Learning to Learn

language & study skills in context

**Proceedings of the 6th Annual
Australasian Study Skills Conference,
University of Adelaide,
May, 1985.**

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Printed by University Relations Unit,
The Flinders University of South Australia

ISBN 0 7258 0252 9

INTRODUCTION

In the first 'study skills' conference at the Australian National University, participants spent quite some time discussing the matter of responsibility for the teaching of study skills. Was it the province of counselling services? of specialist advisers? of academics?

Over the five years since that conference, it is clear that, within the Universities at least, there has been a shift of focus from counselling services to more specialized advisers (often located within academic structures), and an increasing interest from other areas in the tertiary sector in the kinds of service that specialists in learning and language skills can provide. The review of current provision of language and learning skills support within Australian Universities, which is included in this publication, shows such a shift when compared with the figures of only three years ago. It also shows that despite 'hard times', the provision of services in these areas has expanded slightly.

What is clear is that, in practice, the responsibility for 'teaching study skills' is broadly shared, and the papers of this conference reflect this.

There are papers from counsellors, literacy advisers, ESL teachers, academics, library staff and members of specialist units, and the range of interests displayed in these papers is broad - distance education, improving access to tertiary education, English as a Second Language teaching, the role of the library and so on. Some address very precise areas - dyslexia, reading, intonation - and some tackle broad theoretical issues. Underlying all of these interests is the continuing concern about effectiveness and people are continuing to focus, in a very healthy way, on the question which will be raised again as central to the whole practice of advisers - 'Do study skills help students learn more effectively?'

What has marked these conferences over the past five years is people's willingness to submit what they are doing to the scrutiny of their peers, and we are grateful to those who have been prepared to demonstrate what they do and involve their audience in evaluating their materials. It is also good to see some papers which directly attempt to assess the very elusive quality of 'effectiveness'.

So, welcome to Adelaide in 1985. I hope the conference provides enough insight, encouragement and challenge to carry you through another year.

THANKS

- to all presenters of sessions for their time and energy in preparation and their willingness to allow us access to their work and thought

- to convenors of sessions and discussants for their willing cooperation

- to Sue Moore of the Office of Continuing Education for her good-humoured help with organization

- to Gerry Mullins and Ann Noble for their thoughtful contributions to the planning and their help with the running of the conference

- to Helen Phillips for her efficient, thoughtful and good-natured secretarial support over the 12 months of planning.

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Abstract

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Perhaps the aspect of student activity which causes first year university students most concern is that of writing essays. How can students best be helped to become proficient writers of university essays? There has already been some debate as to whether essay writing can be learned as a generalised skill or whether it can only be learned within the context of a specific Discipline.

This paper seeks to argue that the most effective way to improve the essay writing of students is first to discuss the nature of human learning and what constitutes effective learning in a university setting, then to discuss essay writing as a means by which one can learn effectively, and finally to consider variations among Disciplines concerning the conventions of essay writing which may influence how seriously an essay is regarded and the grade it is likely to be given.

An outline is given of a Foundation Course topic for mature age students which proceeded upon these lines.

* * * * *

STUDY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMIC CHAUVINISM

At the Study Skills Conference at Deakin there emerged the germ of a debate about how best to help tertiary students to become accomplished essay writers. The purpose of this paper is to promote discussion on that issue.

A view which has been argued is that it is not possible or appropriate to "teach" students how to write essays in a course which is not based within the confines of some particular discipline. It is argued that essays must be written within a discipline because the selection of evidence (and its validity), the way in which evidence can be used (inference, etc.) and the areas appropriate for criticism (facts? methodology? bias?) all vary significantly depending upon the 'rules' of the discipline. It is further argued that such an essay would have to be assessed by specialists in that discipline, because it is not merely the blinding clarity of the argument which will affect their judgements but also the appropriateness of the argument (what is questioned, how it is assessed etc.) These particular discipline-specific requirements are part and parcel of the essay writing task.

One advocate of this position wrote to me suggesting that for these reasons there were very real dangers in developing essay writing skills outside of the context of a specific discipline.

> *"My worry about an essay 'out of context' is that it may simplify and therefore be misleading, or it may suggest that argument is a thing on its own, divorced from subject matter and discipline, whereas my view is that these are totally interlocked. Therefore the 'bad outcomes' you speak of could be a false sense of confidence in skills; a training which could distort the approach to later 'real' essays; and a disjunction in the processes of developing an argument between 'pure logic', use of genuine evidence, and the necessity of analysing and criticising both theories and evidence within the guidelines of a discipline."*

I wish to argue that that position is false, is a form of academic chauvinism, and that there are some powerful intellectual advantages in developing essay writing skills outside of discipline boundaries. I want also to describe an attempt to do just that.

There is no question that disciplines often have specific conventions or rules about essay writing which contrast markedly with those of certain other disciplines. Further disciplines also often vary with respect to the forms of thought, the kinds of argument and the methods of acquiring new understandings which are most commonly found within them. There is no argument here.

I do not accept, however, that it follows that therefore a student can only learn to write an essay within the bounds of a discipline. To accept such a conclusion would in any case be much complicated by the fact that the differences referred to are not simply differences

between disciplines; they are also frequently differences within disciplines. One would then be forced to argue that students can only learn to write a "real" essay within the context of the smallest sub-disciplinary area which can be identified.

I would also assert that in a very important sense "argument is a thing on its own, divorced from subject matter and discipline ...." To assert otherwise is to suggest that a logical conclusion can be true in one discipline and false in another. The intellectual integrity of students is now seriously threatened since they are expected to reach different conclusions about the truth of an issue depending on the discipline in which they operate.

I would like to illustrate more concretely my own position on this matter by discussing the Flinders University Foundation Course.

The Flinders University Foundation Course has been designed in order to achieve the objectives of the Commonwealth Government's Participation and Equity Program. In brief, it seeks to create a "second chance" educational opportunity for adults who have missed out on the opportunity to undertake tertiary study but who would now wish to do so. It has tried to develop effective ways in which to introduce such students to university study, to build their confidence in their capacity to undertake such study and to give them learning techniques which would enable them to succeed if they choose to proceed.

The structure of the 1985 Foundation Course is such that they will first do a general topic entitled "Becoming a Successful University Student" which seeks to develop a whole range of learning techniques outside of the context of any one discipline. It will then introduce students to the forms of thought, kinds of argument and methods of acquiring new understandings common within certain Schools and subsequently to discipline differences within those Schools. Can we justify beginning a Foundation Course in this way? If we can, might we not then argue for a similar approach for all first year undergraduate students?

In developing and implementing this Foundation Course topic we have sought to achieve a number of related objectives, including the following:

- That students should learn more about how people learn;
- That students should acquire an understanding of the university as a particular social organisation with particular, sometimes contradictory, goals and expectations;
- That students should learn effective ways of achieving their own learning goals within the context of a university.

These objectives have been pursued in the following ways.

A text, "Eureka! or How To Be A Successful Student", has been written for this topic. The approach adopted in this book is described in the following passage taken from the Preface.

> *"This is not so much a 'How to Study' book as a 'How to Learn' book.*
>
> *Success at university is often gauged by whether or not a person has been able to pass enough subjects to obtain a degree. It can be argued that such success depends upon how a student studies. Some writers have therefore analysed the study behaviours of students, have broken these behaviours into small, discrete elements (such as note-taking, reading, time-tabling, writing, and so on), and have offered advice about how to study successfully by describing ways in which these discrete tasks "should" be performed.*
>
> *At times the 'How to Study' approach makes studying at university seem rather like working on an assembly line, as if the mastery of particular study routines is the essence of scholarship. Perhaps this is to be expected. We live in an age of rapid technological change, one characteristic of which is that many jobs have been systematically deskilled. The contribution of workers to the production of sophisticated and complex products now often takes the form of mechanical, repetitive and unthinking behaviours which require little critical judgement or creative thought. It would not therefore be surprising if some people should view study in the same terms.*
>
> *Despite the success of automation in some areas of human activity, the sophisticated and complex products of true scholars simply cannot be produced by 'rule-of-thumb' techniques. In my view, a mechanistic approach to study techniques not only limits the intellectual capacity of students to analyse, understand, and propose solutions to the problems of our age, but also threatens the intellectual health of the university itself. Consequently, the focus of this book is upon ways of becoming an effective learner. It is concerned with ways of making meaning, ways of understanding our world and our place in it, and ways of recognising both the strengths and weaknesses of such understandings. It tries to help the reader to become a more truly competent student, capable of critically analysing material on any subject in constructive and creative ways.*
>
> *It is not that I consider it a waste of time to talk about ways of studying. Indeed there are a great many practical suggestions in this book about how you might go about your study. However, these suggestions are offered as more or less helpful ways of making sense of complex information and ideas, and in the hope that*

you will try them out in a critical, intelligent way, rejecting those that seem inappropriate and adopting or, even better, modifying to suit your own purposes, those that are useful. In other words, they are intended to help you to learn about learning as well as about other subjects of study.

This book seeks to achieve one other purpose. It points out that coming to a university for the first time is rather like visiting a foreign country, the inhabitants of which follow unfamiliar customs, have their own unique rituals and use a variety of foreign languages. The book is, in that sense, a guide book designed to help you to negotiate the unfamiliar territory of the university".

This book begins by discussing how people learn, stresses that the reader is already a skilled learner and suggests that the task is to build upon these existing skills. It consistently describes learning by way of building metaphors, emphasising that "the process of learning requires you to organise information and ideas in such a way as to construct meaning for yourself". It describes a number of elements likely to be found in any sound learning style; these include being able effectively to collect building materials relevant to your learning purpose, being able to integrate these materials into an organised, coherent whole, and being able to evaluate one's own knowledge structures and those of others.

In 1984 the Foundation Course topic "Becoming a Successful University Student" consisted of a series of lectures and tutorials which followed reasonably closely the approach taken in "Eureka!" The first lecture (given by a counsellor) was entitled "Learning to Learn", the second (given by a lecturer in Education) talked about how to collect intellectual building materials in a university setting and the third (given by a lecturer in American Studies) suggested ways of integrating these materials in order to make more sense of them and/or to write an essay. Since students in all university disciplines engage in these activities, it seems eminently reasonable to discuss them in this general way. It may even be the most efficient way to do it.

The next lecture was entitled "Rationality, Reasoning, Ratiocination". It examined questions such as 'How can I know that my beliefs are correct?' Professor Brian Medlin, who delivered this lecture, would certainly argue that "argument is a thing on its own" in that what is rational or reasonable remains so regardless of the discipline in which it is being argued. He concluded his Foundation Course lecture in these terms:

"I have urged you to operate always (or as much as possible) with the two great principles of rationality. With Occam's Razor and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. I have urged you to structure your reading and writing about these principles, to strive for understanding and lucidity.

Most of your teachers will encourage you in these endeavours. But you will be lucky to get through a university without being driven towards irrationality.

You may find yourself driven into rote learning, or pressured to accept your teacher's teaching, or seduced into writing high-sounding gobble-de-gook.

I can't give you any general advice about handling particular misfortunes of this kind. But I do urge you: keep the faith. Rationality is worth a fight. Keep the faith and fight.

Even if the offending teacher is myself".

The next lecture dealt quite specifically with differences between and within disciplines. Delivered by Bill Brugger, Professor of Politics, it was entitled "Mapping the Academic Tribe: a guide for the beginning mature-age student".

Professor Brugger invited these students to consider why discipline boundaries exist at all.

"We now need to engage in political geography. In the world of nation states, the divisions within nations are often as important or more important than the boundaries between them; such is the case with the various disciplines in the university. But who can deny that the artificial boundaries between nations take on a rationale of their own? To answer the question why the boundaries of the West African states are where they are, we have to look at modern history and examine the pattern of European colonisation. To answer the question as to why disciplines have established the boundaries they have, we need to look at their history. Just as in the medieval European world, the nation state hardly existed, so in medieval learning there was more or less one form of learning - philosophy. Indeed what later became known as science was often called 'natural philosophy' and the more enterprising philosophers tried to master the whole gamut of human learning. The last manifestation of this was the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment which was, on the one hand, an attempt to reformulate a demystified version of the earlier vision of a single science of humankind and, on the other, the source of the birth of new disciplines. Once the state could be separated from society, sociology could be born. The same process saw the birth of economics (though still called political economy). The industrial revolution and the development of capitalism attributed to science, technology and scientific organisation, dynamics of their own. This separation of what Marx called the 'forces and relations of production' gave the natural sciences their autonomy. As the social division of labour intensified, so did the academic division of labour. Politics dissolved

into political philosophy, political sociology, jurisprudence, public administration, various branches of law - and so on. For a time, sociology mustered its forces as the new synthetic discipline which would rally all the others, only to dissolve itself into the myriad disciplines that today even sociologists sometimes fail to recognise. This is the age of ethnomethodology, phenomenonology etc. etc. (If at this stage you are reaching for the dictionary, don't bother; it probably hasn't caught up and by the time it has, ethnomethodology will probably have disappeared. In any case, just remember that many sociologists are not clear what all the branches of their discipline are).

The fragmentation of the natural sciences clearly outdid all the other fields of human endeavour. In part this was due to the explosion of knowledge but it was also in large measure due to the self interest of individual teachers who wanted to create new chairs and new centres of power. Thus the same speciality might be taught in a number of disciplines, justified by the claim that, although the subject matter is the same, it is taught from a different perspective. An obvious example here is statistics.

An understanding of the origins of discipline boundaries makes it much more possible to understand why some academics go to great lengths to define and to defend them. In his Foundation Course lecture, Brugger made the following observation:

"Just as in the world of nation states, academics continue to define themselves according to conventional disciplinary boundaries regardless of the origin or rationality of those boundaries. Sub disciplines might fight amongst themselves but at the cry la patrie en danger (the fatherland in danger), they rally to their discipline's flag and mobilise to root out traitors. In doing so disciplines demarcate the limits of permissable disagreement. Those who fall outside those boundaries are often seen as bad people. There develops what one psychologist called the 'psychology of totalism'. A relaxed department will usually tolerate a wide range of views. Once under threat (economic or intellectual), however, it will try to maintain a spurious integrity. The cry goes out: 'stop the invasion of socio-biology into the politics department', 'eliminate the inroads of speculative metaphysics into pscyhology', 'don't let Chinese mumbo jumbo cloud the minds of aspiring physicians'. The rancour may be alarming".

Being aware of discipline origins and discipline differences should enable a student to negotiate the university more knowledgeably, critically and productively. But there is a more fundamental and important reason for being able to develop this overview. We want students not only to maximise their intellectual capacity, but also to

maintain their intellectual integrity. Brugger expressed his concern on this matter as follows.

> *"Right from the start then the beginning student should identify not only the assumptions of academic sub-groups but the degree of political tension at the border. This is particularly the case when rival disciplines will assess the student's assignments. But in the process the student must preserve his or her own integrity. One of the saddest things I find as a teacher is that students write essays for various disciplines, sub-disciplines or individual academics which contradict one another in their basic assumptions. An essay for an economics assignment, for example, might take as given the notion of economic actors maximising their utilities. The student might then write an essay in political theory denouncing utilitarian method (i.e. maximising utilities) and another essay in sociology talking about the social construction of economic categories (showing that homo oeconomicus was just the product of a particular time and had no universal applicability). Sometimes the student makes a cold calculation as to what sort of arguments appeal to the prejudices of different assessors, but too often the student does not see the contradictions. To admit them would be to admit a loss of integrity, but integrity is still surely lost".*

Those who argue that one can only learn how to study, or how to write an essay, within the boundaries of a discipline may simply be suggesting an approach designed to maximise the probability of obtaining good grades. But Brugger points to serious dangers in this approach. Discipline boundaries, no matter how arbitrary or irrational, are uncritically endorsed. Discipline assumptions are uncritically accepted. And how is intellectual integrity to be maintained under these circumstances?

The purpose of this paper is to argue a position concerning the best ways of helping students to become accomplished essay writers. I have so far discussed learning in general because I believe that the writing of an essay should be seen as one specific and important instance of the general learning process, which involves defining one's learning purpose, collecting relevant further information and ideas, integrating the information and ideas into a coherent whole, and communicating that coherent understanding to an audience.

The Foundation Course topic under discussion required students to write an essay and to do it outside of the boundaries of any one discipline. The topic which was set is attached as an appendix.

This essay topic was set in the belief that there are certain learning techniques which can be talked about and practised outside of the boundaries of any given discipline.

1. Students will need to define the topic they want to learn about. Admittedly that definition may be influenced by characteristics of a discipline, but the process is the same. In any case, a student should not be blinkered by discipline interests or conventions.

2. Students will need to be able to select material relevant to the topic. A discipline may place emphasis upon certain sources, but a student should be courageous enough to go beyond these when that seems useful.

3. Processes such as describing material accurately, explaining why some part of it is important (or useful or whatever), comparing and contrasting elements within the material, analysing, criticising, evaluating, integrating and synthesizing are seen as common to all essay writing.

It is recognised that disciplines do require different forms of communication. The essay topic specifically acknowledges this fact, and then asks for a particular format (a widely acceptable one, by the way) to be adopted on this occasion.

I would argue that conventional differences in style are of far less importance, certainly at this point in a student's development, than is the ability to develop complex and coherent understandings, to be able to express those understandings in a lucid and logical way, and to be able to examine the writings of oneself and of others in a critical and analytical way. These are the things which should be given priority.

I would further argue that disciplines which place great emphasis from the outset on correct form, are in danger of stifling creative intellectual activity among students and of producing conformist followers rather than critical thinkers.

The essay topic does emphasise one other thing which can contribute to a student's intellectual development but which cannot be demonstrated within the boundaries of a single discipline. It is that discipline boundaries are more or less arbitrary human constructions and that truth or knowledge does not fall conveniently within such boundaries. To be capable of moving across disciplines can be extremely valuable. As I argued in "Eureka!":

> *"... there is much to be gained from being familiar with a variety of ways of studying a topic and from being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each of these approaches. The different assumptions which are adopted in these various areas of study act like different lenses through which we can view ourselves and the world; one may be like a wide-angle lens which gives us a very broad picture of the scene; another may be more like a mid-range lens which sacrifices some of the larger picture to give a more detailed view of one section, while yet another may be more like a powerful telephoto lens which provides a very*

detailed image of a very small portion of the scene but with little context. Each image has both advantages and disadvantages. Having access to all of these would be especially valuable".

The essay set within this Foundation Course topic was not set within a "real" discipline. It was however a "real" university essay set within a "real" course in a "real" university setting. Perhaps these are the sorts of reality which we should be talking about. If so, we might agree to shift our debate from whether learning to write an essay can only occur in the setting of a discipline to a discussion of the following:

- When is a piece of writing simply "an exercise" and when is it "genuine"?
- What role should "exercises" play in improving the quality of "genuine" writing?

APPENDIX The Flinders Foundation Course

Essay Topic

Nineteen eighty four may be remembered as the year in which the long standing debate about whether or not Australia is a racist society resurfaced. The current debate has aroused strong passions, but has not very much helped people to understand this question any better.

Discuss material which you have read and which relates to this question explaining whether or not (and why) it has helped you to understand this question better.

Essay Deadline: 5.00 pm. Monday 12th November, 1984

Essay Length: At least 500 but not more than 2,000 words in length.

Comments

The reason you are being asked to write an essay as part of this Foundation Course is so that you will have the opportunity of applying in a practical way the learning principles discussed throughout the topic. We want everyone to "have a go" at writing a university-type essay, even if they base it on only one piece of reading.

A university student would normally be given a topic such as the above, and also a suggested reading list. The essay question would be set within a particular discipline topic, and the reading list would direct the student to aspects of the question which were of concern to that discipline.

Below are suggested readings taken from a wide range of disciplines. You are free to choose whichever readings your prefer. You may want to choose materials from one or more discipline areas, but we suggest that you do not choose more than two such areas.

You may also prefer to use materials from sources other than those listed below. You might want to research newspaper editorials, articles and letters to the editor, for example, or search for additional material in the library. Other sources may occur to you. University students are typically rewarded if they are able to search out some materials for themselves.

The essay asks you to discuss materials which you have read. This means that you will need to select material which is relevant to the question, describe briefly but clearly what that material has to say, and explain how and why it was helpful.

If you have read more than one piece of source material, you may wish to compare and contrast the various pieces (in what ways are they similar or different?)

If you feel a little more adventurous, you might want to analyse, criticise and evaluate the piece or pieces which you have read.

Final Draft

When you get around to writing a final draft, in several weeks time, try to integrate and synthesize the materials which you have collected and your ideas about them so that your piece of writing will give a logically developed view of the topic which reaches some sort of conclusion about the materials and their helpfulness.

Were you to be writing this essay for a particular discipline within the university, you would be expected to set it out in a particular way. Different disciplines offer different guidelines. For the purpose of this essay, regardless of which subject areas you draw your material from, adopt the following format in your final draft.

1. Leave a 4cm margin.
2. Attach a front page which has the following information
   a) Flinders Foundation Course
   b) Name of tutor
   c) Name of student.
3. Acknowledge your sources using footnotes in the form shown on pages 129-131 of "Eureka!"
4. Write your bibliography on a separate page in the form shown on p. 135 of "Eureka!".

Reading:

Drama:

Hewett, Dorothy. The Man from Mukinupin. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Perth, 1979.

Merritt, Robert. The Cake Man. Currency Press, Wollahra, N.S.W. 1979.

Romeril, John. The Floating World. Currency Press, Sydney, 1975.

You might also consider the novel and the film The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (Thomas Keneally.)

Economics:

Blandy, Richard et al , "Migrant Workers in Australia: Industrial Cannon Fodder?" Australian Bulletin of Labour, Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1977, pp. 20-31.

Haig, B.D. "Earnings of Migrants". In B.J. Chapman, J.E. Isaac and J.R. Niland (eds.) Australian Labour Economics: Readings. 3rd edition, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1984, Chapter 29.

Kriegler, Roy and Sloan, Judith. Technological Change and Migrant Employment. National Institute of Labour Studies Working Paper, No. 62, April 1984.

Threadgold, M.L. "Aboriginal Incomes: an aggregative analysis of the 1976 census results". In B.J. Chapman, J.E. Isaac and J.R. Niland (eds.) Australian Labour Economics: Readings. 3rd edition, Macmillan, South Melbourne 1984, Chapter 27.

Education:

Lippmann, Lorna. "The Multicultural Society and its implications for Education". In John Sherwood (ed.) Multicultural Education: Issues and Innovations. Creative Research, Perth, W.A., 1981.

McConnochie, Keith. "White tests, black children: Aborigines, psychologists and education". In Bill Menary (ed.) Aborigines and Schooling. Adelaide College of the Arts and Education, Adelaide 1981.

McConnochie, Keith. "Individual and Institutional Racism". In John Sherwood (ed.) Multicultural Education: Issues and Innovations. Creative Research, Perth, W.A., 1981.

English:

Barnes, John (ed.) An Australian Selection. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1977.

In particular you might consider the following stories within this selection.

Vance Palmer.	Home
Hal Porter.	Everleigh's Accent
	They're Funny People
Henry Lawson.	The Drover's Wife
Peter Cowan.	The Tractor

You might also consider the following works:

Herbert Xavier, Capricornia. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1959.

Martin, David. The Young Wife. Macmillan, London, 1962.

History:

Broome, Richard. Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance 1788-1980. George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, Chapters 6, 10 and 11.

Reynolds, Henry. Aborigines and Settlers. The Australian Experience, 1788-1939. Cassell Australia, N.S.W., 1972, Chapters 4, 6 and 9.

Reynolds, Henry. The Other Side of the Frontier. James Cook University, Queensland, 1981, Chapter 5, Conclusion.

Yarwood, A.T. and Knowling, M.J. Race Relations in Australia: a history. Methuen Australia, North Ryde, N.S.W., 1982, Chapters 1 and 11.

Philosophy:

Scriven, Michael. Reasoning. McGraw Hill, New York, 1976.

This book discusses racism briefly in Chapter 7 (pp. 207-8 and p. 222). However, it has been included in this reading list mainly because of its discussion of the nature of reasoning and of argument which students would find useful whatever the topic being studied.

Politics:

Jupp, J. "Multiculturalism: friends and enemies, patrons and clients". Australian Quarterly, Vol. 55, 1983, pp. 149-159.

Knopfelmacker, F. "The Case against Multiculturalism". In R. Manus (ed.) The New Conservatism in Australia, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982, pp. 40-64.

Jakubowicz, A. "State and ethnicity: multiculturalism as ideology", Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol. 17, 1981, pp. 4-13.

Parkin, A. "Ethnic Australia: Social Change, Politics and Public Policy". Current Affairs Bulletin (to be published in August, 1984.)

Psychology:

Jones, James H. Prejudice and Racism. Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1972.

Kipper, S. and Brigden, D. "Australian Stereotyping - A Comparison". Australian Journal of Psychology, Vol. 29, pp. 89-96.

Tajfel, Henri. "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations". Annual Review of Psychology. Vol. 33, pp. 1-39.

Watson, Peter (ed.) Psychology and Race. Penguin, Harmondsworth, England 1973.

Sociology:

Inglis, Christine. "Chinese in Australia" In D.E. Edgar (ed.) Social Change in Australia: Readings in Sociology. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1974.

McQueen, Humphrey. A New Britiannia. Penguin Books, 1970, Chapter 2.

Neilly, W. "Exploitation of Black Workers". Australian Left Review, No. 60, pp. 20-26.

Phillips, Daphne. "Italians and Australians in the Ovens Valley". In D.E. Edgar (ed.) Social Change in Australia: Readings in Sociology. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1974.

Pierson, J.C. "Voluntary Organisations and Australian Aboriginal Urban Adaptations in Adelaide". Oceania, Vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 45-68.

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A Distance Education Strategy for Assisting Learners Bridge the Gap to Tasmanian Higher Education: Cost Effective Study Skills Options to Overcome Institutional Presdigitation, Pious Principles or Procrastination

by

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is fourfold. It attempts to:

i) place in context recent study skills initiatives being piloted in the North/Northwest regions of Tasmania;

ii) identify a range of pre and post-enrollment study skills options that might be integrated as part of new or existing face-to face, mixed mode or distance education programs;

iii) propose a number of pragmatic change strategies that if adopted could help minimise the time lag between the "acceptance in principle" stage of program development and its eventual implementation; and

iv) stimulate further inquiry during the subsequent conference workshop where participants will be invited to extend and refine a tentative conceptual framework that would assist other practioners to:

   a) assess the appropriateness of alternative strategies to implement study skills programs and

   b) decide upon which options have the most chance of success when balanced against learners' needs and the institutional resources available

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b) decide upon which options have the most chance of success when balanced against learners' needs and the institutional resources available.

WHEN, WHERE and WHAT'S HAPPENING IN TASMANIA

Late last year the Tasmanian branch of the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association held a workshop on the approaches to study adopted by mature age learners (Entwistle, 1979; Biggs 1979; Watkins, 1982; and Kember, 1984). Participants from the major providers of tertiary education in the North/North-West region of the state also identified and discussed current provision for study skill support for adults. A brief summary of the highlights of this discussion may give a glimpse of the current thinking influencing the direction of present study skills initiatives in Tasmania.

Principles of Adult Learning

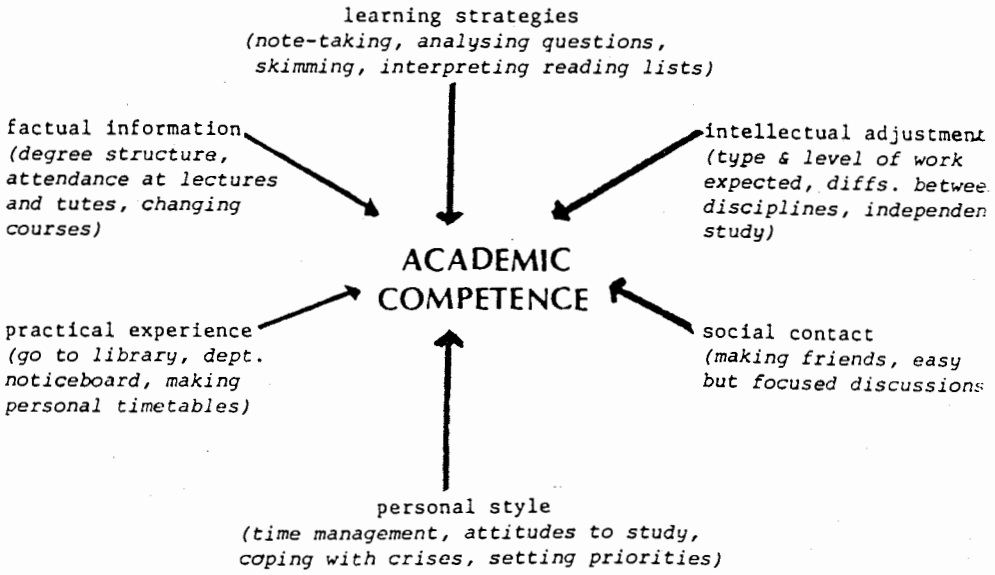
The following six principles of adult learning as summarised by Burge (1984) were seen as characteristic of strategies adopted in study skills programs:

1. Facilitation - learning is facilitated rather than subject matter taught.
2. Self direction - the learning is largely self-planned and directed.
3. Individuality - individual learning styles are respected and used within course design.
4. Relevance - the learning is relevant to the individual's personal and professional life situation.
5. Collabortion - collaborative learning interaction among students is encouraged.
6. Resource extension - resources from the wider environment (community, work situation, et.) are used in the learning situation.

Rationale for Study Skills Programs

The rationale for study skill courses proposed by Ballard, Clanchy and Taffe (1984) was seen as an appropriate set of basic assumptions to underpin similar initiatives within the Tasmanian context. Their diagram as shown below, proved an extremely useful tool to quickly orientate those participants unfamiliar with the notion of study skills to the various approaches that can foster competence in the academic environment.

Figure 1
Approaches to Foster Academic Competence (Ballard et al., 1984)



Different Kinds of Counselling and Professional Support

Three main sources were utilised to identify the different kinds of counselling and professional support that could be used in either the face-to-face, the mixed mode or the distance education context. The report by Frederick et.al (1981, pp. 12-15 & 71-81) presented to the Academic Board of the University of Melbourne placed in perspective the six basic models which institutions normally utilise to deliver formal face-to-face learning/study skill services.

With external studies programs it was argued that tutoring at a distance is very different to college based programs. Reference to Nigel Paine's article, "Counselling: Defining the Field" (1983) helped distinguish the three separate areas where counselling activities often take place. That is:

Pre-course counselling:	Finding the most appropriate course for a potential student
In course counselling:	bureaucracy of the course or problems of learning
Post-course counselling:	where to next?

A matrix Paine (1983) has drawn up, as shown in Table 1, classifies the types of skills required to successfully carry out each of these three counselling functions. This classification highlights the fact that few skills are exclusive to any one of the counselling functions that are used within the learning/study support systems needed in distance education.

Table 1
Skills Required for the Counselling Function (Paine, 1983)

Skills		Skills	
Ability to articulate a student's needs	PIA	Listening skills	PIA
Knowledge of alternative courses	P(I)A	Ability to differentiate between study problems & personal problems	I
Knowledge of support or introductory courses	PI	Desire to respond to student's problems quickly & efficiently	PIA
Ability to match need with course	P(I)A	Knowledge of the regulations governing students	I(A)
Knowledge of the bureaucracy of course application and enrolment	P	Knowledge of possible career options	(I)A
Sympathy for student	PIA	Wider course knowledge than own subject specialism	(P)(I)A

P = Pre course counselling
I = In-course counselling
A = Post course counselling
( ) = Useful but not essential

There was general agreement that most of the present study skills initiatives for face-to-face, mixed mode or external study within Tasmania fell within either of the pre or post-enrollment options shown in Table 2 on the next page. This checklist of study skill options has been based upon the precedents mentioned so far in this paper and in particular, is influenced by the 23 practical ways of reducing early drop-out rates suggested by David Roberts (1984).

This simple checklist provided each participant with a conceptual framework or reference point from which to discuss what what option might have the most chance of success when balanced against learners' needs and the availability of institutional resources. As institutions vary considerably in their philosophy, role and function what seems a good idea for one is inappropriate for another. Certainly these options are not new, but for those starting out in the area of learning and study support services this is a useful "shopping list" for future action.

Present Initiatives

An overview of present initiatives throughout Tasmania will be briefly summarised during the workshop presentation. However it would seem that this process will be accelerated by the recent $30,000 CTEC grant awarded to the TCAE for bridging and transition programs in the North/North-West region of the state. While this is only a pilot program it should provide a number of useful precedents for the cost effective delivery of study skill support to a geographically isolated region.

Table 2

PRE-ENROLMENT	POST-ENROLMENT	INITIAL SEMESTER/S	LATER LEARNING/STUDY NEEDS
EVENING BRIDGING COURSE (6 weeks)	EVENING BRIDGING COURSE (1 week "Crash Course")	FOUNDATION COURSES (study skills integrated or competency based) e.g. • Foundation Maths • Communication	Learning algorithms and study skills incorporated into notes
"TASTER COURSES" (2-15 week noncredit)	ORIENTATION COURSES (1-3 days by school)	PRELIMINARY FIRST SEMESTER COURSE BOOKLETS	Library and research skills
SELF PACED MODULES Foundation Math (15 modules) Foundation Physics (4 modules) Preliminary English (2 modules) Preliminary History (2 modules)	SURVIVAL AND COPING SKILLS PAMPHLETS AND STUDY TEXTS	INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN SUPPORT FOR FIRST YEAR LECTURERS AND TUTORS	Report and thesis writing
PRE-ENROLMENT PACKAGES	POST-ENROLMENT PACKAGES	INFORMAL PEER SUPPORT GROUPS	Planning for research and managing advisors/committees
INDIVIDUAL LEARNING CONTRACTS	INDIVIDUAL LEARNING CONTRACTS		Job search, vitaes and re-learning to communicate in business and industry
EXTERNAL P.A.S.S. COURSE (6 weeks)		PASTORAL CARE AND SUPPORT • Counsellor • Local Liaison Tutors • Remedial Specialists • Lecturers	
SPECIAL PROGRAMS e.g. • Aboriginal • Mature age	SPECIAL PROGRAMS e.g. Overseas		
FEEDER AND TRANSFER COURSES • TAFE • MATRIC. COLLEGES • ADULT EDUCATION			
DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT • Reading • Essay Writing • Learning Style • Numeracy	DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT • Reading • Essay Writing • Learning Style • Numeracy		
PASTORAL CARE AND SUPPORT • Counsellor • Local Liaison Tutors • Remedial Specialists • Lecturers	PASTORAL CARE AND SUPPORT • Counsellor • Local Liaison Tutors • Remedial Specialists • Lecturers		

WHO: • Counsellor
• Local Liaison Tutors
• Remedial Specialists
• Lecturers
• Learning/Study Skills Tutor

WHERE: • Learning and Study Resource Centre
• Study Centres
• Library - College, TAFE, School, Local
• Tasnet computer network

To gain an overview of what is and will be happening in this access and equity project a description of the need for this project, its aims and rationale have been summarised. Table 3 presents a synopsis of the main elements of this four stage project strategy (Brown-Parker et al. 1984).

Table 3
Synopsis of Four Stage Project Strategy

TIME LINE FOR COMPLETION	STAGE	STRATEGY
March-June	1	AWARENESS RAISING AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONFIDENCE . Promotion to reach school leavers. . Three part-time regional liaison tutors/counsellors - pastoral care. . Meetings with community/small group sessions.
August-Sept.	2	DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT AND BUILDING STUDY SKILLS . Diagnostic tests to assess skills, potentials, attitudes with selected computer managed learning for immediate feedback. . Follow-up help from remedial specialists. . External Study Skills Pre-enrolment guides and study skills packages for English I and History I and II.
Oct-Feb.	3	INDUCTION/BRIDGING/TRANSITION TO ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT . Building Study Skills for College or University. . Foundations Maths . Foundations Physics
Feb-July	4	CONTINUED SUPPORT AND SERVICES . Access to external & "walk-in" materials at Study Centres.

The Need

The North West Council for Community Education in Tasmania suggests that around 80% of school leavers choose not to go on to higher education. In a comparison of educational participation between mainland Australia and regions in the state, there appears "clear evidence that not only does Tasmania lag behind the rest of Australia in participation in education but that the North-West region lags behind the rest of Tasmania"(Walker, 1984).

Aims

The current C.T.E.C. funded project is intended to provide greater access and equity to school leavers in the North/North-West regions of Tasmania. It is targeted towards an audience of school leavers and young people. Its major aims are to:

1. Raise the awareness of young people and their communities in the North/North-West regions regarding the benefits of, opportunities for and special programs in higher education in Tasmania and on the mainland;

2. Remove some of the initial uncertainties about formal study in an academic environment and to help school leavers further develop confidence in their own capacities and potentials;

3. Identify the realities of managing day-to-day academic, vocational, personnel and family demands faced during the initial semesters of study and assist young school leavers to assess their own present ability to cope with these demands;

4. Offer a range of practical study techniques and learning resources that might be utilised by those disadvantaged school leavers who are inadequately prepared or motivated to successfully undertake academic studies in higher education; and

5. Complement existing bridging and transition programs by offering supplementary induction programs that focus on the special learning needs of the school leavers from geographically isolated regions of the state.

The Rationale

The following description provides a brief rationale for each stage of this project. (A more detailed discussion of the strategies used in each stage of the project will be briefly discussed during the workshop).

Stage 1 - Awareness Raising and Development of Confidence

To convince school leavers of the value in participating in higher education, it is first necessary to raise the awareness of young people and their communities in the North/North-West regions. There must be a heightened awareness of the benefits, opportunities and special programs provided for them in higher education in Tasmania and on the mainland.

Once convinced of the benefits, there is a need to help potential participants gradually "through the psychological door" to higher education.

Much of the groundwork for this fundamental first stage of the project has already established a climate of cooperation between providers of higher education.

Stage 2 - Diagnostic Assessment and Building Study Skills

Research and experience shows that study/learning problems typically described by students in tertiary education reflect a common core of difficulties (Frederick et al., 1981; Ballard et al., 1984; Goldberg, 1980; Brandes and Raters, 1983). Assistance needs to be provided to help identify the realities of managing day-to-day academic, vocational, personal and family demands that students face during their initial semester of study.

First, a variety of reliable and valid diagnostic instruments, along with suitable counselling, will be made available to assist potential participants assess their ability to cope with the demands, expectations and standards of higher education.

Second, regional liaison tutors/counsellors will be accessible on a one-to-one basis to provide the encouragement and quality of pastoral care demanded by school leavers in disadvantaged areas. For the initial four months before implementation, existing study skills programs will be further developed, adapted of refined to meet the special needs of school leavers and young people.

Third, all transition courses are remedial in nature and students require immediate and appropriate feedback. This needs substantial and intensive development investment. This is particularly the case when developing written materials for distance/external learning.

Adequate investment in this stage of the project is vital to its subsequent success. Young people in the North/North West regions should be provided with first class instructors and well designed, high quality learning materials appropriate to their needs and life experience.

Stage 3 - Induction/Orientation to Academic Environment

A series of face-to-face, mixed mode bridging, transitional and orientation programs should be offered to those who are thinking about enrolling in external, full-time or part-time study at a college or university. These noncredit "bridging courses" should offer a range of practical study techniques and learning resources that focus on the needs of those disadvanteged school leavers who are inadequately motivated or prepared, both in confidence or competence, to undertake academic studies successfully.

To complement these more general bridging courses, supplementary induction or orientation programs will be designed to focus on the special needs of school leavers in English, Maths, History and Physics.

Face-to-face or mixed mode approaches would complement the external studies' written materials or computer managed learning packages offered in Stage 2 of the project.

Non-formal adult education strategies developed during the pilot courses in 1983/84 would be used to encourage and nurture growing interest, positive attitudes, peer support, practice of required competencies and generally develop a confidence in each young school leaver's potential to succeed. [see Appendix A for an outline of these "Returning to Tertiary Study" courses]

Stage 4 - Continued Support and Services

Once the expectations of young school leavers from disadvantaged regions are raised regarding access to higher education, it is essential that provision be made for:

i) continuing those programs assessed as cost effective; and

ii) ensuring adequate post-enrolment support.

Further access to study skill tutors/counsellors is desirable to minimise drop-out rates during the initial semesters of study and will be provided within the resources available.

WHY HASN'T IT HAPPENED BEFORE?

It is sometimes too easy to get swept up in the enthusiasm of short term but exciting projects such as the CTEC funded bridging/transition pilot programs. There is a temptation to catch one's breath and acquiesce in the knowledge that something positive is being done in the area of study skills. There is the tendency to forget the energy and tactics that were required to overcome the procrastination, the pious principles and the prestigitation - and finally get to the implementation stage of the program development process. Few pause long enough to ask the fundamental question, "Why hasn't it happened before?"

The remainder of this paper addresses this question. It is not a uniquely Tasmanian question, but it is one which must be realistically answered if pilot programs are to be adopted, funded from recurrent budgets and finally integrated as part of an institution's bone fide commitment to access and equity in tertiary education.

Procrastination

First, a convincing proposition is that institutions of higher education view themselves as organised centres of learning and excellence. In this respect, they assume the role of guardians of truth - whether this truth be acceptable or unacceptable to their government sponsors. They are also the guardians of another set of truths, as prescribed by the prevailing ethics, values and practices adopted by various professional schools (Henderson and Henderson, 1974). In addition, institutions of higher education are looked upon by the immediate community they serve - as the guardians of truth as interpreted through a more functional and pragmatic set of priorities and often parochial interests. With so many 'truths' to accommodate, it is understandable that institutions of higher education are inherently risk-minimisers and conservative by nature. Change at best, takes place at the speed of a thousand turtles.

Second, a potential agent of change must appreciate that the traditional decision making structure of higher education reinforces procrastination: there are countless layers upon layers of councils, boards, committees, sub-committees and working parties. Only those who are energetic, altruistic, patient, persistent, skilled, a Machiavelian manipulator or just lucky seem to be able to successfully negotiate this labyrinth of indecision.

Within the Tasmanian context and given higher education's propensity for procrastination, the University of Tasmania, in existence since 1889, should not be unduly criticised for adopting a student counselling service that only provides 'generalist' counsellors to assist with learning and study needs (University of Tasmania Counselling Report, 1979). In comparison the Australian Maritime College (AMC) and the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education (TCAE) are relative newcomers to the higher education scene. The TCAE has one fulltime counsellor for 2600 students and the AMC has a Director of Student Services for 650 students. Despite the lack of any

full-time learning or study skills support in all three institutions, those primarily concerned with the counselling role are committed to and active in the promotion of study and learning skills programs - and should be congratulated.

The Tasmanian situation seems very similiar to those encountered in other states of Australia. Then, what change strategies might prove useful for those wanting to implement a more comprehensive range of study skills options ? The following suggestions, spiced with a healthy dose of skepticism, might include:

Strategy 1. An appeal to the purse strings: "Someone else will pay".

This is a winner with all-powerful budget committees. If there are problems or the program fails, blame can be shifted onto the sponsor without any cost to the institution. If the program is a success, the institution can claim a large anount of the credit.

To pursue this strategy, it is essential that there is a heavy initial investment in the writing of the proposal. Educational needs for study skills must be carefully translated into the language of economic rationalism, a philosophy that has been openly embraced by contemporary Australian administrators, politicians and bureaucrats. [Appendix B provides a precedent for writing the Problem Statement for a proposal.]

Strategy 2 A way of filling empty classrooms with warm bodies: "Someone else may benefit if we don't act now".

This strategy is useful but needs the support of rigorous data (a few large but accurate bar graphs should be included to placate the quantitative buffs and impress those in the humanities!). If this data is not available fall back on the argument that there is a greater probability that participants [along with their friends, relatives and children] will tend to affiliate with the institution that sponsors transition/bridging programs.

Strategy 3 Being left behind other institutions in the race for increasing or maintaining enrolments: "Everyone else is doing it".

This appeal which sells hamburgers, holidays and hardware can also be used to sell study skills programs. A proposal needs to be marketed under the normative banner of "doing the right things for the right reasons". If it seems an institution is "doing the right things for the wrong reasons", this minor flaw in motive is more acceptable than either "doing the wrong things for the right reasons" or "doing the wrong things for the wrong reasons".

To maximise the persuasiveness of a proposal, it should never be marketed as "innovative". To ensure the program will be considered with the seriousness it deserves, it needs to be packaged and presented in the most conservative of terms, i.e. grounded in precedents of theory and practice, the success of similar programs with stress on the comparative cost effectiveness of proposed strategies (insert the "nice to do" options at the end of the list of priorities so that when the program budget is inevitably slashed, the essence of the program is still intact).

Pious Principles

It seems almost insulting to the converted to dwell upon the recurrent argument about the remedial nature of study skills programs. As a matter of principle, many academics in higher education staunchly maintain that it is the function of "lower" institutions to equip school leavers or mature age entrants with the necessary skills for college level study.

It is quite unproductive to counter this core belief with advocacy for more enlightened, egalitarian or humanistic educational philosophies. A pragmatic strategy is to bite one's tongue and acquiesce gracefully, while vehemently focussing attention on the consequences of the neglect of these "lower" institutions and their inability to produce students who are literate, numerate or have some vague notion of the foundations of our sciences or humanities. [It may be observed during scholarly debates on this topic that a clear relationship emerges between the nostalgic remarks made by the more geriatic academics who completed their first degree many decades ago, and the viewpoint that current standards and intellect of beginning students have gone to the dogs (Webster, 1985).]

Following are a few suggestions that could be added to any existing repertoire of strategies to counter such "concerns" of brother/sister academics.

Strategy 4: Point out that lecturers of many first year courses are asked to cope with increasing demands for remedial language/numeracy/study skill counselling, especially from mature age entrants. This new role is time consuming and insidiously and incrementally creeps up to create an overload situation. Unfortunately the phenomenon is not easily quantifiable and rarely acknowledged in the allocation of teaching responsibilities . However it smacks of an industrial issue and as such usually gains sympathy and support from staff associations or unions.

In the interests of equity, and as a matter of principle, an immediate solution can be suggested. Either a study skills tutor/lecturer be appointed to provide this specialised pastoral care, or "freshers" be able to attend pre-semester study skills programs. Both options help alleviate, or at least minimise this new burden on the lecturers of first year units. appointed to provide this specialised pastoral care, or "freshers" be able to attend pre-semester study skills programs. Both options help alleviate, or at least minimise this new burden on the lecturers of first year units.

Strategy 5: In response to this latter strategy many hard working and sincere lecturers (and many administrators who do not teach first year classes) will take offense. They will draw upon the normative argument that all "good" foundation course lecturers "should" absorb this pastoral care role as part of their normal duties. Again, there is no use disagreeing with this very professional and caring argument. On the other hand a display of puzzlement at reliable research figures which pinpoint high drop-out rates or low retention rates is a useful way to re-direct concerns from the "what should be" to the "what is." In other words, although lecturers should be adopting this nurturing role, some lecturers do not have the time nor the skills in this area and require help from specialists.

Strategy 6: To overcome resistence to the legitimate concern over the "lowering of academic standards" a solution is needed which appeals to rationality, leaves the door open for some common ground for agreement, yet need not comprise principles relating to the role of bridging or transition courses in higher education.

A first step is to create a climate where the majority of those in the discussion agree to intellectualise rather than personalise the argument. Then the discrepancy between the expectations and emphasis of the "providers" of first year courses can be usefully compared to the expectations and levels of skill and success of the "consumers", the students.

During this comparison it can be argued that there are two distinct clientele within the "consumer" group - those who require:

i) Non-credit bridging courses offering remediation in those fundamental numeracy, literacy and study skills necessary to cope with higher education; and

ii) Bone Fide post-matriculation level credit courses designed to refine existing skills and that provide the foundation for study in various disciplines.

Most reasonable academics will accept the argument that basic remedial courses should not be taught for credit. With an allocation of up to one percent of institution budgets that can be spent on continuing education, the stage is set for compromise and the pursuit of acceptable and realistic options to present non-credit bridging courses.

Presdigitation

Early adoption of study skills programs as an intergral part of an institution's commitment to access and equity for the educationally disadvantaged is usually dependent on effectively and patiently working within the political realities of higher education. To think otherwise is naive as, by nature, decision makers in higher education tend to be tough, competitive and often quite ruthless. Principals, Deans or Heads of Schools do not achieve their status positions through commitment to academic excellence alone. Once their hat is thrown into the heavily politicized ring of administration of higher education, a requisite for success or in fact survival, is their skill in gamesmanship.

It was privately suggested by one Dean in the U.S.A. that what appeared to be misspent experience in his youth developing the keenness of mind and digital dexterity to play Kellys pool, stud poker and the presdigitation needed to win at the pea and shell game proved invaluable for his new role in higher education.This anecdote highlights the need to adopt pragmatism when working within such a politicized environment.

One must recognize, at least, the two major decision points that have to be successfully negotiated before any study skills proposal becomes a reality.

i) A proposal must be "accepted in principle" by the appropriate layers of academic councils, boards, and committees, and

ii) The necessary resources must be then allocated to implement what has been "accepted on principle".

It is useful to view "decision-making" in this environment as a euphemism for the allocation of resources - whether money, position or authority. It is normal to consider any new program as a basis or excuse for changing power relationships within or among institutions . Given this potential for any program being unintentionally caught up in power struggles, it is prudent to continually emphasise the institutional benefits of a study skills program. It is more diplomatic to mention advantages for particular schools or departments in private rather than in public forums.

On the other hand the converse tends to be true when attempting to pilot an existing study skills option in another school or department. Benefits gained for a previous program in another school should be emphasised, particularly noting any decreases in drop-out rates or increased lecturer satisfaction with student performance. It is a interesting to observe how the normally negative motivators of "envy","greed","empire building" or "personal one-upmanship" can be creatively redirected towards supporting study skill programs when using this approach.

In both cases the following rule of the 4C's highlights the major elements that should be central to the writing of any proposal:

Complimentary

Cost effective

Competence

Confidence

Summary

The answer to the question," Why hasn't it happened before?" cannot be explained away as something uniquely Tasmanian. A degree of rivalry exists between institutions of higher education in the North and South of the State but no more than the healthy competition between institutions in Sydney and Melbourne. Yes, Tasmanian tertiary institutions are conservative, tend to uphold middle class values, norms and world views. They have placed great faith in traditional academic standards, expectations and teaching models that have worked in the past - like their sister institutions on mainland Australia. But in the same way as other institutions, there is experimentation with new and exciting delivery systems - especially in the area of study skills and study centres. In short, Tasmanian institutions are no more plagued by procrastination, pious principles or presdigitation than other mainland colleges or universities.

The wider context within which administrators are forced to operate should be acknowledged. Triennium budgetary arrangements and changes in government priorities preclude serious long term planning and reinforce survival mentalities just to keep the boat afloat. At this present moment government support for bridging, transition or transfer programs is high on rhetoric but low on funding. There is a flurry of activity for the disadvantaged with small scale but highly visible participation and access programs for young people. After this funding is withdrawn institutions will be faced with deciding what study skills options should be supported from their own recurrent budget funds.

This is the context in which initiators of bridging or transition programs operate. Those who advocate on behalf of the educationally disadvantaged and share a concern for greater access and equity in higher education must also learn the skills of the process politician (Guthrie et al., 1978). Philosophies need not be compromised but to successfully implement change, pragmatic strategies must be utilized to transform program needs into the language and values understood by decision makers in higher education.

HOW COULD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDY SKILLS PROGRAMS BE IMPROVED?

One major concern when designing study skills programs for educationally or socially disadvantaged young people is the question of motivation.

The following extracts focus on these concerns:

> "It would seem that if adult education is serious about serving lower income, disadvantaged and minority groups, cajoling, enticing and "motivating" them into programs based on essentially conservative, middle class orientation would have only marginal success "(Merriam and Mullins, 1981)

> "It was clear from the majority of responses that motivation was the dominant difficulty. Not that the students did not want to learn - indeed their concern with articulating their feelings about study difficulties about study difficulties was a clear sign of this desire - but most of them had difficulty in identifying, formulating and clarifyinf their short term goals and overall purpose in life" (Shannon and Maresca-Tew, 1982).

> "In his terms, and Maslow's (14), the adult students were better prepared to use the growth opportunities provided by the college than adolescent students. Adolescent students were prepared to see remediation as a preliminary form of rejection by the college, consistent with their own apparent self-rejection. ... Younger students appeared to see their skills deficiency and remediation as further evidence of their inadequacy and incongruence with college study" (Clarke, 1980).

Finally it is hoped that the strategies and models presented in this paper will stimulate discussion during the workshop on ways to extend and refine a tentative conceptual framework that would assist other practioners to:

a) assess the appropriateness of alternative strategies

b) decide upon which options have the most chance of success when balanced against learners' needs and the institutional resources available.

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Appendix A

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE COURSE?

The topics that you will cover in this study skills course are based largely upon the feedback we have received from adults who have returned to tertiary study and have attended similar bridging course programs. While the emphasis is always given to meeting your own individual learning needs and priorities, we hope to focus on a different set of study skills each meeting.

Meeting

1 Overview of expectations, standards and the "rules of the game" in tertiary study; discovering your own learning needs and styles; and sharing of alternative approaches and techniques for study.

2 Planning when, where and how to study - managing time, coping with stress; learning and remembering; and using all available resources.

3. Reading text books: the use of the library and other information sources.

4. Listening, note taking and participating in lectures and tutorials.

5. Writing assignments and examinations.

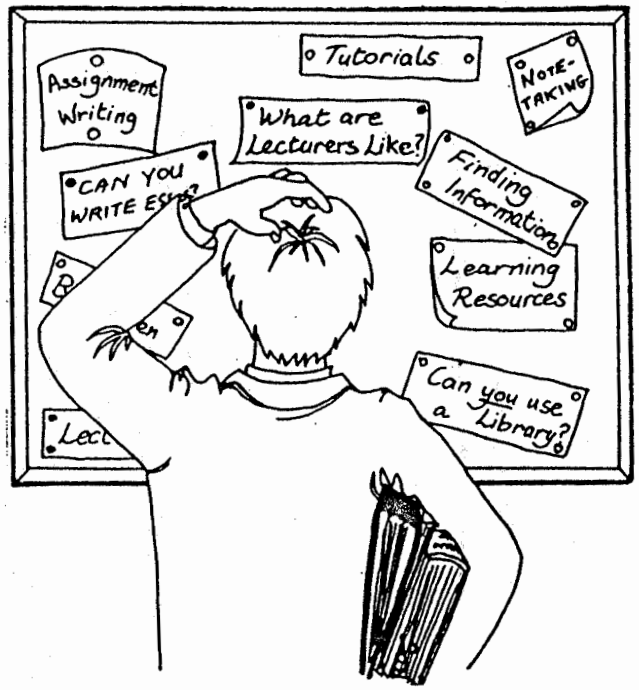
6. Numeracy skills - identifying the level and skills required in various college courses and hints on how to bridge any gaps before next semester.

If you require more information please phone:

Pam O'Hara - Launceston (003) 26 0201
or
Chris Carstens - Devonport (004) 24 7011

TCAE

Returning to Tertiary Study



A six-week evening course that helps you find out about your present study habits and provides some practical skills that will make your return to university or college easier.

WHERE ?	WHEN ?
Launceston TCAE	Monday evenings 7.30-9.30 pm Oct. 22, 29, Nov. 5, 12, 19, 26

ALSO

Devonport TECH COLLEGE	Wednesday evenings 7.30-9.30 pm Oct. 24, 31, Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28

WHO IS THE COURSE FOR?

The course is designed for adults who are thinking about enrolling in external, full-time, or part-time study at a college or university.

This non-credit "bridging course" should be particularly useful to people who are returning to formal studies after an absence of some years and feel a need to "brush up" on some of their study skills.

WHAT DOES THE COURSE COVER?

During a series of six two-hour meetings you will cover such topics as:

* managing time and stress
* lifestyle adjustments
* discovering your own learning needs/styles
* writing assignments and essays
* organising and studying for exams
* listening and note taking
* participating in tutorials
* reading techniques
* academic expectations and standards
* using libraries and resources
* numeracy skills needed in tertiary courses

WHEN AND WHERE WILL THE COURSE BE OFFERED?

The course will be held at the T.C.A.E.'s Newnham Campus in Launceston, Room B119, on Monday evenings 7.30 - 9.30 p.m. and also repeated at the Devonport Technical College, in Devonport on Wednesday evenings, 7.30 - 9.30 p.m.

WHO'S ACTUALLY GIVING THE COURSE?

A number of lecturers at the T.C.A.E. think that study skills are important and wish to help you bridge the gap and facilitate your return to tertiary education. They are:

John Brown-Parker
Des Fitzgerald
Greg Hannan
Thao Le
Jo Osborne
Barry Wise

You will find them to be very helpful and down to earth people with lot's of experience and practical tips to share with you.

DOES THE COURSE GIVE ME ANY QUALIFICATION?

No, it doesn't. But it should make it easier for you to succeed in courses that do !

DOES IT COST ANYTHING?

Yes. There is a nominal course fee of $20.00. This covers the cost of meetings, a text book, and all other hand out materials you will receive during the six weeks.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Complete the attached enrolment form and return it, together with the course fee of $20.00 to :

Pam O'Hara
Student Administration
Tasmanian College of Advanced Education
P.O. Box 1214,
LAUNCESTON. TAS 7250

Enrolment Form

Send to: Pam O'Hara
Student Administration
Tasmanian College of Advanced Education
P.O. Box 1214,
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

PLEASE PRINT ALL ANSWERS CLEARLY

Surname: (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) .....

Given Name(s): .....

Address for Mail: .....

Phone No. Work: ..... Home .....

I wish to attend the course at LAUNCESTON

or

DEVONPORT

I enclose a cheque/postal order payable to the Tasmanian Col of Advanced Education for $20.00.

I make this application for enrolment on the understanding t any fees paid will only be refunded if:

(a) the course is cancelled , or

(b) I am not accepted for enrolment

Applicant's signature: .....

Date: .....

Appendix B

1.0 THE PROBLEM

1.1 The problem is to design an affordable comprehensive strategy which is practical, can be implemented in stages during 1985 and which:

(1) coordinates and maximises the use of existing state-wide institutional resources;

(2) further refines or adapts existing projects and materials; and

(3) develops and evaluates new projects providing support services to students.

1.2 The problem centres on -

- adequate funding for development costs to design, develop and evaluate new and existing programs,
- recurrent funding from the institution to maintain those programs which are proven to be cost-effective.

1.3 Development costs - needed for designing, staffing and evaluation programs. Because transition/bridging courses are remedial in nature (irrespective of the target group), then any responsible educational strategy must consider the appropriate level of intervention to encourage enrolment - be it a raising of awareness, fostering confidence diagnosing potentials, developing competence in study or coping skills, orientation or induction, or providing support services during the initial years of study.

1.1.1 Successful interventions that are remedial in nature require substantially more initial resource allocation than most mainstream academic courses. They require:

i) staff with special communication skills and expertise;

ii) diagnostic assessment and counselling;

iii) problem solving and encouragement through tutors;

iv) quality feedback and timely return of exercises.

1.1.2 Without substantial grants for program development, "seed money", low priority must be given to such initiatives in time of very restricted funding and institutional survival.

1.4 Recurrent costs - The strategies adopted are designed to ensure, after development grants are expended, that the institution can maintain the most cost-effective initiatives for its target group of learners.

It would be irresponsible to raise the expectations of target group in the community by proposing "one shot" projects that cannot be continued. Provision must be made for maintaining continuity of services and fulfilling expectations once they have been raised.

1.5 The problem then, is for the institution to plan an affordable comprehensive project strategy that helps co-ordinate existing state-wide institutional resources, further refines or adapts existing programs or materials, and selectively pilots and evaluates several new small-scale projects.

THE USE OF SELF-HELP RESOURCES IN DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Abstract

Jean Clayton,
Senior Lecturer,
Adelaide College of T.A.F.E.

In this participatory workshop, I will present materials I developed at Flinders University for self-help strategies for students who need help with language skills - with special attention to the needs of non-native speakers.

I will discuss the reasons for developing the materials and the manner of their use, and give opportunity for participants to attempt to develop further materials of their own.

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

Abstract

Garnet Deravin,
Language Centre,
South Australia Institute of Technology,
North Terrace,
ADELAIDE.

This 8 week full time course was designed to give ESL students the appropriate study skills required for tertiary level education. The target group was expected to have an ASPLR of approximately 2. The one other requirement was that each student should have applied for enrolment in a tertiary institution for 1985.

The course covered three main areas:

1. Reading and Thinking
2. Study Skills
3. Listening and Comprehension

The large and positive response showed that a need for such a course existed and the various questions and problems that arose seem interesting to consider.

* * * * *

This paper cover the major areas and issues of the EAP course, some canvassed only briefly. It is by no means exhaustive and it is (hoped) expected, that conference question time will allow for expansion.

S	=	Student
T	=	Teacher
AMEP	=	Adult Migrant Education Program
SAIT	=	South Australian Institute of Technology
F	=	Flinders University
A	=	Adelaide University
SACAE	=	South Australian College of Advanced Education
TAFE	=	Technical and Further Education
EAP	=	English for Academic Purposes
ESP	=	English for Special Purposes
LC	=	Language Centre

PART 1

RATIONALE

On January 7th 1985 under the AMEP, The Language Centre, SAIT, began an eight week course of English for Academic Purposes.

Through the LC's Self-Directed Learning Program we realised that there were many migrant students who were about to embark on tertiary study or who were indeed already in 2nd or 3rd year of University courses and who were having difficulties with one or more aspects of the English language.

We decided to hold a course specifically to help these students. We made it quite clear to each student that the course was not ESP but strictly EAP, i.e. refining macro skills and learning tertiary study skills.

The following is the short form objective sheet of the course:

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

This course aims to prepare students for studies at tertiary level; in particular to:

Provide orientation for student life	:	gaining knowledge of student facilities within the various institutions
Encourage student directed learning	:	students taking responsibility for their learning while using available resources (libraries, fellow students, etc.)

Foster effective skills in the following areas :

READING	:	Skimming and scanning methods Vocabulary strategies Illustrations and graphs Reading for meaning Cohesive features of texts Notetaking
WRITING	:	Planning written work - outlines Organising material Summarising Written paragraphs
LISTENING	:	Comprehension skills Listening for gist Effective notetaking

PART 3

COMMENTS

From this course arose various interesting pedagogical issues which may be worthwhile discussing.

The approach, where each teacher presented the same material three times a day, had advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages were :

1. There was an obvious reduction in preparation time.

2. The second and third presentations allowed far more productive exploitation of given material.

The disadvantages were :

1. A certain staleness occasionally crept into the third presentation from repetition.

A basically communicative approach was used for teaching this course. Small group work was exploited to account for different levels of proficiency within a class. There had been an attempt to minimize these differences in the initial division of classes, but this criteria had to contend with that of "profession". The three "professions" were :

1. Engineering and computer study.

2. Arts and matriculation.

3. Social Services and Medicine.

By having differing levels within each class we were at least matching the situation that would be encountered at the tertiary institutions in which the students were going to find themselves. Students would not perceive themselves in a lower level group and all would reach the same point at the end of the course. As mentioned different proficiency would be accounted for within a class with small group work.

There was also a problem of whether to present material relevant to each class "profession" or not. This would have meant each teacher preparing three different kinds of material a day devoluing on one area. It was firstly thought that, by giving a class a variety of material (some directly related to their field, some not), students would be exposed to the wider background that native speakers brought with them to tertiary level education.

As well as closely monitoring student progress an attidute of self-directed learning was encouraged. This was to help the transition the students would be making from secondary to tertiary education. In the latter, students were expected to take responsibility for their own learning and this is an attitude that was encouraged in the course.

To further prepare the students for tertiary level study they were given an extensive introduction to library systems. This involved a tour of the Adelaide University Library and assignments based on using the systems demonstrated.

Throughout, the course was adjusted to newly perceived needs and unforeseen areas of weakness. There was also the requirement that the teachers closely liaise so that there were no discrepancies in the developmental sequence planned.

A questionnaire was sent out to students at the end of the course as part of the course evaluation (See Appendix 2).

The results will be discussed at the conference session.

QUESTIONNAIRE

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

Name: .....

What course have you applied for? : .....

Which institution? : .....

What country do you come from? : .....

Did you study English in your country? : .....

How many years? : .....

How long have you been in Australia? : .....

How many English language courses have you done in Australia? : .....

What was/were it/they? : .....

.....

.....

.....

What subjects did you study in your own country? : .....

.....

.....

Have you started or completed a tertiary course in your own country? :

.....

What was it? : .....

.....

.....

.....

What was your profession in your own country? : .....

Questionnaire contd.

Which of the following area do you find most difficult?

a) LISTENING
   - for the general sense
   - in a lecture situation etc.

b) READING
   - for the general sense
   - for specific information

c) NOTE-TAKING

d) WRITING ESSAYS
   - planning
   - structuring

e) SPEAKING IN DISCUSSIONS

Which of the above do you feel you need most help with? : .....

.....

.....

.....

What other areas of English do you feel you need to develop? : .....

.....

.....

.....

Have you ever been on a guided tour of the State Library? : .....

Any other comments .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE, S.A. 5000. TELEPHONE (08) 228 0211 TELEX 82565 DIRECT LINE

11th March, 1985

Dear Student

Now that you have completed an English for Academic Purposes course we would like to do a follow-up survey. We would be grateful if you could return this questionnaire as soon as possible so we can develop a reset course.

1. What were your perceived needs before you commenced this course?

2. Were these expectations met? Yes/No

3. (a) Are you studying at the present time?

   (b) If so, where?

   (c) What are you studying and what year?

4. (a) Are you experiencing difficulties with your course in respect to language?

ALSO AT: THE LEVELS, P.O. BOX 1, INGLE FARM 5098. TELEPHONE 260 2055. TELEX 82565
AND NICOLSON AVENUE, WHYALLA NORRIE 5608. TELEPHONE (086) 45 7744. TELEX 80268

4. (b) If so, what difficulties are you having?

5. Have you been able to apply the skills you acquired during the course to your studies?

6. What parts of the course did you find most helpful?

7. Other comments about the course (not the teachers!) you would like to make.

APPENDIX 3

RANGE OF COURSES APPLIED FOR - ARRANGED BY INSTITUTION

	Adelaide Uni.	Flinders Uni.	SAIT
Dentistry	4		
Medicine	4		
Law	1		
Architecture	2		
Mathematical Science	1		
Medical Science	1		1
Chemical Engineering	2		
Civil Engineering	1		1
Arts	1		
Pharmacy			2
Computer Studies			5
Electronic Engineering			3
Electrical Engineering			1
Mechanical Engineering			1
Metallurgy			2
Accounting			1
Sociology		1	
Humanities		1	
Systems Analysis			1
Physiotherapy			1
Social Work			3
Business Administration			1

It should be noted that the numbers of any given table will not necessarily add up to 60 as some students failed to provide all the information requested.

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE LIBRARY'S PART IN TERTIARY STUDY SKILLS

BY DAWN DUNCAN-KEMP,
c/o The Resource Materials Centre,
D.D.I.A.E.,
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

and JOHN ELMS,
c/o The School of Education,
D.D.I.A.E.,
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

ABSTRACT

There is a generally prevailing attitude that tertiary institute libraries are adequate for virtually any assigned task which is based upon some form of literature review. In the light of current enrolments, this attitude comes under challenge. Recent research suggests that libraries can be overtaxed without due care, planning and co-operation in essay assignment work.

The same research evidence suggests that most tertiary students do not know how to be efficient and effective in the commonly required use of library-based resources. Though library orientation lectures are duly conducted, typical tertiary students assume that they know how to use a library effectively. The observed performance of tertiary students indicates that this confidence is seriously misplaced.

A succinct case is made for tertiary study skills experts to take the library as a focus for their early advice to tertiary students. This case is soundly based upon evidence that suggests that tertiary students fail primordially because of their inability to cope with essay assignment loads. It will be suggested that the essay assignment is generally speaking the first barrier faced by tertiary students and that their inefficiency in coping with essay assignment demands leads to a significant proportion of tertiary student withdrawal and failure.

If, as widely reported, the literary standards of our tertiary education students are so lamentably poor, then, remediation of this fundamental problem may best be undertaken using the library facilities as a central point of initial study of essay or learning enhancement skills. Surveys of tertiary education library usage clearly indicate that those who fail typically seldom use the library at all until it is desperately late for the submission of set assignment work or examination preparation. In personal interviews conducted at the D.D.I.A.E. many of the students who failed in some subjects, but who remained at the institute, revealed that they thought that they could pass by using the set textbook alone. These students were those who had passed some subjects and failed others.

The practice of setting one or more textbooks for a course of study allegedly fits into the 'pattern' of secondary school studies. However, tertiary studies are characteristically more comprehensive and demanding. The library of a tertiary education institute is the repository of additional information and, in some cases, information that embodies various points of view. The comprehensive fund of knowledge often proves baffling to incohate tertiary education students. The availability of these carefully stored resources is not apparent to students. The learning of study or learning enhancement skills can better be conducted amongst the resources that are necessary to the effective coverage of all courses.

The need for our students to be able to use libraries and other resource banks in their professional careers is apparent. The ability to use such resources efficiently and effectively may readily form a sound basis to a more successful professional career. The seed to this growth should surely be implanted early in the pre-service preparation of our future professionals. As part of their preparation, our students should be made proficient in the use of all of the resources of a modern library.

In addition, analytical and comparative strategies have considerable value for the professional in our 'information saturated society'. Such necessary skills as these may best be experienced in the libraries of our institutes. Without such specific and fundamental preparation Australian professionals will not maintain a place in the van of progress which is seemingly expected of modern nations.

To provide such preparation requires adequate and appropriate planning of the library resources. Research at the D.D.I.A.E. conducted by John Elms has indicated that the general presumption that library resources are more than adequate for the tasks set for our students is seriously misplaced. This research evidence suggests that tertiary education libraries can be seriously overtaxed without due care and co-operative planning. This viewpoint is worthy of further investigation when one considers that tertiary education enrolments have risen without any associated rise in library funding. Thus the reported research

uncovered that the current library lending policy and the larger enrolments resulted in a scarcity of library resources for literary reviews.

To illustrate the point more specifically, in one first year subject, the enrolment was about two hundred and fifty (250). The institute library has been in existence for sixteen (16) years. During this time an average budget of two hundred and fifty (250) dollars per year for each subject has been spent on the acquisition of suitable texts. The typical cost of texts in this subject was calculated to be twenty-five (25) dollars per text. A specific survey of the library holdings revealed that no more than two hundred texts were held that related to the first essay assignment required in this subject. Concomitantly, students from second, third and post graduate year subjects also required such texts. The library's policy is that a student may borrow a text for a period of two (2) weeks. Some texts were placed on 'reserve', that is, these texts could be borrowed directly from the Information Counter for a specified period of time. The result was that there were nowhere near the required number of texts for borrowing, regardless of efforts to alleviate the relative scarcity of relevant texts.

Genuine co-operative planning of the essay assignment work could have reduced this problem to some extent. The full dimension of this problem is such that severe scarcity of texts would have been experienced by most of the members of the various groups seeking these titles. Perhaps such unco-ordinated approaches serve the purpose of sorting out those who are likely to succeed regardless of the difficulties that lie in their paths. However, it is more likely that these circumstances are the result of inadequate co-operative planning.

One other finding that derived from the survey research conducted at the D.D.I.A.E. was that some of the students resorted to unprofessional practices in their efforts to cope with the demands of their essay assignment work. Whether it was because there were too few texts available or not, some students resorted to plagiarism, copying out the work of their friends and other totally unacceptable practices. Such revelations are quite worrying. Unfortunately too much of the research regarding tertiary students does not get down to the substantial problems that exist. Too much of this research is indirect and superficial. However, the library and library staff should be encouraged to take an on-going part in the preparation of our students.

The purpose of this paper is to bring to notice the prospect that if academic staff liaise fully with library staff, such problems as have been briefly considered may well be eliminated. By co-operative efforts, academic staff can be advised as to how many texts on specified topics are available. Comparative charts can be complied to establish the extent of the relevance for various assignment topics in the same and other coursework in

other subjects. Thereafter, a student advisory service can be more positively implemented. To include the library staff in the essay (and other) assignment work is likely to meet with success. All that is needed is for academic staff members to invite the library staff members to assist in the planning of each year's essay assignment work so that realistic demands upon our students can be formulated.

To this team can be added the specialist in study and essay or learning enhancement skills. The requirements of complete courses can be thoroughly planned semester by semester. Such thorough planning is not common in Australian universities or colleges of advanced education. Though it might seem that the library's part in the process may seem to have been aggrandized, it is readily justifiable as most, if not all, tertiary courses require that its students gather information or learn skills that are stored in libraries.

The part of the specialist in study and essay skills or learning enhancement is clearly important. The specialist by assisting students in how to become more efficient and proficient in essay assignment work can substantially reduce the time that students take to complete their essay work. This efficiency and associated saving in terms of the demand upon the limited references will be of considerable value in alleviating the current demands that are too great to be adequate met. The partnership as outlined seems to offer the best possible use of the available resources while teaching the students useful skills.

In part, this paper also is intended to seek out the opinions of others who are involved in assisting tertiary education students to establish whether such co-operative efforts have been trialled or implemented in other institutions. If success in forging such co-operative effort has been achieved it would be greatly appreciated if those who have been responsible for such innovation would discuss how they were able to achieve the required co-operation and support. Such information and advice should be earnestly sought as it is obvious to the authors as a Liaison Librarian and a member of academic staff and generally recognized specialist in learning enhancement that the advantages of such co-operation should be to the benefit of all involved and should make far better use of the limited resources that are available in tertiary education.

Helping Students Write: What Help Can be Given and Who Can Give it?

by Joelie Hancock
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South Australian College of Advanced Education
Sturt Site, Sturt Road
Bedford Park, S.A. 5042

At the Sturt site of the South Australian C.A.E. a low-cost program to help students with their writing was evaluated in 1984. As well as indicating that the program did improve certain aspects of students' writing, the evaluation highlighted the role of within course staff in supporting students with their writing. To increase its effectiveness the continuing program plans to continue to develop faculty awareness and co-operation in assisting students with their writing, and to regularly monitor the program's effects.

April, 1985

Helping Students Write: What Help Can Be Given And Who Can Give It?

Joelie Hancock,
Faculty of Health Science and Education,
Sturt Site, S.A.C.A.E.

There are many advocates and much support for the dictum: Learn to write by writing. It is a logical extension of our recognition that language is learnt by using it, as well as an acknowledgement of what experienced writers and researchers report (Britton 1970; Elbow 1973; Graves 1978; Walshe 1979; Smith 1982).

Preconditions for learning to write

The dictum is not as simple as it first appears. Writing does not automatically improve by would-be writers closeting themselves away with pen and paper and writing whatever comes into their heads - although this is likely to help. Writing, along with other language modes, improves with practice only if the right conditions are present. First there must be appropriate models, or 'demonstrations' as Smith (1981) and Harste (1983) prefer to call them; aspects such as form, register, vocabulary, syntax, punctuation, spelling and style are all learnt primarily through demonstration.

> The first essential component of learning is the opportunity to see how something is done. I shall call such opportunities 'demonstrations', which in effect show a potential learner 'This is how something is done.' The world continually provides demonstrations through people and their products, by acts and by artifacts. (Smith 1982, p. 108)

Second, the writer must have a purpose for producing a clear logically developed piece. He or she must have something to communicate and some knowledge of the reader's expectations. There would be no point in refining a piece of writing if the writer did not think there was something worth improving or if there were no-one to read and appreciate it. Third, the writer needs sufficient experience of writing to realize that the writing process is recursive, requiring planning, preparation, drafting and refining. Good writing is rarely a one-off job; there are numerous published writers who testify to this.

As teachers at all levels of education come to recognise these preconditions for learning to write, more students will reach the tertiary level able to write well. They will be familiar with the range of registers, appropriate sentence structure and punctuation and with various forms of writing. They will have a strong sense of audience and be tuned to identifying the requirements of different readers and assignment markers. They will know from experience that producing an effective piece of writing requires time and effort.

Tertiary teaching staff know that many students are coming into their courses without appropriate language experiences to draw on, without a sense of audience, and without realizing the trials and satisfactions of the writing process. Some tertiary staff are able to help their students become familiar with the language forms they will need to use, are able to

convey their expectations as readers/markers, and are able to help them discover the nature of the writing process. Some tertiary students are able to pick up by themselves what forms of language are appropriate and realize what is involved in meeting the expectations of their teachers. But there are also students whose past language experiences have not helped to prepare them for the forms of writing required, and whose writing experiences have not led them to appreciate what is involved in the writing process.

It is for these students that special provisions are needed. The question is: What provisions are effective? And the dilemma is: If writing is learnt by writing (for a purpose, with demonstrations and a real audience) and the purpose, the demonstrations and audience are in the courses, can help from outside the courses be effective? Once the writer is taken from a particular context, the forms purpose and audience are changed. As Hunt (1983) puts it:

> If we separate words out from the contexts by which they are determined, if we pull sentences out of discourses, if we disengage discourse from a context of use and human purpose, we tend to produce something I call 'textoids', synthetic fragments of language which exhibit none of the complex richness of natural language. It is precisely this richness which enables us to navigate as effortlessly and unselfconsciously around the hermeneutic circle of understanding as we have to do in order to understand any system of signs. (p. 5)

There is no guarantee that writing skills learnt and displayed in one context will transfer to another. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for finding ways to help students develop writing skills outside their courses, particularly where teachers have specialised knowledge, that is rarely in language teaching, and where students vary enormously in their written language skills. And where language tutors recognise the role course lecturers and tutors play in making their expectations explicit, ways can be found to help both staff and students to be clearer about what language forms are appropriate.

Writing assistance outside courses

Recognising that their nursing and teacher education students needed assistance in their writing, and that few lecturers were equipped to provide that help, the Language Arts and Counselling staff at the Sturt site of the South Australian College of Advanced Education developed an English Improvement Program in 1984 and undertook to evaluate its effectiveness. The program was developed as a low-cost, self-help program with a small number of individual and group tutorials, since there were no staff available for a more extensive commitment. Given the influence of each context on effectiveness in writing, there seemed to be a strong chance that help provided outside of courses would have no predictable effect on writing required within courses. Hence the necessity to evaluate the program.

The influence of context and the small amount of help that could be provided were important factors in selecting the writing skills that the Improvement Program was going to assess and help to improve. The program tutors left to the course lecturers and tutors the task of clarifying language expectations and the ideas and concepts to be undertstood. The program tutors emphasised with students the overriding importance of clarity in their understanding, in their thinking and in their writing, and the secondary nature of the writing skills that the Improvement Program could teach them.

So what were these surface writing skills? Guided by the English Skills Assessment (A.C.E.R. 1982) and Sturt's use of it in a similar program during 1983, the following skills became our specific objectives:

spelling
punctuation
apostrophes
sentence structure
discourse structure
agreement of number and tense

We have since added word usage as an area that can be usefully identified and improved.

It is important to note that the program also set out to inform and gain the cooperation of as many teaching staff as possible so that they might recognise their role in providing guidance for students as well as in referring students to the language tutors.

The English Improvement Program

During orientation week of 1984 all first year students at Sturt were given a reading and writing exercise to complete within an hour. The writing produced was assessed for skills in the areas of interest, as listed above, and all students received a report on their performance in each of those skills:

a) No problem indicated.
b) No problem indicated, but attention recommended.
or c) Appears to be a problem. (Referred to as a 'problem area' below.)

A list of suggestions on what action might be taken in each of those targeted areas was attached to each report. Action suggested included:

a) Work through self-help booklets or exercises on spelling, punctuation and apostrophes.
b) Discuss results with a tutor.
c) Attend group tutorials on specific skills.
d) Arrange individual tutorials with a tutor.
e) Purchase recommended reference books.
f) Indicate interest in computer programs that were expected for development in some skill areas.

A record of the booklets bought and the assistance provided was kept. The effectiveness of the total program was assessed through comparing writing skills improvement of the Sturt students with a comparable group at another S.A.C.A.E. site, and by interviewing the 35 students at Sturt who showed the most problem areas on the beginning of year/writing exercise. This group is referred to below as the Sturt At Risk group.

A comparison between the number of problem areas among this At Risk group at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year showed a reduction in problem areas of 56%. The same beginning and end of year comparison was also made for three other groups of students:

1) a group of 35 Sturt students randomly selected from the rest of the group who did the beginning of year reading/writing exervise,
2) a group of 35 students from another site of S.A.C.A.E. who were matched with the 35 Sturt At Risk students by their results on the beginning of year reading/writing exervise,
3) a randomly selected group of 35 from the remainder of the students tested at the other site.

The other site is at Salisbury, where the first year intake also completed the beginning of year reading and writing exercise. At the Salisbury site, however, there was no program organised to report back to students their results on the exercise nor to provide them with assistance. Table 1 shows the beginning and end of year comparison of problem areas for each of the four groups.

The Table shows that all groups had less problem areas at the end of the year than at the beginning, but both of the groups from Sturt had a much greater reduction than did the Salisbury groups.

TABLE 1
Comparison of problem areas for each group of 35 students at the beginning and end of year

Site	Group	Time of Year	Sp	Pu	Ap	Ag	SS	P	Total	% Reduction
Sturt	At Risk	Beginning	21	22	15	8	22	6	94	
		End	12	4	6	5	12	2	41	56%
	Random	Beginning	10	2	6	0	5	0	23	
		End	3	0	1	0	2	0	6	74%
Salisbury	At Risk	Beginning	29	26	16	12	25	3	111	
		End	9	13	17	16	14	2	71	36%
	Random	Beginning	13	15	7	6	5	1	47	
		End	5	11	4	11	8	1	40	15%

An examination of the amount of improvement on each of the particular skills for the different groups reveals that improvement was made on some skills regardless of whether or not there was a program to assist students. Those skills were most notably spelling and punctuation, although there was a much greater improvement with the program than without. It could well be that in these areas students can improve without direct assistance, although a contributing factor may have been students' use of the self-help booklets on punctuation and spelling which were available on both sites. Table 2 shows the percentage decrease of problem areas in each skill for the four groups of students. A minus decrease indicates an increase, which was apparent on several of the Salisbury scores. A possible explanation for this increase in errors may be attempts at more complex writing on the end of year sample of written work. Whatever the reason, there was no similar increase in errors in the Sturt samples of writing.

TABLE 2
Percent decrease in problem areas for each group of 35

Site	Group	Sp	Pu	Ap	Ag	SS	P	Total
Sturt	At Risk	42%	82%	60%	38%	45%	67%	56%
	Random	70%	100%	83%	-	60%	-	74%
Salisbury	At Risk	69%	50%	-6%	-33%	44%	33%	36%
	Random	61%	27%	43%	-83%	-65%	0	15%

In apostrophe use, agreement of number and sentence structure, students with the program made substantially more improvement than those without (apart for the unaccountable high improvement in sentence structure by the At Risk group at Salisbury).

Other factors influencing writing development

It may well be that the improvement shown in the Sturt groups was due to factors other than the English Improvement Program. For instance, all student nurses in the first term were required to submit fortnightly written summaries and critiques of specified articles which were returned to them with detailed comments and suggestions for improvement. In second term all teacher education students undertook a two hours a week writing course. In other of the compulsory units in both courses suggestions were made to help students with their preparation of assignments, and detailed comments for improvement were returned with assessed assignments. Current notions about how writing is learnt would suggest that this sort of within course concern for correct and effective writing

can play a significant role in students' writing development.

The interviews with the Sturt At Risk students revealed the following:

*Most of those interviewed took action as a result of the feedback they received from the reading writing exercise (28/31).
*22/31 attended one or more of the first term tutorials.
*A half (15/31) bought one or both of the self-help booklets.

When asked how helpful the tutorials and self-help materials had been the student said that they found

*the self-help booklets helpful
*the tutorials helpful
*but that in the end they had to take responsibility for improving.

"I thought it was up to me to just be more careful."

"I knew it was up to me to work on my spelling."

Two students recognised that the help available was not appropriate to their needs. These were students from non-English backgrounds who had errors in word usage and sentence structure.

When asked whether they thought different or more help would have been better half said that they would have liked regular individual tutorials (15/31); eight wanted more insistance on correct forms and comments on assignments in all units; five wanted this sort of help as part of the required course.

All teaching staff have a role

Students did appear to gain from and appreciate the English Improvement Program as it was offered. However, there seems to be no way to separate out the help gained from the program and that provided by staff within the courses. For this reason, the experimental/control method of evaluating the Improvement Program's effectiveness is suspect; there was no control or even record kept for either group of the other factors that would be likely to influence students' writing development.

The English Improvement Program at Sturt will continue to offer assistance to students outside courses. At this point in time, the beginning of year reading/writing exercise continues to have an important function in alerting students and staff to the Faculty's concern about writing and directing both staff and students to where the help is available. The program recognises that only the within-course teaching staff can provide students with some of the help they need, and it must continue to make clear that there are much more important aspects of writing than correct surface features. The staff in the Improvement Program are finding that other lecturers are showing a greater interest in attending to the writing needs of their students through referrals, requests for working with their students as part of the units, and in asking for advice about particular writing problems. The staff in the program intend to keep other faculty staff informed of the types of difficulties they are dealing with, the areas in which assistance is most successful, any developments in the sort of help provided and of the sort of assistance that within course staff

might best provide. By increasing awareness and language teaching skills of all faculty staff, more of the students' difficulties can be dealt with at their source. I suspect, however, that there will always be some students who need the regular ongoing support that only staff with that special responsibility can cater for.

Ongoing monitoring of the program is seen as important if the program is going to continue to meet the needs of students. Regular monitoring also provides an opportunity to report to the faculty's teaching staff and to further clarify the program's specialised and limited role. Some comparisons of before and after samples of writing and a careful sampling of students for interviews about the effectiveness of the program would seem to be the most appropriate forms of monitoring the program.

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INTONATION AND THE NON-NATIVE SPEAKER

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In this workshop, I intend to show, using a small group of non-native speakers of English, the importance of correct intonation in "getting a message across," and in particular in cases of student interaction with members of the academic staff.

I will give a demonstration "lesson" to show some of the techniques we E.S.L. teachers use to make students aware of intonation patterns used in English, and of some of the social implications inherent in these patterns.

TITLE: The Instructional Design of 'Facets of Learning', an audio based program to teach study skills

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ABSTRACT: The development of study and learning skills involves the encouragement of self-confidence and self-motivation as well as the communication of information. The characteristics of audio cassette as a medium of communication, particularly when enhanced by supporting print material, makes the use of audio based discussion programs a potentially valuable addition to a study adviser's repertoire.

The Instructional Design of 'Facets of Learning', an audio based program to teach study skills.

Introduction

This is basically a case study, using the program 'Facets of Learning' to illustrate the strengths of an audio based approach to the development of study skills.

There are two parts to what I want to say.

The first part concerns the technical reasons for producing an audio-cassette backed up by print to encourage students to develop study skills: the second is about the educational principles that have been considered in the design of the program.

I want to make it clear at the start that I am talking about audio programs as an adjunct to a total program of thinking and learning development for students, whatever that total program might be, and not as a replacement or substitute for other more effective means when they are available. In the ultimate analysis I doubt whether anything else could ever be as potent an external source of inspiration as 'eyeball to eyeball'. But that is the ultimate analysis. In the immediate present, there are few people and a very large demand; and there is a strong case, presented elsewhere by others, for counsellors and educational advisers to be redirecting their efforts in new ways which will help both students and staff in educational institutions to look on the acquisition of thinking and learning skills as a central developmental challenge to all rather than a remedial band-aid for a few. If this is to be a priority, then tools and techniques need to be found, which will lighten the traditional burdens. Audio programs, I believe, should be explored as one of these tools. The program under discussion, 'Facets of Learning', was initially produced with the needs of external students in mind.

In Part One I discuss, in a hypothetical way, the 'technical' features of producing a program on study skills using audio, backed up by print. I hope that most of you have managed to listen to 'Facets of Learning'. You will recall that it is structured as three separate interviews, each of 12 to 14 minutes duration, linked by, and interspersed with, music and comments. The total program lasts just under 45 minutes but it is not intended that it should be listened to in entirety in one go, or even in entirety by a particular student. On the reverse side of

the C90 cassette is an index which enables students to locate quickly the particular section in which they are interested. The topics covered are reading and note-taking, organising oneself for study and planning an essay.

Part One: technical aspects of design

Why audio?

In the last few years, audio cassette players have become freely available at a price that is within virtually everyone's grasp.

Portable sets and headphones have made it possible to listen to a cassette in many situations where it is impossible to read a book.

A large majority of people have become accustomed to sound as an accompaniment to all aspects of life. Housewives (and house husbands!) turn on the radio while doing the housework; headphones are becoming a relatively common sight on public transport; the weekend handyman (or woman) listens to their latest tape while fixing the spouting. Interspersed with many of the radio programs, of course, are the ads. Bombardment with sound interspersed with messages is a well-established cultural phenomenon and expectation.

It seems a reasonable objective, therefore, to try to help students develop their skills in learning by making use of a medium that already has high acceptability to a large number of people.

Constraints

Following the line of thought outlined above imposes both negative and positive restraints on the use of audio. Study situations are not limited to a set time when the student sits at a desk with books, a cassette player and a note book to hand. So 'integrated' audio programs, where the student listens, completes an exercise, and listens again, are not appropriate. If print is to be used with audio, then both audio and print must be separately self-explanatory - stand alone - but capable of being used together in a mutually enhancing way.

If we assume that the listener may well be engaged in some other task, as well as listening to the program, then we can also assume that the attention span on particular items will be fairly short and that the presentation, therefore, must be made in a way that is interesting enough to attract and hold the listener's attention. This implies that material

which requires a long sustained span of time for its exposition and development is not suitable for this type of presentation. On the positive side, it suggests that the format that is chosen should allow for plenty of variety and that the content should have interesting ideas which will be remembered and reflected on at a later date - and perhaps listened to for a second time.

Thirdly, listeners have become accustomed to a high quality of sound reproduction. It is not enough, therefore, to produce a microphone and record something interesting. (Just to draw a parallel with print - to adopt this simplistic approach is comparable to the days of cyclostyling important points to distribute as class notes. Poor quality sound is just as unacceptable today.) Audio should be planned, recorded and edited with as much professionalism as print.

Audio supported with print

This part of the discussion overlaps the technical and educational aspects, which will feature in Part Two. I have included it here for the sake of completeness.

Apart from immediate face-to-face communication, print is undoubtedly still the staple medium for education. Some of the reasons for this are its easy reproducibility, its permanence, accessibility and the flexibility it gives to the learner. A student may spend a few minutes skimming an article for the general ideas or a few hours reading the same article in depth: to listen to an audio program for whatever purpose requires an investment in 'real' time. For this reason it is important to link audio to some form of print where appropriate. This gives an opportunity to enhance the impact of the audio, either by giving a quick overview and recall of the main points or by expansion of these main points by including further longer and more complex examples which it would be unsuitable to discuss in detail in an audio program.

Another advantage of including a print component is that the message is reinforced by being presented in at least two media. I say 'at least two', because I have in mind both words and graphic communication and I think that, for maximum effect, both should be included in the printed back-up material.

The final major question which I shall mention on the technical side (which again has an educational aspect) is why the print should be viewed as backing up the audio and not, as has been more usual, the other way round, with the audio backing up and enhancing the print.

My main reason is to explore the educational possibilities of a cheap, popular and highly acceptable medium, which has certain inherent features, discussed below, not possessed by print. These features make audio a potentially highly successful means of providing advice and encouragement to students which will, it is hoped, help them to be more effective learners in a wide variety of different areas.

Part Two: educational principles of design

some student needs

The off-campus students, for whom I originally produced 'Facets of Learning', are already deluged with print. They also tend to be and to feel isolated. In addition to information on skills and techniques of study, they also need encouragement and reinforcement of their own self-confidence and their ability to complete their studies successfully. In addition, they lack the opportunity to participate in discussion, either with other students or with their teachers. As a consequence, it may be more difficult for them to internalise the information that they receive.

As I proceeded with the development of the program, reading a variety of literature and reflecting on the needs which the program was designed to meet, I came to realise more clearly than before that these needs were not peculiar to off-campus students alone. They are needs that are inherent in the learning situation itself. Many on-campus students have the basic ability and the relevant information but lack the self-confidence to perform adequately. Although they have opportunities for discussion, they may not feel able to participate because they are really not sure what kind of questions they should be asking. The opportunity to re-listen, at leisure, to a live discussion, and to make their own mental contribution to it, may be of great value.

empathy

As members of one of the helping professions, we are probably more aware than many of the importance of such interpersonal qualities as empathy, trust and confidence in encouraging learning and development in students. These qualities are difficult, if not nearly impossible to convey in print, but may be immediately conveyed by a certain tone of voice, or inflection of speech. In presenting the program as a variety of informal discussions with three different people, each with their own individual styles of presentation, one of my aims was to give students an opportunity to emphathise with one or more of the speakers and to feel themselves to be in some way active participants

in the discussions. (I had already had a practical demonstration of the interest that a particular voice can create for some students in one of my previously produced series of philosophical discussion on audio cassette.)

confidence

Related to emphathy, is the encouragement of self-confidence in the listener's own abilities.

In discussion with the speakers, we agreed that one practical way in which we would try to encourage students' self-confidence would be to emphasize that many of the skills most people already possess to a greater or smaller degree, for example, scanning a catalogue for some wanted item of photography equipment, or planning a particular birthday party. We also adopted a policy of using familiar examples to illustrate general principles, and using vivid visual language to create a sense of reassurance.

modelling

I refer by 'modelling' to both the inspiration that may be conveyed by some teachers through their own enthusiasm, or conscientiousness or some other quality, to the extent that a person may say 'It was X who through his teaching inspired me to take up chemistry' - or music or psychology - and to the 'aha, so that's what is meant by .....' that being party to a live discussion or demonstration of an issue may evoke. This is also an area where audio has an advantage over print. Once a discussion is rendered in printed format, it must be stylised into a form suitable for the eye rather than the ear. Pauses, inflections, enthusiastic rushes of voices and thoughtful questioning - all must necessarily be deleted. In the majority of cases where the main objective is to convey information to the recipient, this is an advantage. It enables the information to be presented in a format that the student may either skim or study in depth, depending on his inclination, the extent of previous knowledge and other factors. But in the case of teaching study skills, presenting information is only part of the story: a further major portion consists in fostering such intangibles as a positive approach to the subject and the confidence that one has the ability to achieve one's objectives.

conclusion

In summary, my discussion depends on the premise that teaching learning skills involves more than conveying information, however useful or interesting or complex that information may be. Teaching learning skills also involves

inspiration and the encouragement of self-confidence. These are personal qualities which may be conveyed to some extent, at least, through listening to another voice or voices. This is where an appropriately produced audio program of the kind discussed, can be a valuable adjunct to a study adviser's repertoire of resources.

Justus H. Lewis
14 April, 1985

WRITE IT! THEN GET IT RIGHT!

Suggestions for Assessing, Programming and Teaching Assignment Writing Skills at Tertiary Level

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Assignment writing skills require that students learn to present information effectively. A program that teaches first year tertiary students to present their assignments with due regard for content, structure, language and presentation is reviewed here. Ways of establishing students' writing capabilities and of identifying students at risk are covered. A set of assessment criteria, which evaluate the students' assignments thoroughly on presentation, structure, content and language, is suggested.

An annotated bibliography and an assignment evaluation sheet will be available at the session.

NOTE:

#1 Some copies of an assignment evaluation sheet will be available for participants.

#2 An annotated bibliography of assignment writing texts will be distributed at the seminar. Additional copies are available from:

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WRITE IT! THEN GET IT RIGHT!

Suggestions for Assessing, Programming and Teaching Assignment Writing Skills at Tertiary Level

M. Rosanna McEVEDY

STUDY SKILLS IN CONTEXT

A well rounded study skills course teaches students how to:

* locate information in the library;
* read and make notes;
* listen and take notes;
* write assignments; and
* present a seminar paper, conduct the discussion that arises out of the presentation and, in the case of graduate students, interact with a supervisor.

Essentially, these skills can be grouped into two broad sets of activities; those involving the retrieval and recording of information (Table 1) and those used to present information (Table 2). Assignment writing is clearly one of those skills which requires that students learn how to present information. The general philosophy and procedures outlined here have been used with individuals, small groups and large classes.

REASONS FOR TEACHING ASSIGNMENT WRITING SKILLS

The appointment of tutors and lecturers who teach study skills within the framework of tertiary institutions is a measure of the concern that Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education feel about the standards of literacy and oracy in tertiary students. There is also a widespread belief in the Australian community that standards of literacy and oracy are declining; illiterate engineers, illegible doctors and inarticulate teachers are collectively cited as evidence of the decline in mastery of the language skills among tertiaty students. Whether standards of literacy and oracy have actually declined is not debated here, but there is no doubt that many students entering tertiary institutions, with migrant, Anglo-Celtic and overseas backgrounds, are not sufficiently literate to undertake tertiary study. In simple terms, they cannot write assignments and thus enter a failure cycle as most of their assessment is based upon their ability to write acceptable assignments.

STUDY SKILL	CONSTITUENT SKILLS
Reading	* Scanning (getting a general idea of the text) * Skimming (looking for specific answers) * Substantiating claims * Recalling
Note making and Note taking	* Recognising discourse organisational features * Identifying lexical and other markers of topic switching in speech and writing * Restating ideas in summaries * Presenting ideas in charts and diagrams * Recording bibliographical details fully and accurately * Identifying main ideas in speech and writing * Recording main ideas * Using abbreviations, headings and sub-headings * Cross-referencing ideas within the students' own notes
Library Research	* Using the name catalogue * Using the serials catalogue * Using the microfiche subject catalogue * Using the reference section * Recording bibliographical details * Annotating bibliographical cards * Using a consistent in-text referencing system * Borrowing books responsibly

Table 1: Retrieving and Recording Information (McEvedy, M.R. 1984 "Teaching Writing Skills: A Proposed Screening Program for Teacher Trainees", Working Papers in Language and Linguistics, July, 1984)

STUDY SKILL	CONSTITUENT SKILLS
Oracy	* Putting sentences together grammatically * Putting longer, impromptu discourse units together logically * Articulating words clearly and flowingly * Using intonation, stress and pitch correctly * Using technical words accurately * Giving literature recitals expressively * Interacting with a supervisor
Report Writing	* Analysing the question * Planning an outline * Organising evidence to substantiate claims * Making meaning at sentence level * Writing paragraphs that express a main idea and develop it * Constructing a coherent flowing argument at text level * Compiling a bibliography * Quoting and sourcing * Using the terminology of the discipline accurately * Writing in the appropriate style * Editing the assignment * Meeting presentational requirements
Addressing a seminar	* Structuring the talk * Talking about the topic * Using audio-visual materials as support * Controlling body movements * Using a register appropriate to the topic, audience and social situation

Table 2: Presenting Information (ibid)

The courses offered at most Universities and Colleges require students to write numerous assignments. Students need to have the ability to:

* analyse a question;
* use the resources of the library;
* plan, write, rewrite and edit an assignment; and
* present a seminar paper or conduct a tutorial,

but many students are unable to carry out these tasks. At particular risk are overseas, migrant and Aboriginal students whose cultural backgrounds do not necessarily equip them to handle the modes of learning found in tertiary institutions. But a surprisingly large number of Anglo-Celtic Australian students are also marginal performers. Many lecturers are unable to provide tuition in assignment writing skills to undergraduates because class sizes and contact hours have increased, and so failing undergraduates do not receive remedial help. Graduate students sometimes fail because they do not understand the importance of packaging their theses or assignments in an acceptable way. Supervisors assume that their graduate students already have the skills needed to write theses and are not aware, until it is almost too late, that graduates may need tutoring in assignment writing skills, and then the question is: where do they go for help?

While the community, tertiary institutions and lecturers demand certain standards of literacy in tertiary students many of the students' more vocal critics would not, if pressed, be able to define what constitutes proficiency in study skills in students. It is usually left to the study skills tutors or student counsellors to decide what proficiency is and, having decided, instill in students a desire to become skilled writers, readers, listeners and speakers. This last task is not mean feat to achieve as study skills courses are, by nature, repetitive and picky in content, and study skills tutors are often seen as being outside the lecturing hierarchy.

Within a tertiary education context, it is important for students to learn to write acceptable assignments for several reasons. Assignments are used by lecturers as indicators of how well students have assimilated the academic values of being accurate, impartial, well read, careful presenters of information; they are used to assess the quality of the students' knowledge on a topic; and they are used to rank individual student's performance. It is important that all students learn early, and well, how to subscribe to the subcultural code that governs academic performance in general, and assignment writing in particular.

A WRITING SKILLS COURSE

The Objectives

Stated in general terms, the chief purposes of an assignment writing skills course are to get students to:

* write well structured assignments;
* meet presentational requirements;

* write in the appropriate style; and
* demonstrate a knowledge of the topic.

More detailed objectives that are implemented in the teaching situation are:

* to help students to write well structured sentences that contain verbs, and paragraphs that have topic sentences;
* to encourage the use of Academic English;
* to show the students how to control the terminology of particular disciplines;
* to show the students that it is important that they help their readers to understand the content of their assignments through using headings, tables, figures, labels and space judiciously;
* to help the students express their ideas in assignments that have clear introductory, development and concluding sections;
* to inform students that it is necessary for them to include evidence of their reading in their assignments in the form of quotations and paraphrases, and to source these fully and consistently;
* to show students how to draw up consistently formatted reference lists; and
* to show students how the presentation and packaging of their work is improved by the inclusion of preliminary pages.

These objectives concentrate on teaching students how to organise and present information concisely and neatly.

Successful mastery of the study skills associated with the presentation of information (Table 2) is predicated upon the competent use of information retrieval and recording skills (Table 1). But, since study skills tutors are often under pressure to get students to write acceptable assignments in as short a time as possible, it may not be possible to teach information and recording skills before the presentational skills. This situation can occur when large classes are taught, when overseas students are given a month or so to upgrade their English and when students have to meet deadlines on the submission of their theses. It may be necessary for the study skills tutor to set independent study tasks such as:

* locating a book or journal article;
* scanning it for a general impression of the contents;
* recording its bibliographical details;
* making notes on the contents; and
* recording and sourcing quotations for later use,

because there is simply not enough time to cover these tasks and teach assignment writing skills during the contact hours.

Identifying Students at Risk

There are several batteries of tests that require students to spell, complete sentences and write concluding or beginning sentences for paragraphs. These tasks are, I believe, of limited use in establishing the assignment writing capabilities of students as they do not require them to write long pieces of discourse (although they are of use in getting students to achieve sentence-level competence). The most useful way of establishing whether students can write assignments, or not, is to review their actual assignments. Having a set of criteria

against which assignments can be evaluated is useful as individuals and groups can be compared to see what the standards are.

Informing students that they are expected to meet specific performance criteria is a useful teaching strategy. Tutors need to be aware that ignorance of assignment writing standards, not inability, can be the cause of some students not producing acceptable assignments. Departments and lecturers who fail to inform students of their expectations, but mark students as if they had been informed, are not reliable sources of information on under-performing students. If the students present unacceptable assignments after being informed of their lecturers' expectations, there is some cause for concern. If, after being given a copy of a handout on what is expected in assignments and how their assignments will be marked, the students still do not hand in acceptable assignments, then there is more reason to be worried about literacy standards. The final, and probably most reliable, way of assessing students' assignment writing skills is for the study skills tutor to ask the students to rewrite an unacceptable essay, taking care to make all corrections where they are indicated, and for the tutor to compare the 'before' and 'after' editions according to the same set of criteria. If there is no discernible improvement, then the students are at risk, and should be encouraged to seek help. Where no prior assignment exists, the students should be asked to produce some writing on a topic they are currently studying (so their writing is not tangential to their course and time-wasting). They should be told to use headings, paragraphing devices, topic sentences, quotations and observe the stylistic conventions of Academic English. The exercise can then be marked, corrected and re-marked against the same set of criteria.

Planning a Program

Establishing good relationships with lecturers in the various departments is necessary if the students are to gain the maximum amount of benefit from a study skills course. Lecturers in different departments need to be approached so that the skills taught in an assignment writing course are appropriate to the particular discipline - English Literature conventions may well be different from those used in Anthropology or Soil Science assignments. Quite often lecturers have a vaguely uneasy feeling that their students 'can't write', but too few have analysed what the assignment writing problems of their students are. Some liaison is needed to find out what the lecturers' views on students' work are and, preferably, to get a statement of what they see as desirable features in their students' work. Getting lecturers to set actual assignments for students to work on gives pre-tertiary students a sense of belonging to the academic community and helps to focus the work of enrolled students.

An assignment writing skills course can have a language component that is designed in modules which can be taught sequentially as a total course, or in isolation to remedy specific problems. Ideally, each language module should contain ESP and EAP graded exercises, guided practice tasks and realia topics so that a variety of language levels can be catered for. Those students requiring a lot of help can acquire the basics through graded exercises and guided practice. Other students may only need to work on putting their skills into practice on a realia topic that calls upon the particular language patterns that have been practised. Such an approach requires sets of texts that practise

the ESP of different disciplines and a set of general texts that teach Academic English.

Two or three presentational modules that teach the students how to draw up contents and title pages and reference lists, the use of headings subheadings and labels, and how to write legibly need to be included. The use of space around tables, between paragraphs and headings and text, and the importance of wide margins should be taught as a well laid out assignment can attract marks at the margin.

Where large numbers of enrolled or pre-tertiary students are receiving help in assignment writing, a course booklet becomes a useful resource. The course booklet can contain a description of the assignment writing process and a course outline showing the sequence of tasks (modules) to be taught within that process. The booklet should also contain examples of an acceptable title page, contents page and method of incorporating quotations into the text. Examples of a consistently formatted reference list and ways of laying out and labelling tables and diagrams need to be included. It is useful to warn students that they need to follow the conventions of their disciplines for referencing and footnoting. Where there are no firm guidelines laid down by departments, the Harvard conventions can be taught as they are widely applicable.

Students also find it useful to have a set of instructions and reminders about certain writing conventions, such as the avoidance of contractions and the need to indent long quotations, in the formal style, included in the booklet. A statement of what is generally expected in academic writing (that is the need to be accurate, well sourced and neat) provides a useful frame of reference for students. An assignment evaluation sheet that marks essays on specific points for content, structure, presentation and language helps the students develop a set of standards they can internalise and apply generally. A number of blank pages can be included in the booklet for students to write down the requirements of particular departments.

Establishing Capability

A realistic assessment of the students' capabilities is critical, regardless of whether students are enrolled in a course or whether they are pre-tertiary. Enrolled students can present assignments for diagnostic marking and newly enrolled students can be asked to produce some structured academic writing on a topic such as "Give an account of the procedures used when...", as this kind of topic elicits the required structures. It is important that students know they are being assessed for their Academic English proficiency so they will produce English in the Academic, not the Creative, writing style. The study skills tutor can then evaluate the students' writing against a set of criteria specifically designed to assess assignment writing skills.

Students can be asked to review their own work to see whether it meets the criteria laid down in the marking schedule. Marking their own work exposes students to the approach that a reader-marker has to their work

and such an exercise makes them more aware of their audience's expectations. Marking their own work also avoids that element of awkwardness that students feel when they do not want to share their work with people they do not feel comfortable with. Regardless of who the initial marker is, the study skills tutor's mark can then be compared with the students'. If there are many problems with the structure, content, presentation and language the students can be enrolled in a full study skills course. In other cases, where only a few problems exist, modules of the course can be taught in isolation, with students checking in as required.

The basic skills students need to learn in an assignment writing course are grouped in five main sets:

* those dealing with the development of sentence-level competence; paragraphing control, spelling and punctuation;
* those dealing with the structuring and flow of information;
* those involving the use of the appropriate style;
* those demonstrating a knowledge of the topic; and
* those requiring that the information is presented effectively and neatly.

It is important that the study skills tutor assess where students need help and whether the problems are major. While referrals from lecturers are always welcome, many lecturers' assessments of students' assignment writing problems are not reliable. Sometimes a student may be referred because s/he has failed to avoid a lecturer's pet hate (for example s/he has used can't instead of cannot), but other students who have more serious problems (for example their sentences are verbless or have a jumbled word order, or notions of causality are muddled) are not referred. It is better for the study skills tutor to evaluate the students' work and discuss his/her evaluation with the lecturers. Pet hates can then be put in context tactfully.

Frequent Problems

Pre-tertiary and first year students often have problems with:

* coming to grips with the question. In particular, they cannot analyse the question into topic and task words, establish their existing knowledge on the topic and then plan an answer;
* structuring the flow of information. Students often find it hard to organise related ideas into sections, use headings to highlight the main ideas discussed in each section, structure each paragraph around a topic sentence and give their entire assignment a beginning, a middle and an end;
* controlling the amount of information. The inclusion of suitable long and short quotations and paraphrases to back up their assertions is a daunting task for most students. The placing of detailed information in tables, figures or flow-charts is not a skill that most students readily use;
* using space and different type-faces to advantage. Students sometimes need to be convinced that using wide margins, headings, underlining and indentation are legitimate ways of dividing up, and improving the communication of, information;

* controlling Academic English. Students need help in writing lucid, simple sentences that communicate their ideas directly to the reader-marker. Spelling, punctuation and the use of terminology needs to be monitored.

If the study skills tutor teaches all these points then s/he is aosl exposing the students to the subcultural values that underpin academic life and, thus, is improving the survival chances of marginal students.

A PROGRAM

The program outlined below was taught to a total of 1 0 first year students who were divided into four groups. Each group had two timetabled hours of contact per week for six weeks, to begin with. (The marking load and pressure during these six weeks was enormous as other lectures in different subject had to be given and marked.) On enrolment, the students presented an assignment that had been submitted for a unit in first semester and their assignments were evaluated against:

* twenty-seven points of assessment for format and presentation;
* twelve vital points of assessment for language control;
* fifteen point of assessment on content and the structure of the argument; and
* three points of assessment for administrative requ ements.

A major assignment was produced over the six weeks of the course under supervision. Following that, another assignment was produced over two weeks with less supervision from the lecturer of those students whose semester #1 assignment and major assisgmwnt were relatively satisfactory. Those students whose major assignments showed continued problems were given more help. At the end of these eight weeks which were divided into segments by vacation, professional practice and mid-semester week, most students left the course. Those who remained in the course were taught specific skills, depending on their needs, for up to five weeks (Table 3). Most of these students needed help with getting sentences together and structuring paragraphs.

EFFECTS OF THE COURSE ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE

The course was successful, although it was not a particularly popular one with all the students. Specific parts of the course were singled out by students as having more value than other parts, though these sections also received some positive comments. Overall, the students believed their assignments had improved (Table 4), and that these improvements could be related to their increased skill in doing certain tasks (Table 5). Particular aspects of the course were valued as they helped the students at specific points in the assignment writing process (Table 6).

Lecturers also commented on the improvements in students' assignments across departments, although only three departments' actually allowed their assignments to be used as <u>realia</u> to work on. To the lecturer in charge of the course this transfer of skills was most heartening.

LECTURER		STUDENT	
INSTRUCTION	FOLLOW-UP	LEARNING	FOLLOW-UP
Week #1			
Explain purposes of the course; Explain assessment criteria; Collect a sample essay;	Evaluate all assignments against assessment sheet; Do a frequency count on common problems;	Examine sample texts and describe features of academic writing(style, lay out, structure); Apply evaluation to own essay;	Get an essay topic to work on in Week #2; Correct sentence and paragraph texts; List and count errors found in paragraph and sentence texts.
Week #2			
Outline steps in assignment writing process; Discuss where students can go wrong - relate points to data from their own essays; Start with Problem #1 (analysing the question; Cover Problem #2 (establishing prior knowledge of the topic); Help with Problem #3 (grouping related ideas); Start Problem #4 (planning an outline); Collect exercises on sentence and paragraph correction;	Correct sentence and paragraphs reviews of students; Comments on their corrections and marking; Keep a record of the students' abilities to see errors;	Understand the steps involved in assignment writing; Review own essay in light of the comments made on the assignment evaluation sheet; Note own problems to watch; Analyse a question set by another department; Brainstorm the topic; Organise information into topic areas; Get a preliminary plan together; Choose possible headings for different section; Establish where reading needs to be done;	Go to the library, borrow books; Record bibliographical details of publications; Take notes; Collect quotes; Revise assignment plan in light of reading.
Week #3			
Hand back students' sentence and paragraph exercises and discuss; Teach students how collect a quote and source it in their assignments; Teach students how to insert tables and figures in their assignments; Distribute examples of correctly sourced quotations and ways of incorporating tabels and figures;	Be avaliable for consultation;	Start writing; Ask for help in class;	Check assignment content against books and articles.
Week #4			
Be available for conferencing in class;	Be available for consultation;	Edit draft #1 checking for correctness of content, structure of argument, language and presentation;	Write draft #2.
Week #5			
Show students how to draw up a reference list; Hand out examples to follow;	Be available for consultation;	Draw up a reference list of books and articles cited in their essays; Talk about changes to be made to final draft;	Write final draft.
Week #6			
Check final drafts;	Collect for marking before they are handed into the appropriate departments;	Rewrite final draft as fair copy in class;	
Week #7 - 9			
Teach points needing remediation in last essay;	Be available for consultation; Mark all #2 assignments;	Produce assignment #2;	Write assignment #2.
Week #10 - 13			
Give concentrated help to students who need it;	Check if 'graduated' students are continuing to meet performance criteria;	Work on specific problems e.g. quoting, reference list, layout, headings, tables, sentences, paragraphing;	Write assignment #3 under supervision, watching for problems.

Table 3: Weekly Program Schedule

STUDENT COMMENTS	PROPORTION OF STUDENTS
Assignment improved	86%
Assignments did not improve	7%
No comment	7%

Table 4: Students Evaluation of Improvement in their Assignments

SKILLS LEARNED	PROPORTION OF STUDENTS
Better able to plan assignments	43%
Better able to organise information	54%
Better able to control English	89%
More logical flow of ideas	36%
Better able to quote sources	61%
Better able to draw up a reference list	50%
Improved presentation and layout	50%
Better able to analyse questions	11%
Feel more confident about assignment writing	86%

Table 5: Skills Learned in the Assignment Writing Course

POSITIVE COMMENTS ON COURSE CONTENT	PROPORTION OF STUDENTS
Detailed marking sheet	61%
Course booklet	86%
Explaining lecturers' expectations	86%
Learning to quote and acknowledge sourses	93%
Learning to draw up a reference list	93%
Learning to draw up and include preliminary pages	89%
Learning the use of space, headings, margins and other presentation techniques	86%
Drafting and re-drafting assignments	86%
Doing exercises on sentence level problems and paragraph Construction	68%

Table 6: Evaluation of Course Content and Organisation

ABSTRACT of Paper for
VIth Australasian Study Skills Conference
Adelaide, May 1985

Rosalind S. Meyer, Adviser in Literacy, Deakin University

THINGS INVISIBLE TO SEE

This paper contends that Study Skills practitioners are exposed to considerable pressure to adopt an atomistic attitude to their work. In pointing to certain advantages of preferring a holistic approach, it considers some stimulating recent views of student learning; and adds instances of practical ways and means through which holism may promote development.

PAPER FOR THE VIth AUSTRALASIAN STUDY SKILLS CONFERENCE

ADELAIDE, MAY 1985

by

Rosalind Meyer, Adviser in Literacy, Deakin University

THINGS INVISIBLE TO SEE

At the last conference I attended my neighbour at the final dinner was thoroughly critical of proceedings. "Everybody gets up," said he, "and expounds his little bit of research - while not one of them explains how his work has any connection with anyone else's!" I was interested, because my own paper had (though he didn't know it) put the suggestion that "perhaps Study Skills Advisers are in danger of becoming 'atomistic' in their approach." At the time, I had used that proposition merely as an introduction to show what computer games could do to promote "holism" in students. I propose to spare you the latter on this occasion; but the former I intend to address squarely, putting it as a question: "What have Study Skills to do with skill in study?"

That question is brought into startlingly clear focus in a remark made by Bettelheim and Zelan (1982) during an investigation of the ways in which primary children are taught to read. "There is nothing wrong with teaching a skill," they say, "so long as it is not done in ways that do damage to the purposes for which the particular skill is needed or desirable." There can be no mistaking what they mean; and we need to have an answer ready for all such implied criticisms. It seems to me high time that we reflected on our purposes and on the purposes of our students and of our institutions. All these goals are "things invisible to see", which we have again and again attempted to scrutinise; but perhaps another look at the issues, in the light of fresh views of learning which are coming increasingly into prominence as a reaction to the advance on the educational field by information technology, may allow us at least another angle on our endeavours.

Let me make clear from the outset that I do not wish to attack diversity of opinion, variety of research, of teaching, or of theory. My intention is quite the opposite, because I think we should all agree that for many reasons these are entirely to the good. They promote healthy and fruitful discussion, and for that we are all gathered here. On the other hand, I am asking not only whether we can establish some common ground between the various pursuits into which different Study Skills practitioners have been led but - more particularly - whether we can see connections

between the divergent activities which individually we daily practise for the benefit of our student clients. Should we relax our concentration on these divergent activities, now that "Study Skills" has taken shape over the last ten years or so to achieve recognition in tertiary education, and turn our attention to the framework in which they may operate? I believe we should. What are our purposes in the wider perspective? If we do not examine them, it is possible that we shall do damage to them by taking the easy way out and looking only at what is in front of our eyes: the particular aims and claims of this morning, or of this afternoon.

My thoughts first turned in this direction when, pondering on our conference last year, I read Svensson's account (1977) of an experiment to determine what he calls "study skill" in students. He set a comprehension test, in which those with a "holistic" approach proved to score considerably better than did those with an "atomistic" approach. That is, those who perceived relationships, structures, and contextual values acquired a deeper and more functional understanding of the given text than did those who concentrated on specific details to the exclusion of their relative importance. At our 1984 conference issues such as these were implicitly raised by Gordon Taylor, in a paper on reading, and by Hanne Bock, in her analysis of student reactions to essay-questions; while Peter Wakeham's exposition addressed them directly.

Svensson is explicit in pointing to the heightened perception of his "holistic" subjects, who were able to relate not merely one factor to the context within which it operated, but one context to its functioning within another; and thus, they were able to comprehend also different levels of abstraction. In this, of course, as in the terms he borrows, he relies heavily on Gestalt philosophy, a view of learning which also underlies the views of those modern thinkers who are pointing to newly-envisaged dimensions in our mental processes. For these reasons I recommend Svensson's article to you, because I now realise that his findings apply not merely to what we need to engender in our students, but what we need to consider in our own approach. Already Svensson's work has given impetus to the thinking of several educationalists, known now collectively as the Gothenburg school. Among them, the names of Entwistle and of Graham Gibbs will be familiar to you, and perhaps those of Dai Hounsell and Elizabeth Taylor also. As you know, I have for some years attempted to stress the importance of confronting our students with the abstract and the conceptual, and you will imagine that I have welcomed this new turn in research into Study Skills. But it is not the implications for our students to which I wish primarily to direct your attention in this paper: it is the question of our own holism regarded separately as a principle of our practice.

We are all the time under pressure to be atomistic, and too often we fall into the trap. If a student comes to us for help, we ask ourselves what is his "problem"; or what his "problems" are. The one expression is as atomistic as the other, because either reveals our concealed assumption that a "problem" is an anomaly, a one-off (just as several problems are several one-offs), a disruption in a smooth state of affairs which we fondly choose

to assume is normal. I admit I prefer to think that a smooth state of affairs is, at least, not too much to hope for and to work towards: but the point I am trying to establish here is that a student's problem is not an isolated instance of incapacity to achieve something, but instead an indication of the total mental attitude harboured by the student. You will understand that I am not talking of such problems as stress occasioned by lack of money, or of bereavement, or even of a personality-clash. I am referring only to difficulties in studying, working, reading, writing and so forth. These "problems" will be defined by Faculty staff - who fall as neatly into the trap of making false assumptions as do the students and ourselves - as an incapacity to structure an argument, to punctuate correctly, or to read the question. The standard rubric goes: "Fred is a nice chap, but his problem is that..."

Now, long ago, some of us learnt to disregard what was told us by either Fred or his tutor. We have preferred to make our own analysis, either in discussion with Fred or by evaluating his work for ourselves. In this, we have been holistic. Yet few of us have really rejected the stereotypes which underlie our thinking. Automatically, we check, as we read the essay, deficiencies in punctuation, lack of discrimination between the relevant and the irrelevant, and (it may be) an inability to reach a proper conclusion. We do not seriously stop to think that all these have stemmed from one attitude, and that all will somehow be connected, provided we can perceive the principles on which our client's mind has been working. We shall connect deficiency in writing with deficiency in reading, certainly; and we shall not be surprised if a student who arrives to an appointment two hours late or two days late hands us a totally disorganised essay. But when attempting to remedy the matter, do we attempt to draw out the relationship of the one issue to the other? Far too frequently, we do not. We deal separately with the problems, say, of punctuation, of what is relevant, and of how to draw a suitable conclusion: and in so doing we endorse our student's expectations of atomism.

Unless we make an effort to integrate the acquisition of any one skill into a client's whole concept of what it means to study, we are in danger of training him to go competently through hoops, instead of contributing to his total education. Clearly, we need ourselves to have a grasp of how study skills contribute towards skill in study, towards capacity to learn and to develop the mind; and, since inevitably at a certain point we have to deal with "skills" one by one, we have to be sure ourselves of the way in which they work together to create a productive approach, an understanding of why you do what you do, and of how you can use this knowledge to explore new fields. If we succeed in doing this, then we shall have attained what is surely our chief purpose: to enable students to learn for themselves.

How are we to go about this? Not, I rather think, in the way suggested by the table-companion I have quoted, by trying to fit together the pieces of the jigsaw into a neat Study Skills picture. It is obvious that our interests lead us into very disparate areas of research, and thus that when we sit down to evaluate the sessions after any one convention, we have to

concentrate on a few and pass over others, however valuable all may have been. One cannot force the pieces together because the gaps would show between them; and besides, certain areas - since chance dictates the papers offered at any one conference - would be left blank. I suggest, then, that we start with the whole picture, and then see how it may rather differently be subdivided: and to do this, we shall need to throw out our mental assumption that a two-dimensional picture exists, waiting to be distributed into areas, and begin to think of at least a three-D block, whose separate factors have many interconnections that cross different levels.

This will not be as difficult as it sounds, if we first turn our attention to purely conceptual matters, concentrating initially on our purposes. Presumably, as has been said, we wish to stimulate learning: and that means, gradually weaning our students from the expectations of training which necessarily form part of secondary school life to the steadily-developing maturity of independent self-education. I suggest that we look, then, at what distinguishes the trained mind from the educated mind, and see in what ways we can develop the latter, with its holistic attitude, to the discouragement of the former in its inevitable ultimate fragmentation. We need to emphasise understanding at the expense of mere knowledge: to engender a vital intelligence which involves the whole personality to the exclusion of a superficial intelligence which confines itself to certain aspects of learning only. So we need to enquire after the human capacities which may be stimulated to make from learning an illuminating experience, not a matter of limited acceptance.

For the simplest illustration, I refer you to that memorably awful school cartooned by Dickens in Hard Times, run by Mr. Gradgrind: where the instillation of facts to fill empty minds was proclaimed to be educative. Nothing more atomistic could be imagined; and I am only just beginning to appreciate the scope of Dickens' imaginative vision as I recall that the star pupil of this establishment was named Bitzer. Now, it seems to many thinkers, whose voices are increasingly to be heard, that our tertiary institutions are likely to be under pressure to return to a sort of Gradgrindism, as education becomes invaded by what is ominously becoming known as "information-processing technology". It is in protest at an attitude of mind which assumes that all human knowledge may be reduced to binary instructions so as to create in a computer Artificial Intelligence that exceedingly valuable new studies on aspects of learning are being produced. They concern us, because that student who takes his degree with little more than a neat bundle of study skills however acquired may be said to possess artificial intelligence. What deeper and truer intelligence we wish to promote is now available for our consideration.

Weizenbaum, in his Computer Power and Human Reason, (1976) provides an echo of Bettelheim and Zelan's dictum - quoted above - when he writes: "Something should constantly be happening to every citizen of the university; each should leave its halls having become someone other than he who entered in the morning. The mere teaching of craft cannot fulfill this high function of the university." He goes on: "It is perhaps easy for the

teacher of computer science to fall into the habit of merely training. But, were he to do that, he would surely diminish himself and his profession." What are the attributes of human reason and of the genuine education in human reason to which Weizenbaum is pointing? Most happily, it is the scientists themselves who are coming forward with some answers; though some have been thinking on these lines for many years now. In 1966 the physicist Polanyi offered food for thought in his The Tacit Dimension; illustrating his contentions in ways which directly concern the enlightened teaching of Study Skills.

He argues in his little book that there are certain things of which we are aware, but not so clearly aware as to be able to speak freely of them. When queried about one of these we might say "Well, it's hard to put your finger on it." The example he uses at the outset is, that although we can recognise the face of somebody we know, we cannot say what it is that we have recognised in the face, and we assuredly would not be able to teach anyone else how to recognise that face just through enumerating the features one by one. He terms what we know as "tacit", or unvoiced, knowledge; and the way we know it, as "tacit knowing". For all this, Polanyi argues, whatever it is that we recognise must have something to do with the features and the way they compose the face. Yet he is adamant that the two are different, to the point where our visualisation of the first actually destroys our visualisation of the second. As he puts it, "(1) Tacit knowing of a coherent entity relies on our awareness of the particulars of the entity for attending to it; and (2) if we switch our attention to the particulars, this function of the particulars is canceled [sic] and we lose sight of the entity to which we had attended." This will be clearer if we consider whatever is familiar about a face we know, as opposed to what we can envisage by inventorying each feature in turn.

In his contention, Polanyi is elaborating on a principle of Gestalt psychology, summed up by David Katz (1948) after a similar investigation of what might constitute our recognition of vanilla ice cream. "Cold + Sweet + Vanilla Aroma + Softness + Yellow", he points out, are not enough to explain it. "The whole", he writes, "is more than the sum of its separate parts and not, in the positivistic sense, the sum alone." Considerations of this kind underlie the attacks on Artificial Intelligence which are gradually appearing; as long ago as 1972 Dreyfus, in What Computers Can't Do, asked "Why... do those pursuing Cognitive Simulation assume that the information processes of a computer reveal the hidden information processes of a human being, and why do those working in Artificial Intelligence assume that there must be a digital way of performing human tasks?" In a later chapter he reinforces his point, linking his thoughts more closely with both Katz and Polanyi: "This assumption that the world can be exhaustively analysed in terms of determinate data or atomic facts is the deepest assumption underlying work in AI [sic] and the whole philosophical tradition." We can readily see that a computer is unlikely to be able to comprehend the full impact of an orchestral symphony on a human mind, although undoubtedly the symphony depends on, while it exceeds, the sum of its parts. It is in this tacit dimension that we need to develop minds, attuning them to appreciate

more and more keenly all contributing factors at the one time together with the reality of their concomitant results.

How are we to apply this to our teaching practice? We can be thankful that students themselves must take the last steps as they find for themselves how to be at home in the tacit dimension, and that we need only point them in the right direction. They can be shown, nevertheless, initially, how to concentrate on co-ordinating intellectual activities. To develop ability in several areas at the one time is often essential to learning - as anyone who has ridden a bicycle or used a sewing machine discovers at the first attempt - so they may grasp that it is the co-ordination that counts: not the individual skills so much as the putting together of the skills simultaneously. Anyone knows this is the case for a seamstress, a cook, a singer, a footballer, or a racing-driver: students just need to have the fact brought to their notice, so that they may strive to acquire the knack.

Polanyi begins to make the ways and means clearer as he turns to another example - deliberately selecting it, as he explains, at a more complex plane of comprehension in order to make perceptible the levels, and the hierarchies of levels, within which we ourselves process information.

The giving of a speech, which we might connect with the writing of an essay, he analyses at five levels: those of voice, words, sentences, style, and literary composition. Each, as he explains, is "subject to its own laws, as prescribed (1) by phonetics, (2) by lexicography, (3) by grammar, (4) by stylistics, and (5) by literary criticism." The laws of any one level are not superseded by the laws of the one above it: yet their own function has a relationship to the laws of the level above, and to the laws of those contextual levels which lie beyond the one immediately superimposed. Polanyi goes on, to explain in holistic terms how all these levels and contexts may be regarded as we resort to a vision of their "shaping" - that is, as we might call it in a more familiar term, their structuring within a common, if complex, framework. We may ponder how the linkage between contexts affects our understanding of what are our eventual purposes as we teach any one skill in study, from capacity in lexicography to all further goals to which that relates. Eventually, we have to satisfy that context which human beings share and Martians (or computers) do not: getting the whole "ordinary" scene together; triggering-off a conviction that this is part of life as we know it: developing tacit abilities for special uses in study, initially by pointing them out to the conscious mind.

As we consider, we might reflect that in all our daily activities as Study Skills Advisers we are called on to relate one context to another, and thus the laws (as Polanyi rightly points out) which relate each context to others. Already we have to translate a received set of contextual values (convention) to a new set (thought) - as I have tried on other occasions in other papers to illustrate for you. We have to mediate between the student's world and the tutor's world; between the laws which govern secondary school and the laws which govern tertiary education; between growing independence

in learning in first year, and that same capacity in second year. If we have done so unawares, then let us now do it alert to its value, with a sharpened awareness of where our assumed purposes are leading.

We may do so, either by envisaging the structure of one contextual level as related to the structures of all the others involved at the time - so that in all their framework is intricately inter-connected - or we can reject the necessity of spanning all the disparate endeavours of Study Skills practitioners into the one code of laws to promote study and education, and look instead at such basic issues as underlie them all. In this, we shall be materially assisted by the work of M.J.L. Abercrombie, who deserted the teaching of biology in order to find how to teach students how to learn. Distressed that she saw many students graduate who seemed to have acquired only artificial intelligence - in the terms in which we have been considering it - she explored what they lacked, and how it might be introduced to their successors. In 1960 she set down the results of ten years' research supported by a Rockefeller grant; in her introductory chapter makes clear that she understands both Polanyi's "tacit dimension" and also the contexts in which it functions.

Her initial example involves the many abilities we call on simply in order to cross a busy street. She points out that, firstly, we select from the information available to us, discarding anything that does not relate to our purposes. Secondly, we call on our prior knowledge to make informed predictions in a surprising number of ordinarily perceived contexts simultaneously: and among these, she cites "the speed of a car, the skill of a cyclist, the temper of a taxi-driver, our own nimbleness, the state of the road surface, and the behaviour of other pedestrians." Put in this way, the connection between one context and another seems simple, as does the linkage between one level of contexts and another. Yet all have contributed to an understanding so far beyond knowing the sum of the parts as to allow us to make predictions about the future. Here we all are, to prove their success.

Mrs. Abercrombie then proceeds to explain in what ways she has gone about refining the perceptions of her students, developing them in several spheres simultaneously, and, by instigating self-education, leaving scope for further development. I cannot too warmly recommend her work, which in its quietly reassuring, matter-of-fact, linearly progressive logic both explains Polanyi's contentions within practical situations and solves the question of how to indicate them to students. She, too, whether consciously or no - since she makes no attribution - relies on Gestalt principles of holism.

For instance, the first session with students that she describes requires them initially to make a comparison between two radiographs. Thereafter, they are invited to a group discussion in which they may distinguish between what they have actually seen and what they have thought they have seen but in fact have "perceived" only by inference. The distinction, basic to the philosophy of Gestalt, is most readily explained to the layman by pointing out that we think we see on the television screen

human forms and human actions: whereas a Martian might see only what is actually there, patches of colour of differing shades and densities, distributed apparently at random and changing from moment to moment. Equally, where we might say that we "saw" words in print, a Martian might see only lines and squiggles on paper. In this one session, therefore, Mrs. Abercrombie confronts her students with concentration on the detail of what they actually do have before their eyes to be observed, and the necessity to discriminate between that and what they infer, bringing other contexts to bear, that they observe. In this way, they are led to discover for themselves what an inference might be, and how it may be validated by fact. In the process, they should also discover that bias in judgement is a type of blindness unthinkingly or intentionally adopted: and that it affects both what is "seen" and what is inferred.

Are these not among the attributes of mind which we endeavour to engender in our clients, while we are apparently teaching them how to write an essay, how to take notes, how to read material observantly and analytically, how to participate in tutorials? Perhaps, while we concentrate on these specific topics, we shall be obscuring from our clients the connecting links and debarring them from the integrated approach which leads to understanding. Since these impalpable connections are the arteries which bring to each part of the body of study skills the life-blood of truly educative learning, we shall have forgotten our chief purpose: to impart such abilities as will allow every student to explore for himself, with developing capacity to do so, the world of his studies.

Abercrombie's The Anatomy of Judgement is sub-titled "An investigation into the processes of perception and reasoning". Her work shows that such things invisible to see may be brought into the foreground of students' perspectives; and in the foreground, they should be. I have argued elsewhere (1985) that the playing of games provides excellent stimulation in organic conceptualisation; and indeed, one of Polanyi's examples of what may tacitly be known is a game of chess, which, as he points out, is quite another matter from the rules. The tactics applicable to a game are another matter again; yet these are visible - often uncannily so - to many children from the age of five upwards. We need to develop and stimulate this innate ability to take thought for strategies, for processes, and for functions: so we should make room for new emphases in our teaching, however we choose to go about it.

One way in which we can attack the atomistic attitudes of our clients is to bring the importance of contexts as expounded by Polanyi clearly to their notice. Over the past year, I have adopted a new way of teaching the analysis of an essay question. In order to focus attention on the contextual structure of the question itself, I take a word whose meaning every student assumes he knows: a word which is apparently not ambiguous in any way - "water". What would I mean by it, I ask, if I were writing a report to the Metropolitan Board of Works? I should mean a commodity with which to supply a service. What would I mean by it if I were a chemist? The answer will come, this time: H_2O. - If I were on an old-time sailing ship

becalmed in the doldrums? - If I had come to break the world's land speed record on Lake Eyre and found it flooded? And so forth, until we look back at the question and consider how many contexts are applicable to each term as it distributes its weight across the loading of all the words that function towards the total meaning. If for instance the question contains the word "account", that can be employed to introduce consideration of the dialectic essay, since an "account" is not only a special sort of narrative but also, pertinently, a balance of debits and credits set out with detailed evidence in order to arrive at a conclusion which puts the balance marginally in favour of one side or the other. At this juncture one can hope to suggest that the writing of such an essay is in fact an exercise in forming a balanced opinion. For many students, this is a wholly new concept of what an "opinion" may be; so one can explain to them that they need experience in practice before they can be sufficiently at home with the nature of an "opinion" to offer informed criticism of the opinions of others. In all these ways, holism may be stressed.

Another experiment that I undertook last year has not been fully evaluated, since the member of staff who co-operated with me left for overseas not long after: but other staff have given some encouragement. Convinced as I am that the words students utter in speech are too great an abstraction for many of them to be aware of - which would explain why they panic when needing to put words down on paper - I gave a crash course to biologists in hearing what they said and what others said. As I explained to the lecturer, this ought in any case to have assisted them to remember instructions, to understand comment on their work, to take in lectures, and to be more articulate in lab. sessions or when writing. We put the first hour to a version of musical chairs: discussion was encouraged, until when I called "Stop!" they had to write down the last whole sentence uttered. They were then able to check it from the tape-recording we had made. A dictation test followed. In a later class, they took notes from a mini-lecture, and handed these in, together with a full write-up of the contents; and eventually they were required to present a summary of an article to be found in the Library. I for one was pleased, on the whole, with the results.

In such ways as this, we may integrate our various activities, and promote holistic appreciation within given frameworks. Yet I feel that we should also introduce fresh instruction and new enquiries - into such matters, for instance, as the drawing of valid inferences; the ways in which the anatomising of a subject (such as a mouse, a solar system, a poem, or an event) falls short of full comprehension of that subject's significance; and problem-solving, with lateral thinking. I suggest, indeed, that we have not so far solved our own problem: of how by teaching many skills we are to promote skill in study. I offer one final instance.

I had been reading Edward Krick's An Introduction to Engineering (1976), and had been particularly struck by his exposition of problem-solving, which offers a paradigm that reduces all particulars, with apparently effortless clarity, to their basic principles. His initial warning - never to look at the current solution to a problem, but always at

the actual demands of the problem itself - impressed me especially. Soon after, I was asked by a distance student for advice in note-taking. Intrigued to know why somebody who owned all the study materials should wish to take notes from them, I suddenly remembered Krick. "What you want," I suggested to her, "is to transfer all that material to your memory - isn't that right?" She thought for a moment, and then agreed. So the solution for her was not note-taking as such; though with the atomism of a novice, she had not known what else to ask for. Naturally enough, the sophistication of a structured holistic approach was beyond her comprehension: though not beyond her intuited requirements.

It is the things invisible to see which we need to offer our clients. Krick's work brings forcibly to one's mind the many contextual considerations which must be balanced out by the engineer before he can make a valid prediction, and with the help of creative, professional, imagination envisage the completion of some great work - that pipeline tunnel for traffic to be moored to the sea floor under the Straits of Messina, for example; a hovercraft; or a world-renowned bridge. These are the visible fruits of education at its best, in which intuition, perception, precision, judgment, flair, and all the human pyrotechnics of imaginative intelligence play their parts in harmonious integration. It is on these that every discipline needs to call in order to achieve its triumphs.

Graduates who learn to deploy them will continue on in increasing expansion of mind and deepening growth of understanding as the years pass. Is not this, then, the education that we wish to promote, to prompt, and to stimulate? Certainly, I incline to think that it is this that our clients long for, though they do not know what it is or how to find it, when they come to us for help. None of our young students is devoid of a spark of poetry in the soul, and without doubt, it is the pursuit of some private dream that brings back our mature students to the love-hate experience of slaving at their studies. They want to explore the thrilling mysteries of the human mind; and through their education to find such occasional visionary moments as Donne fancifully refers to in the song from which my title is taken. They want to catch a falling star, and to hear the mermaids singing, as they discover the keenest pleasures of that learning from past ages which is their inheritance.

If they have come for a glimpse of these "strange sights", are we not to offer them ways to find the things invisible to see?

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WHAT DO ACADEMIC STAFF MEAN WHEN THEY CLAIM STUDENTS CAN'T WRITE?

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Abstract

While study skills teachers may be able to help students improve their writing, it does not seem likely that we will see much improvement in the higher order skills most of us want students to develop over the course of their tertiary studies until the majority of academic staff are teaching communication skills in the context of their own subject disciplines. However, if we are to approach this Utopian state, we must clarify just what academic staff wish students to do in writing that they are unable to do now. Then we will be in a position to assist the teachers to build into their subjects instruction in writing skills.

In this informal session, I will report on research in progress at the University of New South Wales, in which I am consulting with academic staff about their expectations and standards in assessing students' written work, and in which I am analysing student papers to determine types of errors most frequently made. I will also outline the program of a workshop for academic staff which aims to encourage them to teach in ways that will help students improve their writing. But most of all, I will ask for information from participants about what they believe to be the major problems for students and what academic staff should be encouraged to do.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TERTIARY DYSLEXIC

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There seem, unfortunately, to be few successful ways of helping tertiary dyslexic students to improve writing performance. Assistance provided is intensive, prolonged, demanding on both student and tutor, and sometimes apparently counter-productive.

A number of case studies will be presented as a basis for exploring issues and approaches in relation to assisting the dyslexic student (messy writer, poor speller, haphazard organiser, inadequate converser ...) in the pursuit of academic success.

DYSLEXIA

There are numerous reasons why students and others fail to learn information appropriate to their peer group. Given adequate intelligence, instruction, and socio-cultural opportunity, many students nevertheless manifest a difficulty in demonstrating attainment skills in areas of reading, spelling, comprehension, writing, arithmetic or expression. This difficulty in the learning process, which can persist into adulthood, has been loosely labelled dyslexia.

It is estimated that at least 2% of university students suffer (mostly silently) from this disorder. As with any problem that sets students apart from their peers and makes them seem different or inadequate, the tendency is to defend by denial, repression, or some other form of cover up. Consequently, tertiary students with learning disorders rarely admit to the problem but prefer to battle on alone and be treated like "normal" people. Unfortunately, this can have repercussions in tutorials, and when written work has to be marked by a lecturer or examiner who is not aware of the disorder, and judges the work "fairly" in comparison to standards set for non-handicapped students. As a by-product, students who battle with the disorder through earlier schooling, with or without remedial help, and make it to university, are frequently determined, very conscientious, firm in their views and, some would say, cussedly stubborn and independent.

Professor Doreen Kronick (1) at the University of Kansas investigated high school students with learning disorders compared to a control group. She found a number of personality traits which were more common in the handicapped students. These traits help to explain the entrenched independence of this group. She found that students with learning disorders:

(a) were more sensitive to personal criticism

(b) felt that teachers disliked them

(c) were inclined to misperceive student/teacher interaction as more negative than did the "controls"

(d) tended to exaggerate their judgements of negative behaviour.

It is no wonder then, that university students are reluctant to approach lecturers to discuss their learning disorder problem. Typically, students who come to the Counselling Service about study difficulties and are "discovered", or who acknowledge that they have a learning disorder, are not disposed to explore it or to approach departments for support, and often refuse outright to seek any special consideration for their handicap.

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(1) Doreeen Kronick. Social Development of Learning Disabled Persons. This is a pioneer study on the personalities and emotional pressures affecting the learning disordered student.

Students may need to be encouraged by the attitude of lecturing staff to reveal their learning problems. In order to overcome the students' reticence, staff need to be more aware of the nature of the handicap and be able to recognise the signs which manifest it.

The disorder is characterized by a wide variety of symptoms. Faulty short term memory is frequent. Information held in short term memory is often correctly reproduced but disordered on recall. The student altering the sequence of recalled information can be aware that it makes no sense or logic; anxiety increases and concentration and confidence suffer. Often there is no awareness of disordering until notes are revised. In lectures, note taking at speed often results in omitted or false information and consequently reduced comprehension. Borrowing of other students' notes to fill in gaps or correct faulty records may then be the only alternative. Although there may be a problem with copyright infringements, students suffering from this disorder should be given a sympathetic hearing when asking to tape-record lecture material.

In essay composition more severe handicaps may result in poor or faulty written expression. Although the idea to be expressed comes to the student in a logical manner when being formulated, it can be disordered when an attempt is made to commit it to paper. Consequently, written statements can sometimes appear confused. Students often fail to identify the confused statement, as, when conceived, logic, order, and organization were satisfactory. Lecturers who mark papers containing confused sentence structure and disorganized ideas may need to call students in to be confronted with their efforts and give them a chance of correcting verbally the confusion created by their disorder, rather than have the lecturer assume that they are dull, careless, or disinterested.

Similarly, disordering can occur in speech, and spoonerisms are more frequent in this group than in the population generally. Less frequently whole words, syllables, or sound blends are disordered. This reduces communication skills, e.g. "That tutorial was memorable" could become "That memorial was tutorial". These errors are usually guarded against because of the negative feelings associated with them, but when the student is less viligant - at moments of stress, for instance, in examinations, - or when fatigued, they are likely to be more common.

Poor spelling skills are very frequent. Our Education System, in emphasising creativity and freedom of expression, tends to de-emphasise correct spelling. While most students in their early education are anxious to spell correctly, there are many who arrive at university who have failed to concern themselves with the complexities of syntax and spelling. Those with a learning disorder however, have often devoted long tedious hours to mastering the mysteries of spelling and are still impoverished in this area. Oppressed by their repeated failures, young students often resort to phonetic spelling or a code of their own invention to make some sense, at least for themselves, of what they need to commit to paper.

In pronouncing words they are attempting to read, disordering and faulty sound integration occur. This results in faulty memory traces being laid down neurologically, e.g. "irrelevant" can be pronounced, remembered and

laid down as "irreverent"; "preliminary" is spelled as "perliminary". The student without handicap gets it right the first time and reinforces the correct sound and memory trace. The student with the disorder gets it wrong, stuggles to get it right, and lays down only a few correct responses compared to numerous error responses. The spelling that results is a combination of faulty, uncertain memory traces, anxiety, poor auditory and visual recognition, the likelihood of further disordering, established and inadequate ways of coping with the particular work, and lack of confidence. While remedial help can often do much to improve spelling skills, students who have the disorder will be unjustly penalized if lecturers find fault with their best efforts.

In the early stages of learning to spell and cope with the symbols we use, reversals of letters and numbers and even whole words occur well past the age at which these skills are properly assimilated. In addition rotations, omissions, inclusion of letters from another part of the word can occur, which naturally impairs confidence in reading and spelling, e.g. "gradually" can be seen as "grandly" as the 'u' is rotated; 'b's and 'd's are reversed; "soloist" becomes "solist"; "institution" becomes "insituation"; "statistics" becomes "satistics". Faulty habits of childhood persist into the university classroom. This is particularly a problem for students learning a new vocabulary, e.g. in biology, psychology or medicine, who can be severely handicapped and much slower to learn correct spelling or terminology.

Students need to compile their own lists of most often incorrectly spelled words and add and refer to it until their confidence with "error words" is established.

Awareness of the tendency to disorder reduces its incidence because of increased viligance. Essays may need to be checked by a "good speller" before presentation. Students should be permitted and encouraged by lecturers in the use of dictionaries during examinations.

Speed of reading is impaired. The student with a learning disorder tends to read at a laborious rate. Although these students often choose subjects where reading and written expression are minimal, all reading is affected. The reading of computer printouts, chemistry symbols, experimental data, essays and texts will be slower than the rates of their non handicapped peers. Reading rate accelerators or speed reading courses do little to improve the situation. Increased anxiety is possible when increased speed is applied, as neurological arousal intensifies and passes an optimal level for intake of information. Comprehension is then frequently impaired. In the early developmental stages of attempting to read there is sometimes a tendency to want to read from right to left and confusion regarding orientation skills. As an aftermath of orientation problems some readers tend to omit a line or re-read the same line, necessitating slow reading to avoid this type of error and the confusion and loss of comprehension it causes. Sometimes sounding each syllable aloud seems to be the only way whole words can be understood. Reading aloud may help short tem auditory memory and therefore integration of the correct auditory sequence, but these methods are of course very slow and a far cry from the style of the ordinary reader, who takes in whole groups of words, and the skilled speed reader, who absorbs whole lines and short

paragraphs on the one intake. Using a reading ruler which discloses only the line to be read reduces orientation errors and can assist the development of speed. With the huge quantities of material needing to be read and digested in a university course, the student disadvantaged by a learning disorder may need to approach lecturers for extensions to essay deadlines, and the library may need also to consider altering some of its borrowing rules for this group.

Copying from the board in lectures can also prove difficult. Adjustments in orientation and disordering of information in short term memory make the recording of projected material or that written on blackboards prone to error. Most students cope by slowing their copying down and by constantly checking and rechecking to ensure correctness. Sittng near the middle towards the front of the class or, if possible, directly in front of the board, is sometimes helpful. If handouts covering the material are not made available, students may need to borrow from others to check their own efforts.

Examinations are usually very stressful for those with a learning disorder and additional time to offset the handicap needs to be considered by academic staff. Excess anxiety can cause problems in its own right: panic, loss of recall, freezing, blocking, writer's cramp, migraines, dizzy spells, etc. Examinations are anxiety arousing enough - having to interpret the question, reproduce acquired knowledge, be comprehensive and competent in expression and write legibly and logically. With the handicaps of a learning disorder - the knowledge of inadequacies and previous criticisms, the slowness of reading, the dangers of poor expression, improverished spelling and possible misinterpretation of questions - anxiety is likely to escalate and further impede optimal output. With additional time and the feeling of acceptance that at least the learning disorder is being acknowledged, the student's anxiety is partially prevented from escalating, and there is a better chance of the disorder being held in control. Additional time also would allow for sentence construction and spelling errors to be reviewed by the student. In extreme cases of severe handicap examination papers may need to be read to the student to reduce comprehension errors.

The whole question of how to assess students with a learning disorder needs scrutiny. Vivas where students have the opportunity to sit down and note their answers prior to being permitted to elaborate verbally will be preferable for some students. Tape recorded answers may be better for others. The use of multiple choice examination questions presented visually, perhaps on a computer screen, while also being fed through ear phones, might be more appropriate to some examinees. Students suffering from a learning disorder not only need to be more assertive in coming forward and identifying themselves, but they also need to request methods of examination in which their handicap will be minimized. At the same time there needs to be a willingness on the part of the institution to respond appropriately to such requests.

For tertiary students who have had remedial help in previous years by aware and competent teachers, there seems very little that can be achieved by further 1 : 1 help. There is a tendancy sometimes in those with the problem to pretend the handicap doesn't exist, but students need to

maintain an awareness of the kinds of problems they face and conscientiously and painfully set out to tackle and reduce them whenever they surface. For students who are minimally affected and have reached tertiary study, remedial action would be time consuming, and it is doubtful if the gains that can be made are worth the investment necessary.

For a more detailed discussion on remedial help see Matejoek (1), who has also written and lectured extensively on the controversy surrounding crossed laterality and hemisphere dominance.

I have listed the majority of symptoms that can be found individually or in greater numbers in students who are handicapped by a learning disorder. Miles (2) has a more extensive list. I've chosen not to include in my discussion the problems of other handicapped students with difficulties such as epilepsy and other neurological impairments, hearing defects, speech disorders, and so on. Lecturers who are perplexed by students who appear intelligent and well motivated and yet have an obvious difficulty in any of the areas I've mentioned, may wish to encourage them to approach the Health Service or the Counselling Service, both of which are located on the ground floor in the Horace Lamb Building.

N.S. GREET
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May 1984

NSG:JDH:8354Z
1 April, 1985

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DO STUDY SKILLS HELP STUDENTS TO LEARN MORE EFFECTIVELY?

Abstract

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The paper will review research and practical evidence that converges on an unpalatable, but inevitable, conclusion: many learning skills programs have little or no positive effects on student learning, and may even encourage the kinds of learning we would wish students to avoid. This is not to say that all study skills sessions are useless, but that extravagant claims for their general effectiveness are wide of the mark. It seems that there are few, if any, general learning skills that can usefully be taught to higher education students at present.

The evidence raises two important questions: first, why are learning skills programs so popular if they are ineffective, and second, what alternatives should we consider?

Answers to the first question will be considered under the following headings:

-- the mythology of studying and study skills:

-- the ideology of teachers in higher education;

-- confusion between descriptive theories of learning and normative prescriptions for better learning;

-- misunderstandings of 'what it takes to learn' in higher education;

-- failure to recognise the embededness of learning skill in subject competence and the evidence that skills are rarely transferable.

Suggestions for alternatives and additions to typical study skills programs, derived from recent research into how students in higher education actually learn, will be provided in the second part of the paper. These focus on changes to teaching and assessment in order to improve staff-student relationships, to help staff become more aware of their students' learning difficulties, to present a curriculum which encourages students to develop skill in learning, and to provide assessment messages that indicate to students that understanding rather than reproducing will be rewarded.

STUDY SKILLS TRAINING WITHIN A COUNSELLING SERVICE

ABSTRACT

Different students will be attracted to different study skills courses according to the wording of advertising, the nature of the course and its location. Courses run from a Counselling Service have the advantage of being relatively independent of the academic environment and the disadvantage of being affected by students' misperceptions about counselling. This session will investigate why students enrol for a study skills course within a counselling unit, try to identify the different types of students and their needs, and attempt to generate possible solutions or compromises.

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STUDY SKILLS TRAINING WITHIN A COUNSELLING SERVICE

It is usually believed that students attend a study skills course because they do not know how to study. On the contrary, most students do know the fundamental skills of study and learning and, particularly at university, they have the intellectual capacity to use these skills. Instead, students seem to attend a study skills course because they do not know enough about the new institution for which they have just enrolled and/or they lack confidence and/or they lack motivation and/or they are highly anxious. If so, then the role of the study skills teacher is partly to provide information about the institution, with its stated and hidden curricula and partly to help the students identify why they lack confidence or motivation or feel very anxious and investigate what can be done about such problems. Conventional study skills courses are usually confined to assisting students with understanding the more explicit criteria for academic success and suggesting management skills to maximise success. Such an approach can only deal with a small part of the problem and the success of conventional study skills training may well be due to the indirect effect of providing students with more realistic models, increasing their confidence by allaying fears, and giving them some practice runs (e.g. with essay writing) independently of an academic assessment. This is probably more true for an institution that provides study skills from within a counselling service because a counselling service is seen to have the skills to deal with such difficulties with confidence, motivation and anxiety. If so, then the study skills teacher working from a counselling service has different problems and opportunities from a study skills teacher working from a learning centre or an academic department. Such problems and opportunities can be conveniently discussed according to the needs of the students. i.e. information, confidence, motivation and anxiety.

1. STUDENTS WHO LACK INFORMATION

1.1 The competent students aware of a deficiency

These are the students who usually prefer to go to the academic staff or to a learning skills course run by a learning or language (but not counselling) unit. They are aware of specific deficiencies in language essay-writing, problem solving, organization etc. Their needs are often highly subject-specific. (e.g. How do I get to know the terminology of the subject? What is the best way to prepare myself for a language laboratory session? How can I readily distinguish the important reading in this lengthy list from Anthropology 1?) They do not see themselves as having study "problems" so much as wanting to know more clearly how to go about a particular learning task. They find a general study skills course unhelpful because their problem lies in specific application of certain professional or learning skills.

1.2 The new student uncertain of requirements

Mature-age students, overseas students, country students or cossetted students from private school, feel uncertain about what is expected of them in a tertiary institute. They do not know what an ideal student does and they require basic information about this. Some respond to ads for "study support" groups where they can get to know other students and talk about their problem in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Others do not like the closeness of a discussion group

and prefer the impersonal structure of books, leaflets and/or lectures. The new student usually finds that information about cue-consciousness (Miller & Parlett, 1974 ; that is, being perceptive to points about what is considered important in their field of study) particularly helpful.

2. STUDENTS WHO LACK CONFIDENCE

Confidence means acting "with trust", in this case, trust in one's own assessments of self within the learning invironment. To be confident means to have faith in one's own abilities as a student and to have faith in one's ability to make judgements about the learning environment. Students who lack confidence may mistrust their own abilities and/or be wary, anxious or confused about the demands of their environment, i.e., the criteria for successful performance. They will often prefer a counselling service as a source of assistance because it is clearly independent. This group of students needs reassurance about, and sensitization to, their learning environment. Gibb's (1981) student-centred approach to teaching students to learn is particularly helpful. Within a small, supportive group, the low confidence student becomes more aware of the reality of learning (as distinct from an unrealistic ideal), is able to confirm the validity of different types of approach to study.

Two categories of low confidence students who do not seem to benefit from the small group approach are the cue-seeking and the cue-deaf students. These terms arose from Miller and Parlett's (1974) study of cue-conciousness as a factor in good performance. Cue-conscious students are perceptive to hints about exams, impressions they may make on tutors, comments from past students, etc., about the hidden curriculum of the lerning environment. They readily become aware of the variations in type of language, style of writing or presentation of arguments that is required in different disciplines. The cue-deaf student on the other hand is unaware of such cues while the cue-seeker anxiously searches for more and more subtle hints.

2.1 The cue-deaf student

Such students tend to take instructions literally, to believe success should be measured in hours of work, and to demand explicit, literal and uncomplicated instruction on what to do. "I put hours and hours into my work and I still only just scrape a pass. I'm sick and tired of working so hard. It's not fair that other students have time to play sport and go to parties and so on still do well. I know one student who wrote this essay in about 2 hours flat and got a high distinction. I spent 4 hours a day for 2 weeks and did not get anywhere". They do not like the relatively unstructured nature of the student-centred groups but will enrol in an impersonal lecture course or read "the best" book on study skills. They come within the category of the dutiful person who is afraid to question authority or to act independently. They do well in highly structured courses but feel uncomfortable when asked to set their own learning tasks. Study skills training is of limited benefit because the dutiful, cue-deaf student is limited in his/her ability to apply the techniques imaginatively. Their need to develop independence may be evident to the counsellor but not to the student. For this student the distinction between deep and surface processing is difficult to understand and the intent of study skills instruction (as distinct from the technique) is usually missed. Further investigation with such a student often reveals a lack of independence, family conflicts

(e.g. constantly trying to please parents who cannot be pleased) and/or unqualified acceptance of an authoritarian structure (e.g. family and/or church). Study skills are therefore inappropriate. They require instead either therapy aimed at increasing assertiveness or direction towards a more structured course.

2.2 The cue-seeking student

The cue-seeking students are perfectionists and will enrol in any study skills course available regardless of where it is held. They already know the basics of study skills and achieve excellent examination results. They nevertheless actively button-hole staff for more information or to make a good impression, enrol in any and every study skills course available and avidly devour books and brochures on the subject. Unlike the dogged determinism of the cue-deaf student, the cue-seeker is active, restless and anxious. Like the cue-deaf student, the cue-seeker will enrol in a study skills course but the benefit to the student will be minimal unless the course addresses the fears and anxieties that the perfectionist suffers from so acutely.

3. STUDENTS WHO LACK MOTIVATION

These students enrol in a study skills group because they are bored, can't get on with their work, can't concentrate, find the subject too hard. Such students, if asked, know how to prepare a study timetable, know how to establish priorities, produce good summaries and other such organizational skills. Their problem is that they do not follow their good intentions with good practice and they tend to respond to advertisements about "improving concentration". Whatever originally motivated them to study is no longer relevant. They may respond to a short term behaviour modification approach of reward and punishment. They may ask that the counsellor enforce the structure they they cannot enforce themselves. Such approaches are useful in the few weeks prior to exams, but they do not address the underlying difficulty, namely that the initial motivation to study has lost its impetus.

3.1 Second year burn out syndrome

This affects the bright HSC student who worked very hard and whose Anderson score was high enough to get into the prestigious courses; medicine, law or sciences and engineering (because the best students at school always do maths). The impetus to be good has carried this student through to the end of first year, again with good exam results and now s/he decides to have a holiday. At the start of second year this model student suddenly feels utterly sick of study, begins to ask such questions as, "Why am I here?" "Do I really want to do this for the rest of my life?" "What do I prefer anyway?" "What is it that's missing in my life?" The second-year burn-out syndrome affects the student who is moving from being dutiful to being autonomous. It is a sign of an identity crisis. Because such students are usually bright they know their problem is not really that they don't know how to study but since they don't quite know what the problem is, enrol in a study skills course anyway. Clearly, a counselling service is in a better position to help such students than a language centre or other academically-based unit.

3.2 I can't concentrate because.....

It is fairly clear in this case that the study problem is a result of

worry about some personal issue e.g. boyfriend/girlfriend, pregnancy, money, family crisis, memories of bushfires and so on. This group of students may well use the counselling service that has a study skills programme as a means of testing the quality of the service. The transition from study group to personal counselling is much easier if the student already knows one or more counsellors.

3.3 Everyone else concentrates better than me

These students will enrol in a study course that is advertised as helping to improve concentration largely because they don't know whether or not they are concentrating as well as everyone else seems to be. They therefore come into the low confidence category rather than low motivation. They appreciate any facts or research findings about what is usual amongst students and are often surprised when they discover the concentration patterns of other students.

4. HIGH ANXIETY

This group of students is likely to show a definite preference for a counselling service course on study skills because:

(i) Where the anxiety is due to fear of authority (academic staff) they will not enrol in a course closely related to an academic department.

(ii) Where the anxiety is due to uncertainty created by an unexpected crisis, a counselling service is more likely to have the relevant skills to support the student through the crisis.

(iii) Where the anxiety creates physical symptoms and phobias, the problem may be taken initially to a Health Service with the medical staff referring the psychological and phobic aspects to the counselling service. A combination of specialized help with both study techniques and anxiety reduction techniques is particularly helpful in such cases.

(iv) Where the anxiety is due to the perfectionism of the cue-seeking student, the skills of the counsellor are required to deal with this. Again, a combination of counselling and specialized help with study is particularly useful.

5. STUDY SKILLS WITH A COUNSELLING UNIT

A counselling unit can offer study skills services to students which are not available when similar courses are run within academic departments. At the same time, some students will not attend a course run by a counselling unit because they do not wish to appear to be in need of counselling. Since most institutions don't provide enough money to enable a wide variety of programmes to be offered to students, the reality is that counsellors attempt to make the best they can of an imperfect situation.

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REPORT ON QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR AN

ADVANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND REPORT WRITING COURSE

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ABSTRACT All New Zealand Certificate students must pass a compulsory paper entitled 'Communication Skills' the purpose of which is to provide competence in basic work-related communication situations. The level of this paper is no lomger appropriate for the wide range of students who must take it. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain statistical information on the extent of the need for an Advanced Course, as well as its possible content from students at two Auckland Technical Institutes. Overall, the results show there is a demand for the proposed Advanced Course. However, the most interesting outcomes are the importance placed on interpersonal communication as a section of the new syllabus, and the remarkable similarity between the results from the two Institutes, even though the students involved are from different disciplines.

REPORT ON QUESTIONNAIRE
for an
ADVANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND REPORT WRITING COURSE

1 PURPOSE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

To gather statistical data on:

1 the extent of the need for such a course
2 the possible content of the course

from students sitting the final stages of their New Zealand Certificates. *(1)

2 BACKGROUND

AAVA Communication Skills, 1040, (formerly Communication English, 1006) is a compulsory paper for all NZ Certificate students. Its purpose is to provide competence in a wide range of basic written and oral work-related areas of communication.

The levels of qualifications NZ Certificate students have when they enter a technical institute, now tend to be higher than in the past, and some students have the equivalent of Year 12 qualifications. Also, more people in their late twenties to forties are coming to technical institutes for further study. Many of these students would benefit from a more advanced course than that currently offered by Communication Skills.

Both Carrington and Manukau Technical Institutes have experimented with Advanced Communication Skills and Report Writing courses for competent classes, and the feedback from these groups has been very positive.

A possible syllabus for an Advanced Communication Skills and Report Writing course was presented by Carrington Technical Institute to the members of a Lopdell Centre seminar discussing the AAVA Communication English course in August 1984. It was then that the idea of a questionnaire to determine the need for an Advanced Course *(2) as well as the possible content of such a course, was formulated.

A preliminary questionnaire was drawn up and presented to a meeting attended by Brad Imrie (Director of AAVA) and several other Communication Skills Course Supervisors. After some revisions it was piloted on two part-time classes at Carrington Technical Institute, then presented to students doing the final stages of their NZ Certificates at both Carrington and Manukau Technical Institutes in October and November 1984.

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*(1) See Appendix A. Functions of the New Zealand Authority for Advanced Vocational Awards (AAVA) and list of certificates and diplomas available.

*(2) See Appendix B. Sections from Brad Imrie's circular on an Advanced Communication Skills course.

3 DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRE

In general, the items in the questionnaire reflect

1 topics successfully incorporated into experimental advanced courses at both institutes

2 topics seen as important by several Training Managers, Personnel Managers, and Works Supervisors in large Auckland companies. *(3)

3 topics other Communication Skills tutors regarded as possibly relevant.

4 COMPOSITION OF SAMPLE

The numbers of students who responded to the questionnaire are listed below according to

1 the type of Certificate they were studying

2 their age range.

Carrington Technical Institute (CTI)

NZ Certificate in Engineering (Civil)	40	
NZ Certificate in Survey Draughting	7	
NZ Certificate in Commerce	3	*(4)
NZ Certificate in Quantity Surveying	17	
NZ Certificate in Building	15	
NZ Certificate in Architectural Draughting	28	
Total	110	students

Manukau Technical Institute (MTI)

NZ Certificate in Computer Technology	7	
NZ Certificate in Commerce	32	
NZ Certificate in Engineering (Electrical)	15	
NZ Certificate in Engineering (Mechanical)	38	
Total	92	students

Age Range	CTI	MTI
18-23 years	83	68
24-29 years	16	13
30-35 years	6	7
36-41 years	4	2
42-27 years	1	2
	110	72

*(3) From discussions during author's tutor refresher leave, September 1984. See Appendix D.

*(4) The administration of the questionnaire occurred too late in the term for most NZCC students from CTI to be included.

5 ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Students were each given a copy of the questionnaire outlining its purpose and requesting them to assess each item in terms of its usefulness to them personally, and to rank each item on a scale from 1 (extremely useful) to 7 (no use at all), with 4 being the mid-point. In addition they were asked to mark the number 8 if they felt they didn't know enough about an item to make any worthwhile assessment of its value.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following scores were calculated for each Institute for each item:

1 The overall mean from the total responses (nos 1-7)
2 The mean for each separate department
3 The means for the 23 and under, and over 23 age groups
4 The total number of students who marked the number 8.

The complete tables of these results appear in Appendix C. *(5)

For most items in the questionnaire, the various mean scores are remarkably close. The only significant differences come from the three Carrington NZCC students all of whom were in the 30-47 age group. The positive nature of their results probably reflects their level of experience.

Minor variations in the results from the two Institutes, and between the different departments within the Institutes as well as between the two age groups, possibly reflect the different areas of commerce and industry from which the students are drawn.

At the end of the questionnaire some students commented on the potential value to them of the Advanced Course and on how they thought it might fit into their own course structures. These comments appear in Appendix E.

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*(5) An interesting comparison between the students results and those from a group of senior managers and supervisors appears in Appendix D.

The results graphed below are the means derived from the total responses for each Institute. (Figures 1, 2, and 3).

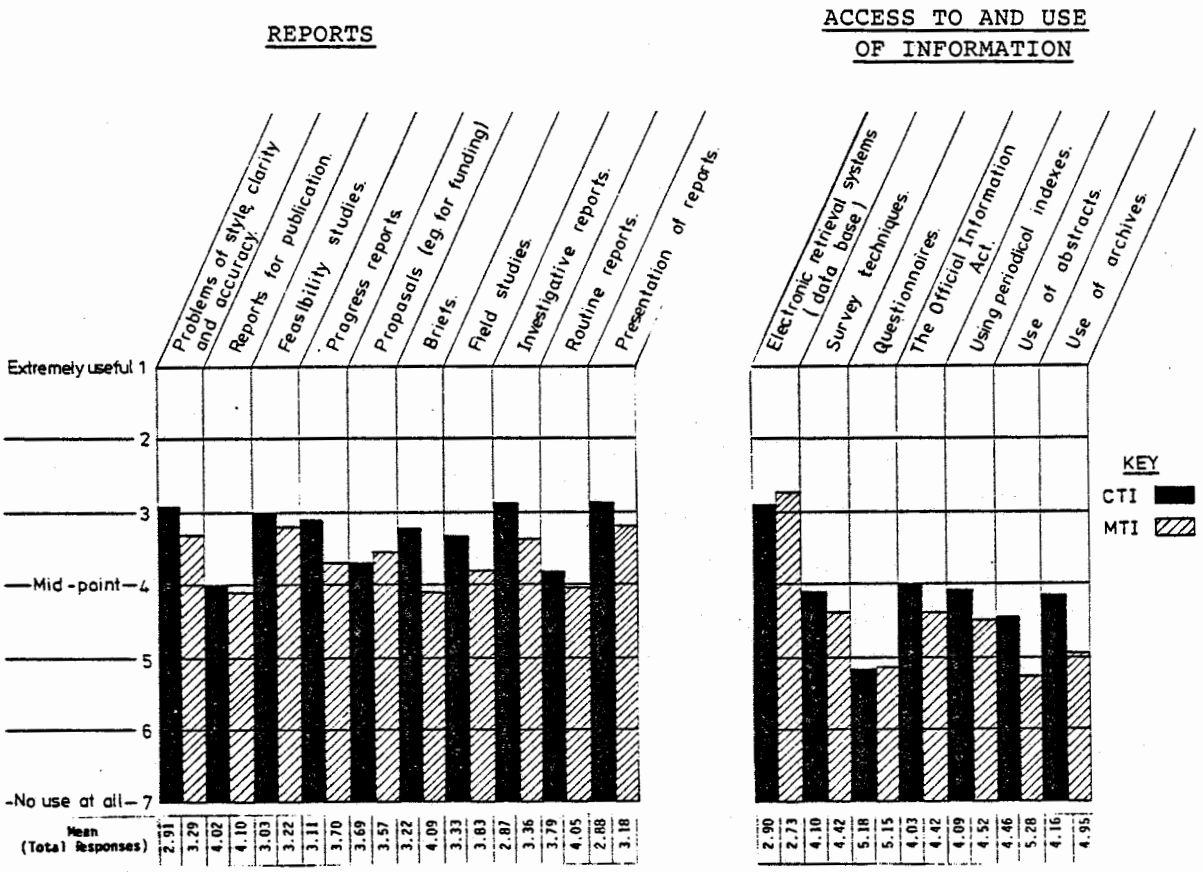

Figure 1. Means derived from total responses

Reports (Fig 1)

Overall results are positive except for those items headed 'routine reports' and 'reports for publication', neither of which was considered as relevant as the other items.

The difference between the value CTI and MTI students placed on the writing of briefs, probably reflects the composition of the sample (no Building, Draughting, or Quantity Surveying students from MTI).

Access to and Use of Information (Fig 1)

Apart from an understanding of data base systems, none of these items was regarded as particularly valuable. This group had the lowest scores overall. It also had by far the greatest number of students saying that they didn't know enough to comment. (See Tables of Results, Appendix C).

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND STAFF MANAGEMENT

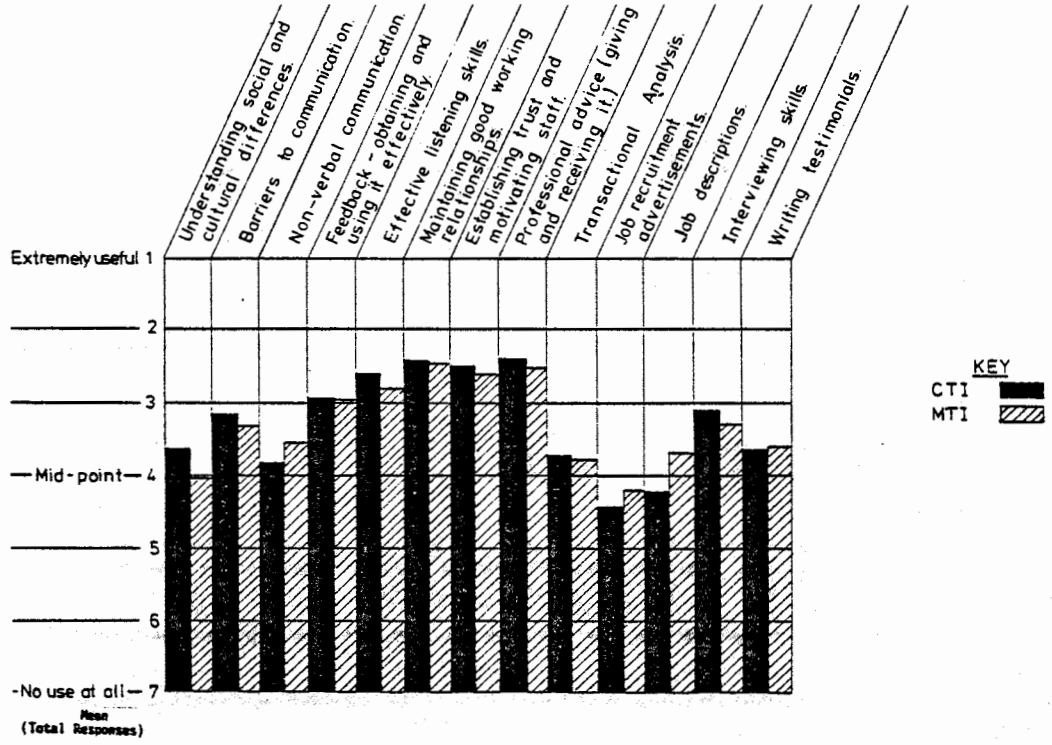

Figure 2. Means derived from total responses

The group of items specifically related to interpersonal communication within the workplace, was regarded as more important than any other section of the questionnaire, and the results from both Institutes were surprisingly close for these items. *(6)

Job recruitment advertisements and job descriptions were not seen as being important by the students (perhaps reflecting the age and experience of the majority of the sample).

Transactional Analysis was included as an item in this section because of its use as a technique for developing an understanding of interpersonal communication. However, a relatively large number of students didn't know enough about it to comment on its value. (See Appendix C, Table 2)

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*(6) See comparison of results. Appendix D.

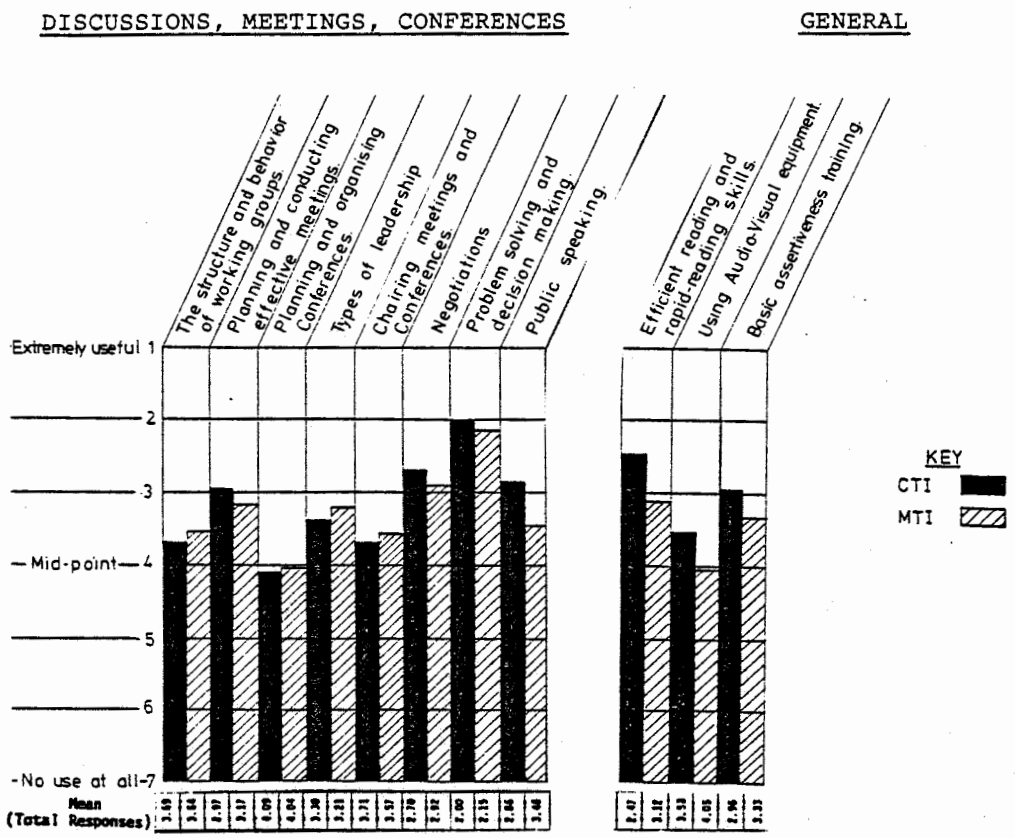

Figure 3. Means derived from total responses

Discussions, Meetings, Conferences (Fig 3)

Again, results from both Institutes were remarkably similar.

'Problem solving and decision making' was ranked highest overall by the students. Items such as 'negotiations', 'public speaking', 'planning and conducting effective meetings', and 'types of leadership', were also regarded as worthwhile, but the majority of students did not consider 'planning and organising conferences' as being particularly relevant to them at this stage.

General (Fig 3)

The high ranking of 'efficient reading and rapid reading skills' could be due to the inclusion of this subject in current Communication Skills courses - the students are obviously aware of its value.

7 EVALUATION

One of the most interesting outcomes of the questionnaire is the remarkably similar nature of the results from both Institutes *(7) even though the students involved are from different disciplines.

The importance the students placed on interpersonal communication is reinforced by the extremely high rankings the group of managers and supervisors gave this subject *(8). It should be considered of prime importance in the planning of an Advanced Course.

Overall, the results are very positive. The students see an Advanced Course as worthwhile and regard the following as the most valuable components of the syllabus.

1 Interpersonal communication
2 Problem solving and decision making
3 Planning, conducting and chairing effective meetings
4 Efficient reading skills
5 Report writing
6 Electronic retrieval systems.

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*(7) and (8) See Appendix D. Representation of the closely parallel results from both Institutes, and a comparison of these with the results from a group of managers and supervisors.

APPENDIX A

THE NEW ZEALAND AUTHORITY FOR ADVANCED VOCATIONAL AWARDS

The Authority for Advanced Vocational Awards (formerly the Technicians Certification Authority) was established under the Vocational Awards Act 1979.

Its functions are:

a To set standards, approve curricula, and prescribe courses and syllabuses for advanced vocational awards; and to conduct examinations, and to appoint examiners, moderators, supervisors, and assessors for the purposes of those examinations:

b To prescribe conditions for entry to courses for advanced vocational awards and to grant exemptions where it considers it appropriate:

c When so requested and after satisfying itself of the standard and other relevant matters, to give approval and recognition to courses provided by technical institutes or community colleges or other institutions or organisations:

d To approve teaching institutions as being suitable to conduct prescribed courses and to accredit approved teaching institutions to conduct examinations to a national standard:

e To grant or issue, either independently or in conjunction with any other examining body, diplomas or certificates to any person in recognition of having successfully completed a course prescribed or approved under this Act; and in like manner to grant or issue endorsements of such diplomas or certificates.

NEW ZEALAND CERTIFICATE COURSES
with five stages of study

Advertising
Architectural Draughting
Building
Commerce
Computer Technology
Customs
Data Processing
Engineering:
- Aeronautics
- Civil
- Electrical
- Electronics and Computer Technology
- Heating, Ventililating and Air Conditioning
- Industrial Measurement and Control
- Mechanical
- Plastics
- Power and Plant
- Production
- Road Transport
- Telecommunications

Fire Technology
Forestry
Hotel and Catering Management
Land Surveying
Land Surveying - Mines Option
Local Government Administration
Quantity Surveying
Science:
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Food Science
- Geology
- Medical Science
- Metallurgy
- Physics
- Statistics
- Water Technology

Survey Draughting
Town and Country Planning
Town Planning

NEW ZEALAND DIPLOMAS

Diploma in Building
Diploma in Management Services
Diploma in Science
Diploma in Surface Coatings Techniques

TECHNICIANS CERTIFICATE COURSES
with three stages of study

Automotive
Civil
Draughting
Electrical
Garage Management
Health Adminstrators
Mechanical
Radio
Survey
Telegraph and Data
Telephone
Waste Water Treatment
Water Treatment
Water Treatment and Waste Water Treatment

APPENDIX B

ADVANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1.0 Need and demand for an advanced course.
Information in the form of comment and submission from a wide section of the community indicates that there exists both a need and demand for this course.

1.1 The participants at a 1006 Communications English course agreed unanimously of the need for this.

1.2 Prof Alan Ordell commented in a letter written to the Authority, that 'if Communications Skills is to meet the demands at a basic level, then the case for inserting a more advanced stage of the subject is very strong.'

1.3 Industry has indicated a desire to see the implementation of such a course as this. The NZ Forest Service has written of its agreement to an advanced subject. The Society of Engineers recently expressed its strong desire to see more advanced skills being taught. At an in-service course at Lopdell House in 1983 representatives of employers expressed a similar request.

1.4 Institutes have reported requests for advanced communication courses in topics such as report writing from many groups including City Councils, County Councils, Hospital Boards, and Fertilizer Works.

1.5 Further evidence could be obtained from AAVA examiners' reports, AAVA committee, employer and employee groups, other professional bodies, ATTI, and students.

2.0 The course to be offered by AAVA. Inclusion as compulsory or optional to be decided by the AAVA committee concerned, on the basis of whether it will be a useful or necessary component in their certificate or diploma.

(Part of a circular from Brad Imrie, Director of AAVA, November 1984)

APPENDIX C

The complete lists of mean scores for each item are contained in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. Mean Scores. Part 1 of Questionnaire.

		Mean (Total Responses)	Mean (Construction only)	Mean (Engineering only)	Mean (Commerce only)	Mean Age Group (over 23 years)	Mean Age Group (under 23 years)	Total Responses for Column 8
REPORTS								
Problems of style, clarity, accuracy	CTI	2.91	3.25	2.51	2.33		3.04	7
	MTI	3.29		3.50	3.05	3.61	3.16	1
Reports for publication	CTI	4.02	4.17	3.90	3.00		3.91	4
	MTI	4.10		4.26	3.97	4.00	4.14	6
Feasibility studies	CTI	3.03	2.88	3.20	3.00		3.05	10
	MTI	3.22		3.27	3.12	2.87	3.37	12
Progress reports	CTI	3.11	3.28	2.93	2.66		3.06	6
	MTI	3.70		3.82	3.58	3.54	3.76	3
Proposals (eg. for funding)	CTI	3.69	3.85	3.55	2.66		3.69	6
	MTI	3.57		3.68	3.43	3.53	3.59	4
Briefs	CTI	3.22	3.28	3.17	2.66		3.20	9
	MTI	4.09		3.97	4.32	4.04	4.12	11
Field studies	CTI	3.33	3.57	3.04	3.33		3.17	0
	MTI	3.83		3.41	4.46	4.00	3.77	8
Investigative reports	CTI	2.87	2.96	2.80	2.00		2.78	0
	MTI	3.36		3.28	3.43	3.00	3.51	2
Routine reports	CTI	3.79	4.08	3.42	3.66		3.85	3
	MTI	4.05		4.00	4.14	3.50	4.26	5
Presentation of reports	CTI	2.88	3.03	2.66	3.00		2.94	7
	MTI	3.18		3.20	3.20	2.84	3.33	9
ACCESS TO, AND USE OF INFORMATION								
Electronic retrieval systems	CTI	2.90	3.14	2.66	2.00	2.88	2.90	18
	MTI	2.73		2.80	2.60	2.73	2.74	4
Survey techniques	CTI	4.10	4.28	3.97	3.00	4.27	4.04	7
	MTI	4.42		4.25	4.66	4.56	4.36	4
Questionnaires	CTI	5.18	5.24	5.20	4.00	4.62	5.38	7
	MTI	5.15		5.32	4.94	5.08	5.18	3
The Official Information Act	CTI	4.03	4.10	3.97	3.66	4.50	3.87	23
	MTI	4.42		4.31	4.60	4.32	4.46	5
Using periodical indexes	CTI	4.09	4.36	3.92	2.33	3.80	4.20	22
	MTI	4.52		4.38	4.77	4.52	4.52	10
Use of abstracts	CTI	4.46	4.69	4.32	2.66	4.42	4.48	29
	MTI	5.28		5.26	5.35	5.60	5.17	15
Use of archives	CTI	4.16	4.38	4.00	2.66	4.07	4.20	18
	MTI	4.95		4.57	5.51	4.95	4.95	11

APPENDIX C

Table 2. Mean Scores. Part 2 of Questionnaire.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND STAFF MANAGEMENT		Mean (Total Responses)	Mean (Construction only)	Mean (Engineering only)	Mean (Commerce only)	Mean Age Group (over 23 years)	Mean Age Group (under 23 years)	Total Responses for Column 8
Understanding social and cultural differences	CTI	3.64	3.74	3.61	2.33	3.23	3.80	1
	MTI	4.03		4.30	3.67	3.41	4.26	5
Barriers to Communication	CTI	3.16	3.22	3.17	2.00	2.76	3.31	0
	MTI	3.32		3.38	3.27	2.88	3.50	3
Non-Verbal Communication	CTI	3.83	4.07	3.68	1.66	3.16	4.09	2
	MTI	3.56		3.50	3.61	3.32	3.66	4
Feedback - obtaining and using it effectively	CTI	2.96	2.92	3.08	1.66	2.62	3.09	4
	MTI	2.97		2.90	3.07	2.88	3.01	3
Effective Listening Skills	CTI	2.63	2.66	2.69	1.33	2.58	2.65	1
	MTI	2.83		2.90	2.76	2.81	2.84	0
Maintaining good working relationships	CTI	2.44	2.69	2.19	1.33	2.48	2.43	1
	MTI	2.48		2.48	2.50	2.37	2.53	1
Establishing trust and motivating staff	CTI	2.50	2.82	2.21	1.00	2.55	1.48	2
	MTI	2.63		2.75	2.44	2.23	2.80	1
Professional advice (giving and receiving it)	CTI	2.40	2.56	2.22	2.00	2.46	2.37	4
	MTI	2.54		2.71	2.31	2.22	2.68	1
Transactional Analysis	CTI	3.73	3.90	3.55	3.33	4.30	3.52	36
	MTI	3.78		3.95	3.55	3.78	3.78	22
Job Recruitment Advertisements	CTI	4.43	4.50	4.43	3.33	4.51	4.40	6
	MTI	4.21		4.57	3.75	3.91	4.32	7
Job Descriptions	CTI	4.22	4.44	4.00	3.33	4.06	4.28	5
	MTI	3.68		4.08	3.22	3.68	3.69	5
Interviewing Skills	CTI	3.08	3.08	3.17	1.66	3.23	3.02	1
	MTI	3.30		3.43	3.11	3.04	3.41	4
Writing Testimonials	CTI	3.64	3.78	3.56	2.00	4.00	3.50	3
	MTI	3.61		3.95	3.11	3.25	3.75	6

APPENDIX C

Table 3. Mean Scores. Parts 3 and 4 of Questionnaire.

		Mean (Total Responses)	Mean (Construction only)	Mean (Engineering only)	Mean (Commerce only)	Mean Age Group (over 23 years)	Mean Age Group (under 23 years)	Total Responses for Column 8
DISCUSSIONS, MEETINGS, CONFERENCES								
The Structure and Behaviour	CTI	3.69	3.89	3.47	3.00	3.62	3.72	1
of Working Groups	MTI	3.54		3.62	3.41	3.32	3.63	4
Planning and Conducting	CTI	2.97	3.15	2.87	1.00	2.86	3.01	1
Effective Meetings	MTI	3.17		3.26	3.08	3.11	3.20	2
Planning and Organising	CTI	4.09	4.26	4.02	2.00	4.34	4.00	3
Conferences	MTI	4.04		4.05	4.02	4.00	4.06	3
Types of Leadership	CTI	3.38	3.50	3.36	1.33	3.48	3.34	2
	MTI	3.21		3.50	2.83	3.00	3.30	4
Chairing Meetings and	CTI	3.71	3.72	3.82	1.66	3.44	3.81	1
Conferences	MTI	3.57		3.51	3.65	3.59	3.57	2
Negotiations	CTI	2.70	2.67	2.85	1.00	2.48	2.78	1
	MTI	2.92		2.88	3.02	3.19	2.80	3
Problem Solving and	CTI	2.00	2.10	1.93	1.00	2.00	2.00	1
Decision Making	MTI	2.15		2.23	2.08	2.11	2.17	2
Public Speaking	CTI	2.86	3.01	2.78	1.00	2.70	2.92	0
	MTI	3.46		3.62	3.26	3.58	3.42	4
GENERAL								
Efficient Reading and	CTI	2.47	2.57	2.42	1.33	2.36	2.51	0
Rapid Reading Skills	MTI	3.12		3.01	3.29	2.74	3.28	1
Using Audio-Visual Equipment	CTI	3.53	3.71	3.43	1.66	3.46	3.56	1
	MTI	4.05		3.94	4.22	4.00	4.07	2
Basic Assertiveness Training	CTI	2.96	3.26	2.71	1.00	2.93	2.97	4
	MTI	3.33		3.60	2.94	3.19	3.39	5

APPENDIX D

RESULTS FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

The questionnaire was given to four Training Managers, three Personnel Managers, and two Works Supervisors from large Auckland companies during the author's tutor refresher leave, September 1984. These people were asked to rank items (using the same scale as the students) according to how valuable they felt the items would be to prospective employees as training for work within their companies.

The mean scores for their item rankings appear in Table 4.

Although all of these companies had very comprehensive in-house training schemes of their own, the general opinion was that the Advanced Course would provide a valuable intermediate stage between the basic introductory course (Communication Skills) and any further specialist training.

This group placed extreme importance on items (i) to (vii) of the section headed 'Interpersonal Communication and Staff Management' with six of these seven items being given a mean score of between 1.0 and 1.2.

In general this group gave much higher rankings to items of the questionnaire than did the students. Only for two items ('reports for publication' and 'field studies') are their rankings markedly less than those of the students. The lower ranking of 'field studies' could reflect the area of commerce from which the sample came.

Although the sample was small, the mean scores obtained provide very interesting comparisons with the students results. These comparisons are shown in Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Table 4. Mean Scores from managers and supervisors

REPORTS	MEAN
Problems of style, clarity and accuracy	1.0
Reports for publication	6.5
Feasibility studies	2.7
Progress reports	1.7
Proposals (eg for funding)	1.1
Briefs	3.1
Field Studies	6.0
Investigative reports	3.7
Routine reports	3.8
Presentation of reports	3.3
ACCESS TO, AND USE OF INFORMATION	
Electronic retrieval systems (data base)	3.0
Survey techniques	3.3
Questionnaires	3.7
The Official Information Act	4.9
Using periodical indexes	3.4
Use of abstracts	5.0
Use of archives	3.0
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND STAFF MANAGEMENT	
Understanding social and cultural differences	1.1
Barriers to communication	1.1
Non-verbal communication	1.1
Feedback - obtaining and using it effectively	1.0
Effective listening skills	1.2
Maintaining good working relationships	1.4
Establishing trust and motivating staff	1.0
Professional advice (giving and receiving it)	2.0
Transactional Analysis	3.6
Job recruitment advertisements	3.2
Job descriptions	3.5
Interviewing skills	2.1
Writing testimonials	3.9
DISCUSSIONS, MEETINGS, CONFERENCES	
The structure and behaviour of working groups	1.3
Planning and conducting effective meetings	1.1
Planning and organising conferences	2.1
Types of leadership	1.7
Chairing meetings and conferences	1.9
Negotiations	2.1
Problem solving and decision making	1.6
Public speaking	1.3
GENERAL	
Efficient reading and rapid reading skills	2.1
Using audio-visual equipment	3.6
Basic assertiveness training	1.4

APPENDIX D

COMPARISONS OF RESULTS

These figures represent :

1. The closely parallel results from C.T.I. and M.T.I. (Figures 4 and 5).
2. A comparison between the student results and those from a group of managers and supervisors (MgSs. See Figures 6 and 7).

REPORTS

(i) Problems of style, clarity and accuracy
(ii) Reports for publication
(iii) Feasibility studies
(iv) Progress reports
(v) Proposals (eg. for funding)
(vi) Briefs
(vii) Field Studies
(viii) Investigative reports
(ix) Routine reports
(x) Presentations of reports

ACCESS TO, AND USE OF INFORMATION

(xii) Electronic retrieval systems (data base)
(xiii) Survey techniques
(xiv) Questionnaires
(xv) The Official Information Act
(xvi) Using periodical indexes
(xvii) Use of abstracts
(xviii) Use of archives

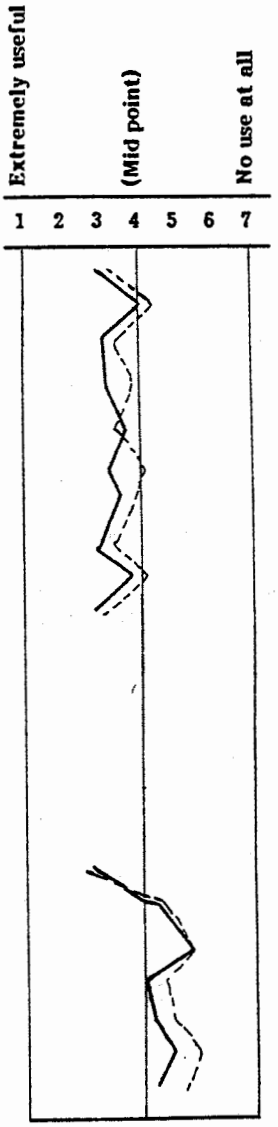

Figure 4

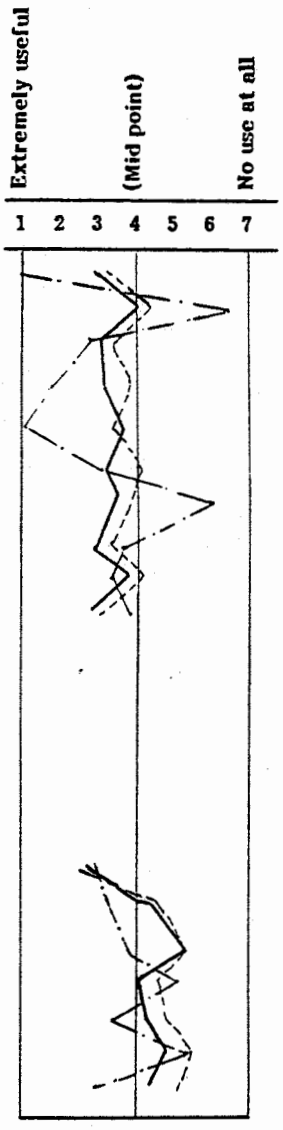

Figure 6

KEY CTI ————
MTI ----------
MgSs —·—·—

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND STAFF MANAGEMENT

(i) Understanding social and cultural differences
(ii) Barriers to communication
(iii) Non-verbal communication
(iv) Feedback - obtaining and using it effectively
(v) Effective listening skills
(vi) Maintaining good working relationships
(vii) Establishing trust and motivating staff
(viii) Professional advice (giving and receiving it)
(ix) Transactional Analysis
(x) Job recruitment advertisements
(xi) Job descriptions
(xii) Interviewing skills
(xiii) Writing testimonials

DISCUSSIONS, MEETINGS, CONFERENCES

(i) The structure and behaviour of working groups
(ii) Planning and conducting effective meetings
(iii) Planning and organising conferences
(iv) Types of leadership
(v) Chairing meetings and conferences
(vi) Negotiations
(vii) Problem solving and decision making
(viii) Public speaking

GENERAL

(i) Efficient reading and rapid reading skills
(ii) Using audio-visual equipment
(iii) Basic assertiveness training

KEY CTI ——————
MTI ----------
MgSs —·—·—

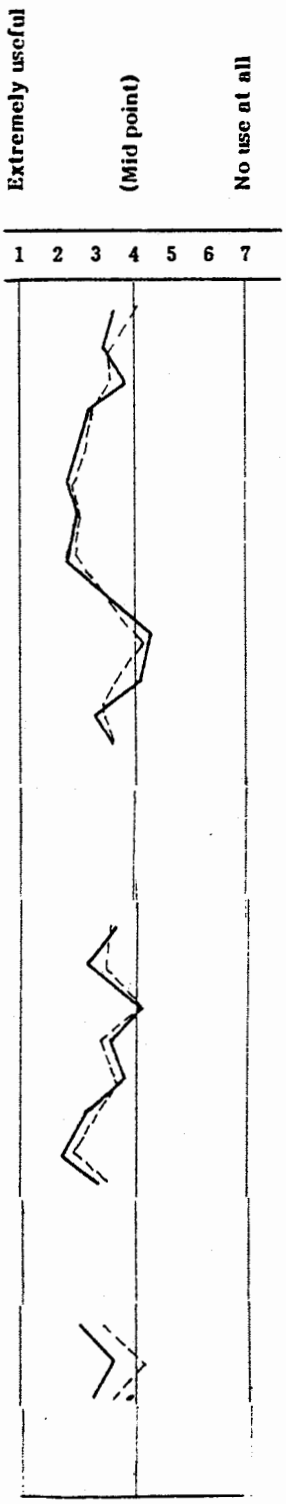

Figure 5

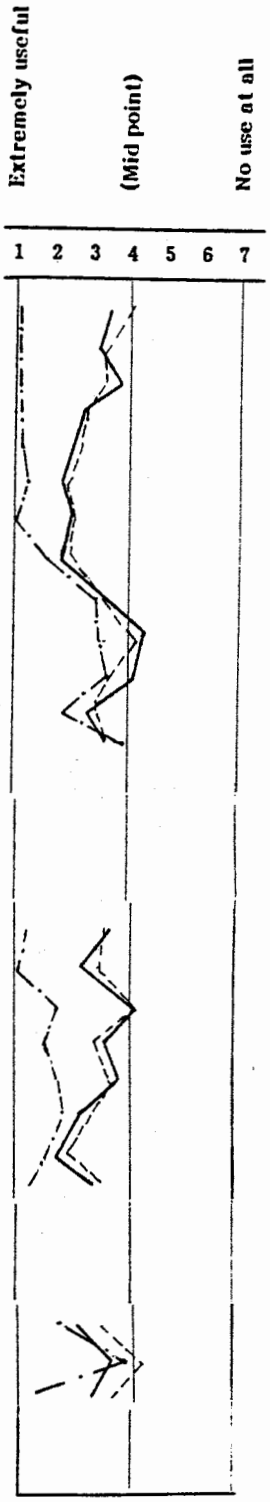

Figure 7

APPENDIX E

STUDENTS WRITTEN COMMENTS

Only about one student in every eight added any comments at the end of the questionnaire. The most specific and thoughtful of these are printed or summarised below.

1 36 year old NZCB student (currently a building inspector). 'I learnt a lot from studying 1006 but would never have the time to study both 1006 and an Advanced course, and therefore they should be alternatives.' (Several other older students responded similarly).

2 19 year old survey draughting cadet working for the Auckland Regional Authority. 'The Advanced Course should be compulsory .....Young people will try and finish their courses as quickly as possible, thus missing out an optional subject. My attitude to 1006 was that it was a hassle that had to be removed before I could finish the course. It was in fact, very interesting, useful, and enjoyable.'

3 22 year old NZCE (Electrical) student. 'It should be done as two subjects - one aimed at those expected to take reduced responsibility such as myself, and the second aimed at a higher level such as those likely to employ and control staff.'

4 19 year old NZCE (Civil) student, currently a management trainee with a large Auckland construction company. 'I feel a Communication English course is needed that will enable a student to gain more advanced experience in the wide area of communication skills. A student doesn't have to extend himself that much to keep up with 1006 - a higher level of work would be more beneficial ..... I think it would be possible to develop this area of study into a full certificate of its own. One subject in one year doesn't really do justice to the information that is tried to be put across to the student in the course.'

5 33 year old NZCB student. '1006 was too basic. I would voluntarily take the Advanced Course if it was available.'

6 Several NZCQS students said the Advanced Course appeared much more relevant to their needs. (This group of students tends to be one of the most highly qualified on entry into CTI). One 20 year old NZCQS student said, 'Most topics in 1006 were relevant, but I would have enjoyed a more demanding course.'

7 Several students felt it was important to place greater emphasis on basic work such as spelling and grammar.

VALIDATION OR VALEDICTION : ANALYSIS OF AN EFFECTIVE READING COURSE

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Abstract

In a tertiary educational institution reading is synonymous with studying. To interpret reading skills in terms of rapid reading is to narrow the scope of reading inappropriately. To teach reading in terms of skills which are appropriate to effective study is to generalise possibly beyond usefulness. What is of significance is to teach skills as they are appropriate to the context in which they are to be applied, that is, the contexts of the subjects which the student is studying. It is doubtful whether the study skills teaching environment is suitable for teaching subject related reading skills unless careful consideration is given to the individual needs of students presenting. An appropriate forum for teaching reading skills is the first year course tutorial group where skills appropriate to reading the particular subject can be taught via discussion and material relevant to the course work.

VALIDATION OR VALEDICTION : ANALYSIS OF AN EFFECTIVE READING COURSE

An effective reading course of six years' standing with few changes made to it in that period is analysed with regard to teaching practice, and reading theory and research. Recent variations introduced by the writer into the course are described and the reasons for these. Comments from teachers of such courses are invited. The ultimate goal of the writer is to foster the evolution of a purpose-designed reading programme which is based in reading theory, which is practicable, and which is above all useful to students.

The original "Effective Reading Course" in question was derived in part from a range of sources and in part from the personal knowledge and teaching experience of a well qualified teacher of English and study skills adviser of some years. It was designed for students to work through independently of the adviser although students seemed to prefer to be taken through it. Many of the reading exercises came from Rapid Reading Made Simple by Gordon R. Wainwright, 1972, and Efficient Reading: A Practical Guide, by Anderson, Durston and Poole, 1969.

The course consisted of six fifty minute sessions of instruction and exercises aimed at making more efficient use of time spent reading by the student. Purpose in reading, appropriateness of reading styles, and comprehension were introduced in the first session. Students were given an initial assessment questionnaire which led them to analyse their present reading habits. Motivation to improve reading efficiency, practice at skills learnt, and a systematic approach to the course were emphasised. Students' reading rate and level of comprehension were tested, and they were assured that they would be competing only with themselves to improve their scores. The students' aims were to double the first reading score recorded (an average taken over three initial reading exercises), to improve comprehension if necessary, to become more flexible in dealing with different kinds of written material, to evaluate the material being read, to read if necessary more widely. At this session approaching reading with questions in mind was introduced.

The next four sessions looked at different aspects of the reading process and gave practice in associated skills. Session two introduced points about the physical aspects of reading - saccades, fixations, eye span, peripheral vision, regressions - and related these to phrase reading. Practice involved reading down columns of words and then phrases with one fixation per line, sweeping horizontally from a phrase on the left of the page to one on the right, and eventually trying to read continuous prose in meaningful phrases and each complete phrase in one fixation.

Session three looked at the nature of comprehension and factors which should help to improve it. Comprehension was defined as the ability to retain information and recall it when required, to select important points, to interpret information and ideas, to make deductions from what has been read, to arrive at general conclusions and judgements, to relate existing knowledge and experience to new information. Speed and accuracy of perception, repeated testing of learnt material over spaced intervals, preparing questions beforehand which the text is expected to answer, using cards to record new vocabulary and to learn from, were emphasised.

The process of preview, question, read, summarise and test was explained. Practice was given in pre-reading and questioning techniques.

Session four emphasised looking at the organization of material by asking what happens, how is the material presented, why is it presented, and was it worth presenting. Pre-reading helped determine the level of difficulty of the text and the appropriate style for reading it. Structural words were shown to point to organisation. Key reading was explained and its efficacy demonstrated by exercises where only the key phrases, which were in heavy type, were read.

Session five explained and gave practice in skimming and scanning.

In session six the student was given practice in applying the skills learnt to difficult pieces of writing.

At each session the student's reading rate and comprehension score for one practice exercise were recorded on graphs and the success of the course for the student at least seemed to depend on whether these continued to show improvement. The student was also verbally encouraged to read quickly during practice exercises; a stopwatch was used to record the reading rate. Comprehension of practice exercises was measured by multiple choice question and answer tests and 80% or higher was held to be an optimal score.

Concerns of the writer which have led to an analysis of the course and the points to be presented in the full paper come under the general headings:

1. efficacy of testing techniques;
2. adaptability of long-standing physical reading habits;
3. implications of growing emphasis on rapid reading;
4. transferability by the student of acquired skills to course reading;
5. practicalities of teaching such a course;
6. suitability of a standard course to the range of needs of students presenting.

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THE USE OF THE REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN A STUDY OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' AND SUPERVISORS' PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS OF RESEARCH

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The paper examines George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory and how it may be applied to higher education: to postgraduate education and professional staff development.

In the workshop, participants will elicit and analyse their own personal constructs of research and researchers' attributes by means of a Repertory Grid form. Other possible applications, e.g. in undergraduate teaching, may be discussed.

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THE USE OF THE REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN A STUDY OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' AND SUPERVISORS' PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS OF RESEARCH: A PROPOSAL AND WORKSHOP

1.0 INTRODUCTION

From our experience in the School of Modern Asian Studies (MAS) (i.e. through formal and informal feedback from postgraduate students, their supervisors and examiners) there are two identifiable problem areas which may lead to students' failure or discontinuation of their research and dissertation:

1. Students' lack of information, practical knowledge and basic research skills.

2. Differences between staff and students' epistemologies and methodologies.

Both sets of problems relate to a lack of communication and understanding between students and their supervisors. These problems are not unique to the School of Modern Asian Studies, to Griffith University, or to Australian universities, but are reported in studies elsewhere (e.g. Welsh, 1979; SERC, 1983; Moses, 1984; Nightingale, 1984). Little has been published on practical and systematic ways in which these problems can be tackled. Zuber-Skerritt and Rix (1984) have designed, implemented and evaluated a workshop course on 'Dissertation Research and Writing', integrated into a Master-by-Coursework programme, in order to alleviate the first set of practical problems by:

- revising the written regulations and guidelines for students, supervisors and examiners;

- systematically developing postgraduate research skills and methods in workshops, directly related to individual students' dissertations;

- facilitating discussions among supervisors, among students and between staff and students in this programme (e.g. on expectations, standards, etc.).

The second set of problems is more complex and, to my knowledge, has not been satisfactorily tackled yet in educational research and practice. It is the aim of the present study to explore these problems by trying to elicit the different perceptions of research held by beginning and experienced researchers.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEMS

In 1983 a group of postgraduate students in the School of Modern Asian Studies (MAS) discussed problems they experienced in their professional training and development. They identified some of the main causes.

For example, they were unclear and confused about staff views of research methodologies and their basic assumptions. We all know that researchers - whether experienced or beginning researchers - have their theories and paradigms which guide them in their methodologies, but which are mostly implicit rather than explicit to others and even to themselves. This causes difficulties for postgraduate students who might find out too late that their supervisors have a different or opposing paradigm and cannot accept the students' guiding theories and their methods of solving their research problems.

For example, the group of students in 1983 mentioned above identified two conflicting methodological approaches of MAS faculty staff in their research and postgraduate teaching:

(a) The social scientist methodologies based on the assumptions that a scholarly dissertation should start with an hypothesis which is to be tested by certain techniques providing data and evidence for verifying or refuting the hypothesis and thus arriving at new, original and objective knowledge.

(b) The historians' methodologies based on quite different assumptions (but not always excluding the above assumptions), i.e. that a dissertation need not necessarily follow the social scientist methods but may quite legitimately consist of a descriptive analysis of a period in history and make an original contribution to history, e.g. by creating a new history, looking at trends, analysing, and drawing conclusions from the analysis.

While the students admitted that in most cases there would be an implicit central question or problem (and even that it might be often more valuable if it were explicitly formulated and consciously conceptualised), they resisted the dogmatic claim and imposition on historians by social scientists demanding that every research scholar must formulate, test and measure a hypothesis in their theses, i.e. must use the social scientist methodology which in most cases need not at all apply to the scholarly study of history. Students are often unaware of and caught in between these paradigmatic and methodological tensions among teaching staff, some of whom might not even realize the causes and implications of these tensions for students.

A Forum of all faculty staff in MAS discussed the problems in a heated debate, but did not arrive at any resolutions. The **status quo** has been maintained.

As a result of a group not being able to resolve these problems, I believe that a personal approach is needed to promote researchers' understanding of their own as well as of others' theories and methodologies, and that, as demonstrated by Diamond (1983b), Kelly (1955) offers a useful theoretical framework for the study of professional perspectives.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Summarised briefly and simply, Kelly's fundamental postulate is that every person has his or her own way of viewing 'self' and the world. These concepts, abstractions or classifications are called 'constructs' which can be elicited by various techniques. There are personal as well as shared constructs all of which can act as frames, but also as restrictions or 'cages', e.g. when we cannot perceive reality beyond the limits of our own constructs. Kelly construes a person as an active, inquiring scientist who builds up his/her own theories by interpreting physical and social events. These personal theories are the basis for his/her hypotheses and predictions about future events. People as individuals and as cultural groups can be explained in their own terms, i.e. in terms of how they anticipate events. Therefore, one can understand people by discovering or construing their construction processes. People's constructs are not objective observations of reality, but subjective perceptions of personal and group culture; their present interpretations of the universe are tentative and subject to refutation, revision and replacement. This is also Popper's (1979) philosophy. If one accepts the notion of 'personal scientist', as I do, the only adequate way to help students and staff to become professionally competent, self-directing and capable of trying alternative pedagogies is seeking avenues for them to explore. Kelly's Personal Construct Theory has been widely applied in psychology and in the clinical context, and also in sociology and management. However, there is very little research done in higher education, apart from Pope and Keen (1981) and Diamond (1982 a,b; 1983). Diamond (1983:52) has found that the student teachers involved in his study not only gained an understanding of their own perceptions, but also of the viewpoints of others. But his conclusion has still to be proven, namely that this appreciation of self and others may be "a first step towards mutual understanding and approval".

4.0 RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The present study tries to contribute to mutual understanding and approval of postgraduate students and staff in MAS who are faced with the same difficulties as staff and students elsewhere: namely, the problems of defining and understanding their own, as well as each other's research tasks, roles, methodologies and underlying assumptions. The study will be exploratory and aim at self and group understanding and at the improvement of work relationships between staff and postgraduate students and among staff. It will demonstrate how a difficult and complex area in higher education can be mutually explored and how original conceptions and perceptions may be reconstructed or confirmed.

4.1 Focal Questions

This study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What are some of the important perceptions of research and of researchers' attributes used by beginning researchers at the (a) start and (b) end of their research project?

2. Can these perceptions be distinguished from those of experienced researchers?

3. (Do the constructs of beginning researchers vary significantly from those of a peer group in a different language and culture?)*

4. Can an awareness, understanding, acceptance and tolerance of various differing personal construct systems be achieved within a tertiary institution, and can they facilitate personal and professional development of staff?

4.2 Method

The data will be collected from students enrolled in the MAS Honours programme as well as from the supervisors of their projects and from their teachers in the methodology courses. The following instruments are designed to collect the data:

(a) Repertory Grid Technique

I have designed a repertory grid form for this study, similar to those designed by Kelly, Shaw, Pope, Keen and Diamond. It will be completed in my presence and with my explanations by voluntary students and staff involved in the Honours programme at the beginning, mid-way through, and at the end of the program. The grids will be manually analysed in order to give participants an immediate response. During my leave I intend to analyse the data and make comparisons between groups of subjects by sophisticated computer programs (e.g. FOCUS, PEGASUS, SOCIOGRID, FLEXIGRID, etc.) and to discuss the results in more detail with the authors and other experienced users of these programs. It will be interesting to see whether the results will be significantly different from the preliminary ones obtained manually; and which instrument is most effective with regard to time spent on analysis and with regard to the validity and comprehensiveness of the results.

(b) Informal discussions with staff and students, recorded in my workbook.

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* The exploration of this question is possible only if the Master students in 1986 at the Technical University of Aachen will collaborate in this study.

(c) Diaries

Diaries (or journals of introspection) will be kept by voluntary students and staff on their spontaneous reactions to the repertory grid elicitation, analysis and discussion; to the methodology courses, and to their research discussions with other staff and students.

Students will keep their diaries until the assessment of the course has been completed. This diary information will be useful as supplementary explanations of students' and staff views for my analysis and re-evaluation of the results during my study leave in 1986.

5.0 CONFERENCE PRESENTATION AND WORKSHOP

The results of a Repertory Grid elicitation with a group of Honours students and their supervisors will be presented and discussed at the Conference.

Conference participants will then be guided through the Repertory Grid form (Appendix 1). They will elicit and anlyse their own personal constructs of research and researchers' attributes. Other possible applications, e.g in undergraduate teaching, may be discussed.

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CONSIDERATION OF THE USE AND MEASUREMENT OF ONE FORM OF TERTIARY SKILLS : ESSAY ASSIGNMENT SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Education research has seemingly become more and more sophisticated. Its virtual reliance upon more and more complex statistical analyses and computer based calculations and interpretations may have divorced this type of research from the real problems of this domain.

A relatively comprehensive, participatory observational approach to tertiary education student difficulties in coping with their academic programmes presented an opportunity to observe, to consider, to formulate, to implement and to evaluate a specifically devised essay assignment organization and preparation system. The method chosen to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of this project was a form of productivity analysis. The degree of objectivity was consistent with that used in to-day's business world. The dimensions measured were the time taken per one thousand (1000) words of essay and the essay results obtained. The results of more than eight (8) years of testing clearly indicate that student withdrawal and student failure can be effectively countered by the early introduction of tertiary (and other) students to such skills. The results stand as a commonsense indictment against the commonly more nebulous research into tertiary student wastage and failure that characteristically 'blame the victim'.

The conference paper will outline the essay assignment organization and preparation system and will discuss the outcomes observed and their measurement over the last eight (8) years.

Tertiary or post-secondary education has become 'big business' in Australia (as in other parts of the world). In Australia, tertiary education does not seem to be adequately addressing serious fundamental problems. One such problem is the woeful record of inducting our charges or (workers) into the 'business'. In general terms, tertiary education seems to provide relatively little of its available resources to ensure that the inchoate has the necessary skills to work efficiently and effectively. One only has to compare the cost of sending academic staff overseas on sabbatical leave to realize that 'staff development' is provided for whereas 'student development' is not so adequately provided for in our universities and colleges. In addition, one notes that the alacrity of the attacks on the other parts of the education system whenever open discussion about academic standards occurs . Public calls for the other education agencies to provide well prepared students for our 'failure mills' are made. In other words, some of the members of our tertiary education institutions have excelled in criticizing the academic standards of our students instead of doing something more substantial and positive about the problem.

Some tertiary institutes have established appropriate enclaves of committed persons who assiduously attempt to reduce the common, fundamental difficulties of our 'charges'. These committed persons even arrange on occasions to come together and to share their experiences and their findings. However, such efforts, though highly commendable and positive, are seemingly at the 'periphery' of the 'decision making stream' of the tertiary education institutions. Such people and their efforts seem destined to a minor role in the plans of our universities and colleges. It is considered that a more prominent place in the life and activities of tertiary institutions for appropriate and seemingly necessary induction of our students will be enjoyed when there is some valid and reliable method or (methods) of measuring student progress following study skills or learning enhancement training.

To suggest that our tertiary education institutions should be conducted on a 'business-like' approach is to invite severe criticism. Substantial arguments will be readily summoned and 'dusted down' to discourage any 'naive' person who bears such inappropriate thoughts. Regardless of the fierce rejection of the prospect of assisting our students early in and throughout their academic careers, it is the opinion of this author that the activities of our tertiary institutions should be conducted on more 'business-like' lines. This is not intended to imply that the more 'esoteric' subjects that are not 'economic' should be closed down. However, there should be more accountability to the taxpayers (who ultimately pay the costs) and greater commitment to achieving efficiency and effectiveness in what our students undertake.

While travelling overseas during the past few years, the author has been impressed by the examples of the note making and the time management of secondary and tertiary education students in Hong Kong and Singapore. One striking point was clearly that the students in these countries must have been taught highly commendable study (or learning enhancement) skills. As the students displayed the material that they had organized, it was apparent that they had very similar methods of setting out their material. Their note-making was of an exceptionally high standard. Their methods of recall were based on their organization of the information that they were required to learn. No such highly systematic and common approach to learning has ever been revealed to the author by Australian students at any level of our education system. This interesting observation may well have importance for Australian educators and students.

Rather than join the ranks of those in tertiary education who merely choose to criticize, the author chose to study the problems of our students. The progressive system of assessment that is firmly in place in most tertiary institutes was selected by the author as the initial focal point. An overview of tertiary student difficulties uncovered that though the academic staff generally considered that the end-of-term or end-of-semester examinations 'sorted out' our students, the students, it was observed, typically experienced difficulties from the very first piece of assessment work. In nearly all cases, the initial difficulty met by our students involved the organization and presentation of an essay assignment. It also seemed that the typical student who withdrew or who failed found it difficult to 'catch up' once he or she fell behind in his or her assessment demands. In fact, the typical 'at risk' student who kept on trying characteristically alleged that he or she <u>just did not have enough time to complete all that was expected of him or her</u>.

To a former Productivity Groups Officer (or Management Consultant), such comment seemed to be highly significant.

Continued and varied close observation revealed that the problems faced by the tertiary students were similar to the types of problems considered by productivity experts in the industrial, commercial and governmental sectors. Chronological outlining of the series of difficulties experienced made it clear that a series of skills seemed to be needed by those students who were relatively inefficient and ineffective in coping with the demands of the common assessment programmes of university and colleges courses. To be able to achieve some improvement, it became obvious that the author should concentrate on the essay assignment element of the progressive assessment schedules. The results obtained indicate that this stage of student difficulty is more important than was initially appreciated.

The typical student who was experiencing difficulty was not the type of student who would willingly consult a textbook on such topics as study skills and advice about associated subjects. These students were typically poor readers. In addition, they were characteristically unsystematic in their study and essay assignment efforts. They generally gave more time to the required work; however, their approach and application were seriously at fault. Their essay assignment organization and preparation consisted of mere transcription of masses of relevant (and in frequent cases irrelevant) passages from books. These extracts would be kept in note books with a confused concept of how one might keep details such as the sources of these 'references'. The vast majority of the transcriptions were not used in the final form of any essay that 'eventuated'. It was revealed that the research subjects used less than ten (10) percent of the transcriptions that they had laboriously gathered and that they frequently could not assign the extract or reference correctly. The students were characteristically 'mentally tired' by the time they deemed that they were 'ready' to undertake to start on organizing and preparing their essay. Thereafter their efforts became a 'tangle of words'. The result was characteristically an essay assignment of poor quality with little, if any, insight shown in regard to the purpose of the assignment.

Each common difficulty and fault was considered. It was obvious that some form of practical and commonsense system was needed to assist these students in organizing, preparing and presenting their essay assignments.

The 'recipe' like approach that resulted was the most suitable. In addition, the recipe like approach had to be formulated into simple English expression. Regardless of these concessions to our younger generation, it was found to be best to present these innovative ideas to students in the form of 'how to' lectures and associated demonstrations of how to implement the system most efficiently. (One could almost hear the critics moaning about 'spoon feeding'.) This combination of the printed recipe-like organization and preparation essay assignment system and the associated lectures and demonstrations resulted in a level of success that had not been fully anticipated. Longitudinal studies of the initial research subjects and their progress up the tertiary education ladder have clearly indicate that the research subjects tended to continue their studies beyond the initial diploma level and that they share substantial success in higher degree studies.

Now to make such claims is to invite those who insist that 'intervening variables' such as 'maturity' 'obviously' account for any success to counter any consideration of what has been done and what has been and what is being achieved. Generally speaking such critics of anything that is done in terms of improving the lot of our students are academic staff who have a thorough grounding in education research, its techniques and all

that these encompass. Their contribution to this area of what should be serious concern is to hide behind the convenient 'finding' that the students are to blame and that the responsibility rests with the students as mature adults. If 'measurement' is attempted, such critics devote themselves to establishing that one cannot not imply or infer that any evidence of improvement in assessment results is a consequence of such 'spoon feeding'. Unfortunately for tertiary education, some of these critics are in 'high places' and exert too much influence. Clearly the challenge is there. The woeful perennial problems of tertiary student wastage and failure should be directly and positively addressed. Any effort to measure improvement in our students' academic performance or their inclination to pursue higher level studies should be of some benefit, not only to our charges (ie our students) but also to our nation.

A current observation noted in a popular Australian magazine that considers business matters recently stated:

> "Everybody talks about setting objectives. Businessmen are urged to give themselves, their staff and their businesses clear-cut, quantifiable targets. Well, identifying target areas isn't hard, nor is wording the objectives. The snag is quantification." (1)

Academic staff of our universities and our colleges should set themselves the objective of ensuring that our students have the fundamental skills needed to undertake the assessment tasks required of them. In addition, academic staff should learn how to measure the skills of their students in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in completing the set assignments.

Towards these ends, the author set about assisting students at several colleges of advanced education and universities. Most of the observations of the difficulties faced by tertiary education students were conducted at the institute at which the author is a staff member. The essay assignment organization and preparation system devised has been published in the form of a very simple booklet (2). One of the purposes of this booklet was achieved in that by using the booklet's recipe like approach and by using the advice as to how to measure one's own progress, many purchasers of the booklet have already rung the author to advise that for the first time they feel as though they have established how to improve and how to measure readily that they have improved. In brief, their common point is that they can readily keep records of the time taken for their previous essay or essays per thousand (1000) words of essay against which they compare their time taken and results achieved (and compare comments provided) after practising the simple, systematic system that is the essence of the booklet. The eager telephone reports reflect the enthusiasm shown by the initial two hundred and fifty-two (252) research subjects on whom the system was first trialled over an eight (8) year period.

derogatory titles, the potential to assist tertiary education students to become successful independent learners is there. The motivational factor should be considered, refined and further researched. Each individual introduced to this concept so far has alleged that he or she has an immediate and personal goal, ie, to beat his or her 'previous best' effort. This motivation or resolve is tempered by the advice that some essay demands are more difficult than others at a personal level. This prospect or notion is readily accepted. The efficiency and effectiveness of the method engender enthusiasm that, in the past, has proven difficult to blunten.

Terms such as efficiency, proficiency, effectiveness, productivity,...need to be defined as a common vocabulary to be used by those who undertake to measure the 'improvements' achieved after formal courses in study, essay or learning enhancement skills. Thereafter results should be reported with clear regard to these agreed upon terms. A central clearing house should be established to record the the results and to make them readily available to other researchers. The research conducted each year should be considered at annual conferences such as this one. Support of application for research grants should be provided in terms of endorsements from the central body to ensure that research efforts are co-ordinated.

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TOWARDS TAILORING STUDY SKILLS TO COUNTER TERTIARY STUDENT WITHDRAWAL OR FAILURE

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ABSTRACT

One interesting consideration arising from recent research into tertiary education student wastage and failure has been the identification of stages at which students withdraw or fall behind and ultimately fail. Clearly the inchoate tertiary education student who is likely to experience severe difficulty is likely to experience such difficulty at the time of the first piece of formal assessment work. Under the progressive and diversified assessment programmes that are common in tertiary education this first (and often seemingly) 'insurmountable hurdle' is a form of essay assignment. Initial assistance and guidance with essay assignment work are most helpful and demonstrably can encourage those tertiary education students who might otherwise withdraw. However, recent evidence suggests that tertiary study skills may need to be presented as an on-going, developmental series. The provision of tertiary study skills at the initial stages of tertiary education is clearly recognized as a sound policy. Observations from overseas indicates that the current policy of sole initial assistance with study skills may not be all that is required. A case will be considered for the devising of advanced study and research skills to be provided as our students progress through their various degree courses.

Current thinking in regard to the provision of tertiary study skills seems to embody the concept that such skills should be provided, if at all, at the point of time of entry of typical students. This concept and the associated policy have much to recommend them. However, there is an evident need for tertiary study skills to be considered as a set of skills that are developmental in nature and which are required in some form of sequence match to the higher demands made by tertiary studies. By way of illustration, the intellectual clarity and depth of reasoning expected of a third year level student should be substantially better and greater than that expected of a first year level student. If this is not a reasonable expectation, then what has been achieved in the three years of tertiary level studies? As such improvement is typically expected of our charges, then it is likely that there are levels of skills that accompany such personal development that have not been formally acknowledged.

The initial assistance offered to our students is commonly found to embody a considerable remedial education component. A substantial number of our tertiary education students require more than just assistance in their habits, attitudes and skills for efficient and effective learning. For example, most of our students have needed substantial remedial assistance in English expression. It would seem that the alterations to previous Senior or Matriculation English studies have contributed substantially to the current common lack of literary skills that are fundamental to efficiency and effectiveness in tertiary education studies. In this regard, the absence of such literary skills as Precis Writing, Paraphrasing, Formal Essay Writing,..., has been one of the causes of our students not being able to cope with the earliest demands of a tertiary education course. Formal written expression skills are required by tertiary education coursework rather than the interesting forms of less rigorous written presentations. However, we should not blame our secondary school English teachers for following the advice of the curriculum experts of our university sector who have been most influential in having these newer forms of self-expression included in our secondary school curricula rather than the formal written expression which is apparently needed in the tertiary sector.

In the light of the current circumstances, it seems more appropriate for tertiary education institutes to conduct their own 'bridging courses' in these literary skills. A popular axiom of education is that one starts teaching from the stage the pupil has reached. In this case, the pupil or student is not typically able to undertake the assessment exercises or requirements until he or she has some considerable and demonstrable skill in formal written expression. Thus one of the initial tertiary study skills that should be formally addressed to-day is a composite of such literary skills as Precis Writing, Paraphrasing, Formal Essay Writing, the conventions of Formal Essay Writing,... Without efficiency and proficiency in these tertiary education

skills it is unlikely that typical students will be able to cope with a tertiary education course.

As demands are made upon the tertiary education student for more complex analyses, obviously higher order skills are required. It seems to be that acquisition of these higher order skills is left as an incidental acquisition to the content of the tertiary education courses throughout Australia. If this is correct, then we are wasting a considerable amount of our nation's 'human capital' by not encouraging and directing the formal development of such process skills. In recent tours abroad one of the presenters observed that secondary and tertiary education students in Hong Kong and Singapore displayed commendable note making skills. In further questioning it was evident that these students had received specific training in the associated fundamental skills. Though application and commitment in a highly competitive and strict system were other factors in the relatively high recall of information, it was obvious that the students had benefited substantially from their fundamental skill instruction.

The intention of this conference paper is to consider recent surveys and other information that may form the basis of a pilot study into a chronology of tertiary education student needs and associated skills over the full extent of typical tertiary education coursework.

It is not the intention in this paper to enter into the debate as to whether there is a noticeable drop in tertiary education students' entry standards in terms of basic skills and in particular, literary skills. Of two hundred and fifty-two 'at risk' Diploma of Teaching students and the more than fifteen hundred 'normal progress' students surveyed over the last ten (10) years, it has been found that the research subjects' needs changed as they encountered the various types and levels of tasks expected of them. However. the specifically devised initial instruction that was provided informally for the initial research subjects (who were 'at risk' students in their second year of their course) assisted them all substantially and demonstrably. The research subjects needed instruction specific to some of the more demanding tasks in their later stages of their three year course. This occurrence led to the opinion that there clearly was a 'prima facie' case for the view that there must be some form of sequential and developmental sets of study and assignment skills inherent in the problems reported by the research subjects.

To date no known nation-wide research has engaged itself in trying to establish what are the needs of tertiary education students. Rather, the literature indicates that there is a virtually institutionalized practice of 'blaming the victim' for his or her withdrawal or failure. It would be more humane and more useful for future research efforts to be focused upon identifying the needs of our students and to establish whether a

regimen and hierarchy of such needs and associated skills can be identified. Co-ordination of such a nation-wide effort would seem to lie in the hands of such committed staff members who have become recognized as the specialists in this field of student assistance.

What seems to be needed is a form of Delphi Study that initiates a series of questions to which anyone and everyone is invited to respond. Such requests for information or questions might be, for example, "Identify problems that you experienced or problems that you know that others experienced in taking up tertiary studies." It is recommended that the promulgation and broadcast of such a series of on-going pertinent questions and associated requests for information and should be achieved through 'The Australian' or some other national newspaper as an on-going nation-wide research project over a substantial period of time. When the responses to the questions have been assembled and sorted, to eliminate duplication, a follow-up promulgation of a summary of the responses should be made and then published with follow-up questions. This process of a continuing series of communications that constitutes a Delphi Study should be explained in the introductory information to the first round of the Delphi Study. Discussion of each point (or difficulty) should be provided by the authors of the research in specified editions of the national newspaper. The responses can be classified into areas of need such as library skills, advanced library skills,.... By way of illustration, library skills may include the use of a wide range of books and encyclopedia. Progression from this level of skill can be the appreciation by students of the relative importance of primary and secondary sources of information. Further development might encompass the use of journals and other sources of information and data. However, to date, the various tertiary education skills have not been clearly identified nor classified and no appreciation of whether there are higher order study and essay skills necessary has been reported.

From the public broadcast of the reported difficulties experienced by tertiary students, a distinct stage of the research and the Delphi Study should be allocated to the consideration of whether there are types or sets of study and essay skills required of our students at the various levels of their degree courses. The opinions and comments of academic staff, students, parents of students, teachers, and any other persons should be sought in each edition of the national newspaper which carries a stage of the Delphi Study. In this way, the common as well as the specific difficulties, needs and skills can be identified, on a nation-wide, voluntary and confidential basis.

By comparison of the distilled levels of study and essay skills it may be possible to identify and to outline the developmental stages that are thought to be needed by our students in their advance through their chosen fields of study. These needs and

difficulties could be further classified into types of tertiary education courses. Such public information could be the basis of further, more specific research.

This type of exercise is, in part, limited by such considerations as what can be done for our students in our universities, colleges of advanced education and technical and further education colleges. Obviously there will those of our academic colleagues who will resist such assistance to our charges on such grounds as 'spoon feeding' or 'the lowering of academic standards'. Such resistance needs to be set aside as far too many of our 'best students' are reporting that there should be some form of formal 'bridging course' between secondary and tertiary education.

The results of a pilot survey that canvassed tertiary students' opinions on these matters revealed that the research subjects commonly cited that they felt that they needed similar assistance to the specific essay organization and preparation assistance that they received as part of the research project. They could not specify just what they thought they needed personally, however, they were clear in their appreciation of what the essay organization and preparation system had done for them and they felt that they needed similar assistance and guidance in other aspects of their studies. Not one considered that the assistance that had been provided constituted 'spoon feeding' and many were hostile to such a suggestion.

From this initial work the view formed that a series of parallel surveys might provide a more comprehensive answer. For example, one survey may be conducted of academic staff of universities, colleges of advanced education and colleges of technical and further education. These three sets of results or opinions could be kept separate. Concurrently, the three sets or types of students from these three forms of post secondary education could also be surveyed. By formulating a comparative matrix, common opinions and those not reflected in the opinions of one or more of the groups may provide fresh insight into the problems faced by our students. Those responses that seemed to differ noticeably from the common responses might conceivably be used as suggestions in the next round of the Delphi Study. Similar 'populations' of respondents could be identified so that the comparisons of the summaries and the unique responses could be used to re-generate thinking about the problems.

These ideas are worthy of some form of constructive criticism. For the authors, there seemed to be no better venue than the Sixth Annual Tertiary Study Skills Conference for such an exercise. It is anticipated that if discussion is generated on this topic that some established or intuitive information may be proffered to guide the authors who intend to pursue the prospect of launching the suggested nation-wide call for information, comment, or advice. Assembled at this conference, one might readily assume, are those persons who are committed to the

prospect of assisting our students to the best of their abilities and capacities. If this opinion is correct, then initial discussion of the proposition that there exists a regimen and hierarchy of tertiary education skills is likely to set the framework for the nation-wide survey. It is towards such exploration of knowledge, information, opinion, comment and advice that the discussion segment will be directed.

A SUMMARY OF THE PROVISION OF LEARNING AND LANGUAGE SKILLS SUPPORT IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES: 1985

Neil Quintrell
Health and Counselling Services
Flinders University of South Australia

UNIVERSITY	LOCATION	STAFF	PORTION ON LEARNING SKILLS	COMMENTS	CONTACTS
ADELAIDE	Counselling Service	3 Counsellors	Small		Don Little Norm Greet Denise Davey
		2 P/T English expression tutors	996 hrs		Ann Noble Janice Laurie
A.N.U.	Communications & Study Skills Unit	2 F/T Advisers 1 Maths/Stats Adviser 1 P/T ESL Adviser (½ time)			John Clanchy Brigid Ballard John Taffe Joanna Buckingham
DEAKIN	University Community Service	1 Adviser 1 Counsellor	F/T 20%		Ros Meyer Barb Coltman
FLINDERS	Health and Counselling Service	2 F/T, 1 P/T Counsellor	10%	Study skills groups individual counselling	Neil Quintrell Vic Beasley Donna Riseley
		1 P/T Language Skills Adviser	400 hrs	Individual tuition	
GRIFFITH	Centre for the Advancement of Learning & Teaching	8 Academic staff	Varies by member and year from 50% down to less than 5%	Broad involvement with faculty staff in schools. Integration of skills programmes into courses	Dr. Bob Ross
	School of Modern Asian Studies	6 Academic staff	5-10% of their teaching time	Skills workshops in the Foundation Course, the Honours & Masters-by-Course-work programmes	Dr. Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt
	Counselling Service	Psychologist	About 5%	Personal problems & reading skills.	Dr. Ira Smith

UNIVERSITY	LOCATION	STAFF	PORTION ON LEARNING SKILLS	COMMENTS	CONTACTS
JAMES COOK	Counselling Service	Academic Skills Counsellor			Clare Wilson
LA TROBE	Counselling Service	2 F/T Counsellors	Approx 10%	Individual Counselling, groups	Elizabeth Hastings Bill Bailey Terry O'Neill Fay Oberklaid
	Language Centre	3 P/T Language Teachers	35 hours per week	ESL	Robert Hooke
	School of Humanities	2 Advisers Language & Academic Skills	F/T	Individual tuition	Doug Bate Dawn Mendham
	School of Social Sciences	2 Advisers Language & Academic Skills	F/T	Individual tuition groups	Hanna Bock Helen Lewitt
	School of Biological & Physical Sciences	2 Advisers Language & Academic Skills	P/T		Christine Pryer Diana Hiller
	School of Economics	1 Adviser Language & Academic Skills	P/T		Sharon Perry
MELBOURNE	Centre for Higher Education	Deputy Chair of Dept. F/T Lecturer	10%		John Bowden Paul Ramsden
	Counselling Service	Transition Counsellor		Study skills included in larger brief	Jim Mitchell
	Keith Horwood Centre	Director/Reader Lecturer		Language skills especially ESL	T.J. Quinn Peter Kelly
NEW ENGLAND	U.N.E. Counselling Service	1 Counsellor F/T 1 Counsellor P/T			Sue Dorland Janet Clinton
	T.A.F.E. Counselling Service	1 Counsellor F/T Teacher ESL Teacher ESL Teacher Report Writing			Kevin Hayes Lee Andrews Ruth Nicoholeidies Maree Anker