that they certify the level of accomplishment regardless of means rather than certifying pathways regardless of the final level of accomplishment.

The tendency is to apply more rigorous standards to the external study degree student and to the non-traditional institute. Various schemes in America described in this book, such as the City University of New York, the Empire State College of the State University of New York, and the University Without Walls, present highly diversified and individual programs but are nevertheless rigidly controlled with carefully developed curricula or projects. One hopeful factor is that 'assessment external degrees' are not regarded as a panacea, so that there is less danger of over-enthusiasm leading to a decline of standards.

In most American universities the regular faculty are involved in both external and conventional programs and there is insistence on a certain minimum contact time on campus. However, the significance of residence is being queried; the element of guardianship implicit with younger students is irrelevant to older persons. For the most part techniques used both in America and other countries are still largely the conventional ones of textbooks and printed notes, notwithstanding the development of extensive use of new techniques, radio and TV, audio tapes, video tapes, and so on.

It is still too early to assess the result of development from 1970, but the major problem may be to keep alive the interest and excitement which the external degree has generated.

This book provides a handy reference to current developments in the USA and some other places, but not, unfortunately, about Australian programs. This is a definite oversight, as the pioneering work of the Universities of New England and Queensland strongly influenced the development of the British Open University, which this author credits with initiating the current interest in non-traditional study in the U.S.A.

Clive Pratt, Head, Department of External Studies, RMIT.

Contributors to this issue

Kevin Batt, James Hurley, Andrew Bain and Clive Pratt.

Herdsa Application form

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

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Areas of special interest