

## University-based adult and continuing education in New Zealand – trends and issues

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present a snapshot of the current problematic character of adult/continuing education in a university setting, with particular reference to the University of Auckland and the University of Waikato. In particular, I will paint a larger picture of changes in New Zealand society and its universities before focussing on issues and trends exemplified in the centres at the two universities. Most of the discussion will be related to changes in the past decade, though some earlier historical analysis is necessary to more fully understand the trends and issues.

This paper is written by a Pakeha male academic of working class origins based in arguably the most elitist educational context in this country. I certainly occupy a privileged position in adult/continuing education (ACE)<sup>1</sup>, given the fact that the vast majority of practitioners are volunteers or part-time paid workers who envy the perceived rich resources which the Centre for Continuing Education, for which I work as a teacher and researcher, has at its disposal. Yet while ACE in universities *within the field* is perceived as privileged, with respect to the university as a whole and in terms of the entire education sector, it occupies a largely invisible, certainly marginalised place. Outside the university, ACE is the Cinderella of the education sectors, even behind early childhood education, despite the reality that it serves more people than the rest of the sectors combined (see articles by Benseman and Tobias in this volume).

The University of Auckland has just released its primary policy document, *2001: Mission, Goals and Strategies*, in which it spells out its intent to 'manage entry' at the undergraduate level and to become New Zealand's premier post-graduate and research tertiary institution. This is not unexpected, especially as other tertiary providers (notably the three polytechnics) in Greater Auckland have become degree-granting institutions and threaten to steal away a large mass of 'low to average achievers' in the near future. What is to be the impact of this policy in practice upon the work of the Centre for Continuing Education? This question will be addressed later in this paper.

The two above seemingly-disparate scenarios are inter-connected. Changes in the parent institution (The University is 'parent' to the Centre for Continuing Education) inevitably affect the work of its offspring, for the Centre is not a fully autonomous unit. As for most, if not all, centres for continuing education in New Zealand, its marginality is evident in its funding arrangements, relative isolation in academic decision-making and its structural location within the university. As McIlroy (1989:343) has observed,

Continuing education remains ancillary rather than organic to universities' essential activities. What is striking is its fragmentation rather than its unity - a fragmentation sometimes imposed or sustained by university managers.

In turn, the strategic changes introduced by the University of Auckland have been 'forced' upon it by its attempt to retain its comparative advantage in a competitive macro environment brought about by governmental practices underpinned by New Right ideology (see Stalker in this volume).

The purpose of this paper is to present a snapshot of the current problematic character of adult/continuing education in a university setting, with particular reference to the University of Auckland and the University of Waikato<sup>2</sup>. In particular, I will paint a larger picture of changes in New Zealand society and its universities before focussing on issues and trends exemplified in the centres at the two universities. Most of the discussion will be related to changes in the past decade, though some earlier historical analysis is necessary to more fully understand the trends and issues.

### The broad societal context

In the last decade there have been massive economic, political and educational changes which have occurred as this country has attempted to balance the books after years of purported overspending, especially in the public sector. For many years New Zealand stood aloof through geographical isolation and internal protectionism from international forces but has increasingly been captured by them. Traditionally, New Zealanders have espoused egalitarianism and equality of (educational) opportunity as part of a classless society, but in the 1990s the stark reality is that the political and economic changes implemented by recent governments (the Fourth Labour Government, 1984-1990 and the current National Government) have helped create a new society of marked differences in wealth. What have been the dominant forces?

Back in 1984, the Labour Government inherited a large national debt and set about restructuring many features of New Zealand society with Roger Douglas as its prime architect (or demolition worker?). Over the six years of what was supposedly a social welfarist government, there were major 'streamlining' practices such as the sale of public assets, privatisation, downsizing of government departments and the implementation of 'user pays' across many sectors. Under the era of 'Rogernomics' the New Right ideology of the 'minimal state' was implemented (Lauder, 1990).

In an analysis of state-provided education, Snook (1989) provides useful insights into trends aligned to political and economic imperatives. These trends are also observable in ACE:

- the education system has become part of the market where individual 'choice' determines quality.
- much more accountability is located at the local face-to-face level with decision-making devolved to local groups. While continuing to control and monitor, the state washes its hands of responsibility for outcomes.
- education is perceived as a privilege, not a right, and since education benefits the individual, it should be paid for, in part at least, by the individual.
- control and responsibility are to be more cogent than freedom and self-evaluation. Charters outlining these controls and responsibilities have been incorporated into every educational institution across all levels.

Counterbalancing these tendencies, there are special features of New Zealand life which pervade most people's thinking-the longstanding commitment to (educational) equality; the traditional (now much diluted) strength of the central state in welfare, health and education and the current drives towards biculturalism (Novitz & Willmott, 1989; Snook, 1989). In particular, the Treaty of Waitangi has recently come to act as the founding document to help promote Maori sovereignty and to redress inequities (e.g. land confiscations). The Labour Government, while implementing a

policy of market liberalism, was simultaneously operating policies of social equity - primarily aimed at honouring the principles of the Treaty. Since the re-election of the National Government in 1990 the emphasis on social equity has noticeably softened, exemplified by the relatively minor place given to Maori concerns in *Education for the 21st Century* (Ministry of Education, 1993).

Given the above scenario, what has been the impact on ACE? The same 'macro' factors have affected provision throughout the field (including universities), though the already marginalised agencies and initiatives were especially targeted in the 1991 budget (see Law 1991; Snook 1991). The most obvious manifestation of economic retrenchment within universities has been an increasing drive towards user pays and people's heightened interest in credentials as the job market has shrunk. These problems are hardly new - O'Rourke (1980) wrote of external factors affecting provision in the Otago region, including reductions in government expenditure, rising unemployment and intrusion from the then Department of Education. What *is* new is the force of these external factors and their effect on the daily lives of people considering continuing education opportunities.

## The universities in New Zealand

The development of ACE in the universities cannot be divorced from the larger macro issues outlined above and developments within the university system overall. Change within higher education has been rather bewildering in accord with the Government's agenda of 'rationalisation' (for which we might accurately substitute the words 'reduced resources'). Government's stated objective has been to increase the number of school leavers in tertiary education to better equip the New Zealand workforce for international competition. Given this imperative, the number of students has expanded significantly in universities, colleges of education and private training establishments (PTEs). Following *Learning for Life 2* (Goff, 1989) and the reforms heralded by the Education Amendment Act 1990, tertiary institutions have been funded via the Ministry of Education and have competed for funding based on Equivalent Full-time Students (EFTS).

In the new regime of open competition between tertiary providers the universities have reluctantly entered a 'new cult of efficiency' (Bates, 1990). While there are many interrelated processes and mechanisms being employed, the following recent changes are examples:

- The implementation of Study Right for school leavers in 1991. In this scheme the government differentiates between school leavers and mature age students in terms of funding to the institution. In effect, this mechanism acts as a disincentive for mature age students to return to study and might better be labelled 'study denial'.
- The initiation of the student loan scheme after which the fees escalated in 1991 from around \$400 per student to about \$2200 in 1996<sup>3</sup>. Since this scheme began, the indebtedness of students has risen considerably (and anecdotal evidence suggests that the academic performance of those students who are forced to work to survive financially has declined).
- The funds directly available to university staff for research have been reduced. A dwindling resource still exists within the university system but for substantive research funds academics have to contest through various sources such as the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FORST) where universities compete with other agencies such as the Crown Research Institutes (CRIs). Internal research funding is hotly contested, the favourable outcomes of which tend to favour the 'hard' sciences.
- Academic conditions of work generally have been eroded, despite the opposition of the Association for University Staff. The staff-student ratios stand at around 1:20, salaries have been tightly constrained over the last five years (staff in specific universities have fared better than others) and the criteria for promotion have been considerably tightened. For many university staff there has been noticeable intensification of work (Apple, 1982) as

student numbers have climbed. Importantly too, the advent of the Employment Contracts Act in 1991 has reduced the power of unions and the prospects of collective bargaining.

- Within universities, there is greater devolution of responsibility to faculties and departments in financial decision-making. This has resulted in greater administrative loads for many academic staff. The need for these staff to be more engaged in administration is compounded by the low general staff to academic ratio.
- The striving for 'excellence' in the higher education sector has resulted in increased attention to charters, mission statements, strategic planning and quality management approaches (e.g. total quality management) as tertiary providers find ways to enhance 'quality'.

Other plans in the governmental pipeline include capital charging on university. plant and buildings which potentially will hit hard 'asset rich' universities such as Auckland. Another prominent factor, especially in the Auckland region, is the continuing trend for polytechnics (several of which have renamed themselves as 'institutes of technology') to behave like universities in awarding degrees and diversifying their curricula well beyond their former technical/vocational emphases.

The shadow of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and its framework hangs over the New Zealand education system at present. This government quango has an ambitious agenda of overhauling the qualifications system to combine industry training and tertiary education under the same roof. Currently, universities are strenuously resisting the pressure to become enveloped within this framework on several grounds, but especially that of threatened autonomy (Donelan, 1995). Ultimately, the price of this stand-off may prove very high to universities (even if not specifically to the University of Auckland) as greater numbers of students at undergraduate level seek educational programmes from 'accredited providers' for Qualifications Authority-approved programmes rather than through universities.

## Adult and continuing education in the universities

### *An historical view*

Universities have played a prominent role in ACE from the early times of Pakeha colonisation. Historically, the seven university colleges gained their administrative autonomy from the umbrella of the University of New Zealand and were charged with the responsibilities of providing adult education opportunities beyond the mainstream degree programmes. In partnership with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), university staff, particularly in the urban centres, took the 'university to the people' and provided voluntary leadership in some adult education agencies (Dakin, 1992). Each university developed its own pathway and ethos, though usually heavily influenced by the dominant model of extra-mural liberal adult education studies transplanted from Britain (see Fordham, 1983; Taylor et al, 1985). In the four main centres where universities were established earlier, the universities without exception adopted the British university extra-mural model but the newer universities (e.g. the University of Waikato) chose the more organisational basis of a centre for continuing education. In the older universities, academic staff were employed under subject specialties (eg. philosophy, music, psychology) to take university knowledge to the people both as teachers and organisers of courses.

The differences between 'university extension' and 'centres for continuing education' go well beyond semantics. The idea of university extension emanated from the university (e.g. Oxford in England) reaching beyond the literal and metaphorical walls to the populace through public lectures. Over time, this evolved into a specialist unit within the university where staff were employed as tutors/organisers to take their discipline to the general public as part of the university's service to the community (Fordham, 1983; Melroy and Spencer, 1988; Taylor, Rockhill and Fieldhouse, 1985). Even when transplanted to New Zealand, this pattern persisted.

Over the last two decades the Universities of Auckland, Waikato, Canterbury, Victoria University of Wellington and Lincoln University have established and remodelled centres for continuing education; the University of Otago redeveloped its extension department to concentrate on distance education via teleconferencing and abandoned previous commitment to a wide range of university-related provision to the province, probably in recognition of the growing success of the Otago Polytechnic in that arena; Massey University decided to focus on extra-mural provision of credit courses in mainstreamed qualification-granting programmes and only briefly assumed the role of traditional university extension and never adopted the newer concept of a centre for continuing education<sup>4</sup>. Hence, a diversity of formats for and underlying philosophies about the nature of ACE have developed within universities.

Centres for continuing education, modelled more explicitly on the American prototype (see Bagnall, 1978, for a more detailed discussion), have emphasised programme development wherein continuing education officers develop curricula based on the communities' learning needs and interests, while marshalling the resources of the university. Their fundamental ethos has been to combine educational service to the community with entrepreneurialism in education - walking the tightrope between educational and economic goals.

### *Contemporary Perspectives*

No two centres for continuing education are the same. We need only look to the two adjacent centres in Auckland and Waikato to see a contrast - Auckland is embedded in a very traditional university where there has been, until recently, a strong cadre of academic staff who taught across a wide range of subjects reflecting the original extension model; Waikato's model surfaced out of University Registry in the early 1970s, employing continuing education officers to service not only Hamilton city but also a huge regional area (as far south as Gisborne). Founded as a regional university, the Centre at the University of Waikato has offered extensive programming on a face-to-face basis as "a partnership between the university and the community" (Kingsbury, 1978: 67).

The marked differences among centres have been affected by at least the following features:

- the parent institution's ethos and history
- the relative importance of ACE as a function of each university
- the physical and infrastructural positions of the centre
- the leadership of various directors
- the extent of the embeddedness of the unit within local and national communities.

In comparing the two universities - Auckland and Waikato - along these variables, their unique characters emerge.

At the University of Auckland, the Centre for Continuing Education was foreshadowed in 1954 as the University Adult Education Centre and has maintained a wide range of programmes reflecting the strengths of this University. Philosophically, as expressed by Noeline Alcorn (1987:29), this Centre has been eclectic in practice based around the concept of *lifelong learning* - i.e. "the belief that individuals need educational opportunities throughout their lifespan for personal, social and vocational development". Located in the largest city in New Zealand, it has concentrated its provision on what would appeal to its main traditional audience (predominantly the white middle class) though it has often been conscious of fulfilling social equity goals (e.g. through New Start, a programme designed for mature-aged adults who plan a return to study, usually in a university or polytechnic). Its importance to the University has been hard to judge - while respective Vice-Chancellors have given rhetorical support, the current funding received from the parent institution (equivalent to 16% of the Centre's income-expenditure i.e. the unit is 84% self-sufficient) just enables the Centre to stay afloat financially (since all salaries, including academic, are paid from

income and expenditure). Physically, the Centre occupies a central building on campus which is readily identified by the general public as part of the University. This location is an undoubted strength in terms of image though the space limitations are very serious and inhibiting.

In terms of infrastructure, its location is more ambivalent - while the Centre is not an academic department (it has some features of one, including two academics specialising in adult education and a senior tutor in women's studies), it does have an academic director at associate professor status who has access to important decision-making groups in the university hierarchy. In terms of leadership, the University has always appointed an academic in the position of director (as opposed to a general manager, the system adopted in all other centres in this country). To my knowledge no adult educator has occupied this position, a situation which would unlikely to be tolerated in other professional environments - each director has been recruited on the basis of academic seniority in an allied field and perceived administrative, organisational competence. As the University of Auckland itself has been conservative and unapologetically elitist (and as a consequence, typically inward-looking) and the city is fragmented into multiple communities, the Centre does not have strong connections in community to the degree of smaller more regionally-based units. It has tended to expend energy in developing relationships with specific populations (e.g. New Start staff have targeted programmes for Maori and Pacific Island adult students and has worked with the Waipareira Trust in West Auckland, while also maintaining a generic approach; educational tourism has relied heavily on older Americans) except for General Studies, because of its currently diffuse student base, has had to appeal to the general public.

At the University of Waikato, the underlying philosophical premise has been one of service orientation to the public of the region. In the words of Norman Kingsbury (then Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor):

At the beginning, we took a principle decision not to set up a teaching department of university extension but rather to have staff involved in the initiation and organisation of courses, drawing the teaching services from the general academic staff and from the community at large. (Kingsbury, 1978:65)

While much has changed since this original conception, the Centre still maintains a commitment to provide regional programmes to complement other providers. The status of Waikato's unit is problematic - it is now funded primarily on an EFTS formula and it does not have an academic leader (consistent with every other centre for continuing education in this country), the latter point suggestive of marginalisation, especially in institutions which identify teaching and research as key educative functions. It has recently moved to modern, commercially-attractive quarters just off campus which provides staff with custom-made teaching spaces and greater day-to-day flexibility, but nevertheless does take them away from campus itself. With regard to infrastructure, this Centre is in a weakened condition with little access to senior decision-making committees. Leadership has been given to university-trained adult educators, but the position itself is essentially non-academic. The longstanding strength of the Centre has been its strong links with community (both within the city and the large hinterland) and its responsiveness to emergent public issues.

In recent times the effects of New Right ideology have influenced the practices of ACE in the university setting. There have been calls for greater efficiencies, more user pays, streamlining of decision-making, increased commercialisation, control of quality and firm strategic planning. In short, centres have been manoeuvred into adopting a managerial and commercial stance. In addition, reviews of centres at Canterbury (O'Rourke, 1992), Victoria (Holborow, 1992) and Auckland (Marshall, 1995) have had significant impacts on the directions of ACE in universities. For example, all centres in this country, apart from Auckland, have directors who are managers/educators<sup>5</sup> and the respective reviews have divested these enterprises of academic staff<sup>6</sup>, thus producing cadres of professional staff 'better suited' to the commercial ethos.

## Trends and issues

### *Funding to ACE*

Universities are funded for ACE via the Ministry of Education under an EFTS formula. (In the days of the University Grants Committee universities received funding 'tagged' for ACE which could not be siphoned off to other 'more worthwhile' activities). At each university the way in which this is currently managed appears to be idiosyncratic, but the overall trend is towards tighter funding on a per-student basis. Without exception Centres have moved into a strong user pays regime - for example, at Canterbury the Review directed the Centre to implement a fuller cost recovery system. Recent personal communication with the director at Waikato has confirmed that Centre's move into direct EFTS-driven funding (apart from educational tourism which lies outside that formula and is highly entrepreneurial). While the autonomy of centres may have increased, the impact on the types of provision is strong. Inevitably, the costs are passed on to the learner with predictable consequences. For instance, tighter fiscal constraints in the late 1980s and early 1990s resulted in a reduction of students enrolled in the Certificate in Maori Studies programme offered regionally by the University of Waikato (see Findsen (1992) for details of this programme). It is very disappointing to see this 'jewel in the crown' in terms of upholding social equity now heavily tarnished and in danger of being sold off.

In general, the pressure is much greater for ACE in universities to increase fees and to look for profit making ventures. As Harre Hindmarsh (1992:188) notes, "the result is increased pressure to allocate time to develop programmes for those who can pay, either as individuals or through organisational contracts". In effect, this on-going tension between economic and educational goals locates time-consuming, or risk-taking, activities such as community development on the periphery and heightens the likelihood of vocational, credentialling and commercial programmes as core activities. It also highlights the importance of a firm proactive policy in social equity to be adopted and implemented least marginalised groups (e.g. Maori, the working class) be neglected altogether<sup>7</sup>.

### *The Changing Nature of Curriculum*

Given the financial stringencies and the increasing managerial flavour of ACE in universities, what are some of the consequences on what gets offered and to whom? First, it is important to acknowledge that the range of provision across the system is very broad - from liberal arts-based activities, to professionally-oriented programmes to social education provision (see Findsen and Harre Hindmarsh, 1996, for a full description). Auckland's programme (see below) epitomises this diversity.

At the University of Waikato in the 1970s and 1980s there was a very coherent and multifaceted non-credit regional programme which constituted about half of the professional staff's efforts. It was a highly innovative and community-based programme which reflected the usually very effective linkages made between that university and its multiple communities. This regional programming has been significantly pruned back and was largely sidelined by the Centre's role in the administration for credit-granting distance education<sup>8</sup>. Across the system, as centres strove for greater economic efficiencies, there have been advances in the programmes which have greater income-generating capacity such as continuing professional education, conference administration, Elderhostel and College for Seniors, educational tourism and summer school programmes.

At the University of Auckland the five major strands of provision are:

- General Studies (liberal adult education for individual development)
- Qualifications courses (six Certificates as professional updating and/or developing critical/intellectual capacities)

- Continuing Professional Education (CPE) for professions (eg. engineers) and conference administration
- New Start programmes (designed for mature age students to introduce them to university 'culture' and demands)
- Educational tourism, including Elderhostel and College for Seniors.

In recent years, the programme at Auckland has approached what Chris Duke (1991: 61) labels as 'pluralism'. He argues that a strong trend in U.K. continuing education in a university environment has been away from an initial liberal monopoly to a liberal-vocational dichotomy and eventually to this pluralism which takes on 'the seamless web or robe'. This has been the path at Auckland, and to a lesser degree at Waikato (since the CCE there never assumed a discernible role in vocational or professional education). Alcorn (1987:27), in assessing the goals for the Centre within the context of an internal review as recently-appointed director, pinpointed this dilemma:

We have been aware of continuing contradictions and tensions not only between our practice and our intent, but between competing ideologies and theories, between the demands of community groups and University expectations, between programme areas that all claim priority status.

Pluralism is not easy to deal with in practice. The General Studies programme recently has struggled to retain enrolment numbers and New Start, while boosted by occasional grants from the University, is not a profit-making venture (nor should it be). The Certificate-level Qualifications Courses (certificate programmes) barely hold their own financially, in part supported by two full-time academics within the Centre whose work is counted as part of their academic (teaching) function. Both CPE and educational tourism are perceived as 'income-generating', enabling cross-subsidization of the more social educational programmes to survive<sup>9</sup>.

There are many issues of curriculum to be resolved in which the CCE does not necessarily have or want the primacy in decision-making. At what point should a director trim back the social education provision when the economic screws come on from the parent institution? What happens when many of the democratic ideals promoted within ACE itself (student-based learning; education for emancipation and social action) are not shared within the wider institution? Should the decision about the future of social equity programmes be made only within the parameters of continuing education staff and principally as a result of internal University politicalisation? What is the reality of the institution's knowledge about and consideration for the increasing numbers of mature age students in the university? Where is the commitment from the wider institution to the ideals of equal access for all adults? What is the likely consequence of the university's professed goal of becoming the premier research and post-graduate university in New Zealand (see opening paragraphs in this paper) on New Start entrants and some of the access-oriented Certificate programmes (e.g. women's studies, adult education)? These questions concerning what counts as curriculum and who it serves deserve greater debate in the university and its publics.

It is helpful to view questions of curriculum in an international context. McIlroy's (1989:336) analysis of the effects of increasing commercialisation of continuing education in Britain are insightful:

Innovation was generally hampered by the funding situation. It was often the work with the unemployed, ethnic minorities or groups with specific educational disabilities, work which was most demanding in terms of time and development cost, as distinct from the more routine evening-class and day-school provision for the already-educated, which went to the wall. Whilst the liberal programme has, therefore, held up well, this represents to a degree a victory for routine and the easy option over innovation and educational risk.

While his comments may now have less accuracy in terms of what is happening for liberal adult education in Britain currently, his critique of a lack of innovation and risk-taking pertains to much of what occurs in the universities in Aotearoa.



### *Participation in ACE*

An area of keen interest to adult educators is to understand patterns of adults' participation in programmes but this understanding can best be developed from systematic analyses of enrolment and completion data. Unfortunately, practitioners have been remiss in collecting and analysing data which can produce 'hard data' and have been reliant on anecdotal evidence or one-off research studies. Universities have been no exception to this rule.

Why is it important to know who participates? While several responses are possible to this question, it is clear that such data can provide clues to the effectiveness of programmes including subject relevance and publicity. Importantly, too, participation data can provide profiles of participants in sub-sections of ACE programmes (eg General Studies, Qualification courses) and allow for more effective planning of curricula<sup>10</sup>. Even more significantly, participation patterns can pinpoint who is benefitting from adult education opportunities and who is not. For general providers of ACE such as universities, the issue of who does *not* participate is very serious, because it can reveal disparities in educational opportunity which may not be intended and point to educational practices or institutional barriers which impede participation for minority groups.

In the 1970s several studies of participation in university ACE occurred including Horton's (1976) study at the University of Waikato. Typically, as reported by Benseman (1992; 1996), there has been a fairly stereotypical group of white, middle class and relatively well educated people, with a preponderance of women in the non-vocational areas, who have been in the majority. While this dominance by women can be interpreted sociologically as a reflection of the field's largely liberal tradition of 'soft' subjects (eg. human relations, the arts) - ACE is low in status and often perceived as a 'frill' - this is an overly-simplistic analysis. More data are needed for more sophisticated research and analysis.

In a recent snapshot of university ACE participants across the system Harré Hindmarsh (see Findsen and Harré Hindmarsh, 1996, for greater elaboration) demonstrated that patterns between the centres vary considerably, reflecting the underlying ethos of the parent institution. For example, in terms of gender, at Lincoln the data revealed that 75% of participants were men, contrary to the overall national trend. However, this can be readily explained by the concentration of user pays professional development programmes in traditionally male (agricultural) occupations at that Centre. At the other extreme, Waikato's highest percentage of women (73% women : 23% men) is indicative of the curriculum base - a high percentage of community or general studies type programmes and more highly (university/government) subsidised programmes. In Harré Hindmarsh's data search she was rather alarmed at the paucity of data on ethnicity. However, there are *some* small victories in terms of equality of educational opportunity - ACE programmes planned in conjunction with Maori, in Maori contexts, are well patronised as exemplified by the successful 1993 New Start programme held at Waipareira in which there were 45% Maori participants and historically at the University of Waikato, where the Certificate in Maori Studies has attracted many Maori into the institution for the first time.

One obvious feature of CCEs in New Zealand, which undoubtedly has an impact on who participates, relates to the gender and ethnicity of staff. In late 1994 Harré Hindmarsh recorded the prevalence of men and Pakeha in these institutions. Only 2.5 of 26 permanent Continuing Education Officer positions were Maori and there were no Maori academic staff. Not surprisingly, men across the system predominate in senior positions. However, making an analysis and doing something concrete about it are two very different things. As indicated elsewhere in this paper, the answers are not entirely in the hands of ACE staff themselves who, in my experience, are generally very sensitive to gender and ethnicity issues. There must be political will at higher levels in universities for changes of this type - after the review of CCE at Auckland, wherein four extra staff were strongly recommended (two Maori; two Pacific Island), there has been inaction explained by financial stringencies and complex University-wide strategic planning processes.

### *The Place of Research and Teaching in ACE*

Within universities the three main functions are those of teaching, research and community service. In most departments the reality is that the third function is of low status since academic promotion is more directly related to research output and teaching commitment. In many respects, the presence of the CCE takes some pressure away from mainstream departments to disseminate their knowledge to the general public. However, for the Centre, the issue of university-community relations remains a serious domain for continual repositioning, especially as it is 'the public face of the university' to many community members and the 'first stop' in a potential student career.

Centres for continuing education are not departments, though academic functions are carried out both via the huge range of contracted short-term tutorial staff and full-time academics at Auckland. Arguably, too, the role of continuing education officer as a professional educator can move into academic territory. Until recently, the place of research and teaching for staff employed within centres has been ambiguous. By and large the prerogative of teaching in credit and degree programmes and the conducting of research has been the role of academics. After the reviews at Canterbury and Victoria Universities' centres it was made explicit that academic staff employed under the old model of university extension no longer 'fitted' into the new managerial model. Instead, centres throughout the country would be professionally staffed by continuing education officers whose prime task is one of programme development. Steps undertaken as a result of reviews have reinforced the professionalisation of ACE in universities and, the University of Auckland apart, have sidelined the serious study of ACE as a field of practice.

The issue of teaching and research in adult education has been untidily resolved. Academic positions for this specialty exist at Auckland (two in CCE), Waikato (two in the Department of Education Studies), Victoria (Department of Education - transferred after a review from CCE), Lincoln (Department of Communication and Learning) and Cariterbury (CCE). No separate academic adult/continuing education department exists in New Zealand and those few individuals who work as academics do so in considerable isolation<sup>11</sup>. The consequence of this paucity of academics is that not only is the study of adult education marginalised but the overall effect on ACE research outside the universities is very detrimental. Very few practitioners in the field write about their work and fewer still engage in research or critical debate about practice. In my view, university academic staff have a major responsibility to provide leadership in teaching and research for ACE in this country. A positive aspect of the recent Auckland review of CCE was the endorsement of its academic staff in the roles of teaching and research in this field. If other recommendations made in this review (e.g. the appointment of four Maori and Pacific Island staff) come to fruition then the prospects for strengthening this area of work academically are much stronger.

### **The Appropriateness of Qualification Courses**

When academic staff have been transferred out of all but two of these units, the issue of the appropriateness of qualification (certificate) programmes comes into question. (Academic credit programmes require academics to lead them). At Auckland, there is still a strong element of credit provision where there are 3.7 academic staff (includes 0.5 for a senior tutor in women's studies and the Director). Staff provide the conceptual apparatus for the development of programmes in adult education, training and human resource development, women's studies (on campus and distance) and school leadership and often teach in them. At Waikato the senior professional staff provide administrative expertise but the teaching is usually undertaken by staff in academic departments (e.g. academics in the Maori Department teach in the Certificate in Maori Studies administered by the CCE)<sup>12</sup>. These qualification courses can act as an important bridging mechanism for mature age students towards degree completion. In addition, the future of the training of adult educators is at risk, unless universities make the effort to preserve this service to the field. At both Auckland and Waikato, a full range of integrated training opportunities in adult education is developing which

includes both the CCE and the respective academic departments offerings. In my view, in both localities this would be better integrated into one department but at least most practitioners do have some (albeit limited) choice for their entry and exit points in training. The issue of ownership of qualifications has arisen when a new diploma of adult education has been developed. As the CCE is not a 'real' department, where does responsibility reside for the diploma's quality control?

Given the trends in Britain to protect liberal adult education provision by repackaging it in thematic areas (e.g. courses in environmentalism) and offering these programmes for credit<sup>13</sup> and given the North American propensity towards credentialism and professionalisation in ACE (see article by Robert Tobias on professionalisation in this journal), the wonder is that in this country we have been able to resist trends of accreditation for so long. There are very few centres for continuing education in the world offering a liberal education programme of Auckland's size and diversity. Looming in the future are the possible (largely negative) effects of the New Zealand Qualification Authority's Framework on the standardisation of learning outcomes for adult learners (see the article by Roger Peddie for more in-depth discussion on the impact of the Framework on adult learners). I suspect that if the Framework continues to hold credibility in the polytechnics, then pressure towards modularisation and credit will increase within ACE in the universities.

## Conclusion

Adult and continuing education in the university setting has been profoundly affected by the impact of 'restructuring', privatisation and rationalisation of organisations apparent in New Zealand society. In the modern context of greater accountability, efficiency and managerialism, centres for continuing education have been challenged by the pervading economic ideology. The changes observed so far suggest that the swing towards economic self-sufficiency and administrative efficiency are placing at great risk the democratic ethos of the sector. The kinds of programmes most in jeopardy are those which require creativity, sustained communication with specific publics, on-going community development, typically for the most vulnerable in our society (McIlroy, 1989).

The question of academic leadership within centres is pivotal for their continuing relevance within universities. The rapid rise of managerialism in these units places them at risk in terms of the central functions of a university. While the role of academics in these organisations remains problematic internally (they do not 'fit' the professionalised model) in terms of the university itself they are more central. I argue that without a clear academic mandate, these units can be reduced to efficient dispensers of lower status programmes; further, no academics in the field renders the serious study of ACE to the age of the dinosaurs. While the training of adult educators could be continued by the increasing range of providers, its character is likely to be largely atheoretical and uncritical.

Within this paper I have also made special mention of the structures and purposes for ACE within the universities. As leading proponents of research and critical teaching, universities need to safeguard academic roles in this marginalised field, lest academic enquiry be thrown out with programmes that do not make money for the institution. The pluralistic nature of these units inevitably results in tensions and contradictions between intentions and practice, between the demands of the university and diverse publics and between programme areas that all claim equal status (Alcorn, 1987). Referring back to the University of Auckland's intention to become a premier research and post-graduate institution, I believe it is imperative that mature age students do not get forgotten in the implementation of this policy. In my view the major threat to ACE in universities occurs when educational goals become secondary to economic in ways which seriously compromise the quality of provision and academic integrity.

## Notes

1. The terms 'adult education' and 'continuing education' are similar but not entirely synonymous. Their meanings vary historically and culturally, usually related to the ideological purposes of the definer. In general, adult education refers to all forms of adult learning to include both non-formal and formal (eg. institutional) contexts and tends to be used to describe the field of practice; continuing education refers to education beyond post-compulsory schooling and hints at its lifelong character; more recently in New Zealand this term has assumed a distinctively vocational flavour which I wish to avoid. Hence, the combination term of 'adult/continuing education' captures the broader intents of both contributing terms.
2. I have chosen these two centres as case studies because of my sound familiarity with them (I worked as a senior continuing education officer at the University of Waikato from 1979 to 1988, apart from study leave in 1985-1987; I am currently a senior lecturer in adult education at the University of Auckland) and because they manifest in their practices divergent philosophical views.
3. Some variation exists *between* universities and between faculties *within* some institutions. This variation reflects the decisions by the majority of universities to absorb the differential funding from the Ministry of Education rather than pass on the actual unequal costs to students. The greatest variation within the entire New Zealand system exists between comparatively lower cost programmes in liberal arts in relation to highly professionalised training as in dentistry.
4. It is deeply ironic that the University in this country which caters for the largest number of adults in their continuing education (via extra-mural degree studies) has not employed academic specialists in adult education.
5. It is interesting to interpret this trend in terms of a wider educational context. The parallels with school principals as managers first and educationalists second are strong.
6. While in Australasia the trend in centres for continuing education has been to opt for this managerial and entrepreneurial style, this is not the case universally. I visited the United Kingdom, the USA and Canada in 1994 and observed that in Britain and parts of Canada there were still many different types of units/departments. In particular, at the University of Nottingham, the oldest adult education department in the world, and at the University of Glasgow a 'mixed model' was evident i.e. the co-existence of academic and programme developers. In the USA academic adult educators (teachers/researchers in the study of adult education) and programme developers were clearly separated.
7. A policy adopted, but seldom actually implemented, while I was a senior continuing education officer at the University of Waikato in the 1980s, was to allow for up to 10% of programmes to be costed at no or minimal costs for 'disadvantaged' groups. This permitted professional staff to devise programmes with community groups who could not be expected to pay prices geared to more affluent people.
8. This role of co-ordinator of distance education has been removed from the Centre at Waikato, partly in recognition of its distorting effect on its overall programming. In many overseas universities (especially in the USA and Canada), centres co-ordinate massive distance credit programmes on behalf of the university, often including summer semesters. At Auckland, the location of the co-ordinating function for distance education has not been resolved. At present the university's distance education officer is located within the Centre's structure.
9. Tensions arise in staff relations when some programmes and people are perceived as 'carrying' others, as if financial concerns should be paramount. Staff involved in programmes with social or liberal education emphases can sometimes feel more vulnerable than those engaged in more entrepreneurial activities within the Centre because their courses do not generate sufficient income to cover their salaries.
10. In 1996 John Senseman has initiated an analysis of General Studies enrolments at the Centre which will be broadened to other areas. The writer (Brian Findsen), John Senseman and Helen Heppner have been undertaking a research project on the impact of the certificate in Adult Education on the lives of past participants. Such research may be extended to the other five Certificate programmes in the future.

11. In other western countries, especially in the United States, there are many departments which concentrate on adult education as a graduate field of study. My own doctoral work was undertaken in the Department of Adult and Community College Education, North Carolina State University, in such a location.
12. Personal communication with that Centre's previous director, Dr David Guy, has indicated that the administration for this certificate is now based with the Department of Maori Studies under the principle of devolution. Unfortunately, enrolments in regional areas have severely decreased under this arrangement.
13. The quest for accreditation of learning is fuelled by the threat that only credit gaining courses will get British Government funding. Similar disquiet is being voiced in New Zealand with respect to future moves from the NZQA.

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