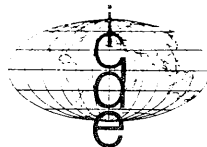# THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

International Council for Distance Education

OPEN   UNIVERSITY   REGIONAL   ACADEMIC   SERVICES

in conjunction with

INTERNATIONAL   COUNCIL   FOR   DISTANCE   EDUCATION   (ICDE)

I N T E R N A T I O N A L   W O R K S H O P

on

C o u n s e l l i n g   i n   D i s t a n c e   E d u c a t i o n

20-22 September 1983
Downing College, Cambridge,   United Kingdom

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C O N F E R E N C E   P A P E R S

Editorial

The papers included here are a selection of those submitted for the International Workshop on Counselling at a Distance, organised by the Open University in conjunction with the International Council for Distance Education, and held in Cambridge, England, in September 1983. An account of the Workshop appeared in Volume 4 of the ICDE Bulletin. A limited number of the complete set of papers are available from Alan Tait.

It is interesting to note that the majority of papers submitted to the Workshop did not draw on therapeutic theories of counselling in this context but rather, as Lewis writes, see the educational counsellor as occupying 'the centre of the teaching and learning process'. Thus the authors represented here see counselling in distance education as a vital intermediary role for the majority of students, successful and unsuccessful, and not relegated to the role of a rescue service for the emergency cases although there is no doubt that this too must be included.

Such a broad and non-specialist definition of counselling inevitably leads to a consideration of the adequacy of the term - after all, we are addressing activities under the broad head of student support services. This broad definition is also endorsed by Dalziel and Freshwater, writing from a young and expanding institution, the Open Tech Unit under the UK's Manpower Services Commission.

Paine's paper has the ambitious title 'Counselling; defining the field' and he begins by locating three separate areas where counselling takes place: pre-course; in-course, and post-course. The central activities of counselling are seen as a two-fold attack on the bureaucracy of the course and problems of adult learning.

Preparation for study and induction are examined by Delahanty and Miskiman, and Raters and Brandes, from Canada and West Germany, while broadly descriptive papers outline counselling and allied support services in institutions in Malawi and Zambia (see papers by Khembo and Siaciwena). Within these latter two papers, and explicitly in that by Holmberg, is taken up the question of local or central organisation of counselling, prepared for a discussion on the educational implications of these at the Workshop.

It is particularly appropriate in a publication of this sort that we should have papers addressing the need for co-operation in the field, in counselling and in training for counselling (see Lewis, within the UK context, and Coltman on Australia), especially when a number of Distance Teaching institutions work within the same or similar geographical areas.

The final part of this issue comprises Michal Moore's bibliography of counselling articles published in Teaching at a Distance over the last decade. Such a bibliography is a tribute both to the extent of interest in counselling in Distance Education, and to the journal teaching at a Distance, at the time of writing unhappily suspended because of financial restraints within the Open University.

We hope the publication of these papers will serve to stimulate not only further writing on counselling and student support services in general, in an international context, but also further opportunities for practitioners to meet and work together and that the theme of this workshop can be taken up again at ICDE's 13th World Conference in Melbourne in August 1985.

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Counselling in Distance Education
- an Overview

by David Sewart,
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It is, I think, more than significant that this is the first international conference on counselling at a distance as far as I am aware and it is particularly appropriate that it should be jointly sponsored by the International Council for Distance Education, an organisation with a long experience of distance education throughout the countries of the world, and the Open University, the first of the new generation of distance education institutions and one which owes it success not least of all to its insistence on individualized support services to students. As a Vice-President of I.C.D.E. and a Regional Director in the Open University, I have a particular concern for the maintenance and development of student support services, the counselling function in distance education, since it appears to me to be a sine qua non of *successful* distance education and therefore of vital importance for the continued well-being of this form of teaching and learning.

In the last dozen or so years, there has been an explosive growth of interest in distance education as this form of learning has been explored by national governments throughout the world. For the developing countries where the supply of trained and competent teachers is often a crippling restriction, material can be produced by a small highly skilled team which can set a standard of excellence capable of wide dissemination through distance teaching techniques and thus significantly reduce the timescale for mass education by eliminating the prior requirement for training a generation of traditional teachers. For the developed countries the motives are perhaps more complex. Economic factors are normally of major importance and in particular the cost of employing teachers. But even in the developed countries the need for training or re-training runs ahead of the supply of teachers and in the rapidly changing environment of recent years, the quick 'start-up' potential of distance education has been seen as a major force in the attainment of continuing education goals.

The requirement for distance education to be cost-effective or, to put it in another way, to be less costly than traditional education, has been dominant in all developments in the private and public sector at least in recent years and this has been reflected in the literature which has appeared in growing quantities and which is concerned to a great extent with course production, the use of media and in particular new technologies, the administration and the economics of distance education. The analysis of the students and more particularly their needs in relation to their study at a distance has taken a poor second place and has only reached the present level of interest through the leadership of such units as the Open University's Survey Research Department. However, recent years have seen a movement of interest towards student support services in general hastened perhaps by a close analysis of student throughput and a realisation that the Passchendaele approach to distance education is economically unsound as well as being morally and educationally indefensible. It is in the area of student support services that the many and varied definitions of counselling all lie.

But what do we in distance education mean by the term counselling, a term which embraces a variety of information, advice and support in many contexts in every day use.

7

Perhaps it is easiest to define the term by exclusion rather than inclusion. Counselling in distance education does not include *direct* support to those with problems which are of a serious physical or mental nature. Our counsellors advise and support 'students'; they are not concerned with 'patients'. The base from which they operate is education not medicine and their role falls within the function of the teacher not the doctor, psychiatrist or therapist. By excluding certain areas from our definition we are nevertheless left with a still imprecise term and one which is susceptible to confusion and misunderstanding. we must define the base for the counsellor and the student/client.

I have argued elsewhere that the counselling function is one of mediation between the student and the system.[1] In a large and complex civilisation, such as our own, there is no possibility of a personal relationship between the individual and those who stand for the religious and secular authorities. There is a gulf between the authority, which is often referred to as the 'system', the 'bureaucracy' or in other perjorative terms, and the individual. The gulf arises because of a natural and perhaps inevitable tendency for the authority and the individual to look at the same problem from opposite ends of the spectrum. The authority does not and perhaps cannot see the individual; it sees only a mass although, if it is really discerning, it will also see divisions and perhaps even sub-divisions in the mass. The individuals, looking from the opposite end of the spectrum, see themselves first and foremost and the problems arising from their own relationship with a particular system. They might also identify themselves with a group who have similar relationships but will nevertheless be aware that each of them has a unique relationship with the system since each is influenced and constrained by a unique personal, domestic, social and work background.

Distance education almost by definition, implies a separation between the system and the students for which some bridge is needed. Such a bridge or mediating function may be provided in a number of ways. The institution may employ full-time counsellors who are professionally trained. This seemingly attractive option has, however, a number of drawbacks. Students in distance education are often widely dispersed and the full-time counsellor might not be able to establish a personal relationship with students which arises so easily from even a single face-to-face meeting, supplemented by telephone and correspondence contacts and perhaps solely composed of these latter after an initial meeting. Moreover, the cost of full-time counsellors can pose major disadvantages in a system of education so often closely connected with cost-effectiveness since case loads for counsellors must be limited if they are to establish viable relationships. A further source of counselling on the part of full-time staff may arise from the requirement for other full-time staff, normally academics but possibly also administrators, to act as counsellors for a portion of their time. While such an option provides a secure locus for counselling, closely related to other activities of the institution, it also presents operational and economic problems in terms of the numbers of counsellors and students as well as setting up tensions in the staff themselves between the requirements of two possibly conflicting elements in their job specification in one function of which, normally that of counsellor, they have little or no professional training. The other regular source of counselling is through the medium of part-time staff acting in a counselling capacity which may or may not be related to a teaching function and may or may not therefore contain the inherent conflict referred to above. Such staff establish rapport with students normally on a local basis. They thus offer a facility for contact at a face-to-face level should this be required. Being part-time, they are economic in institutional terms and can be employed in numbers such that a viable caseload of students can be allocated to them. Part-time counsellors have a further advantage which in many ways is of greater importance than any of these other elements. This arises from their relationship with the institution and the perception of this relationship on the part of their students. The primary concern of intermediaries of this sort is not for the

8

system itself but rather for the individuals whom they seek to represent to such an extent that they force the system to take cognisance of the needs of the individual. Yet they are the employees of the institution and this very fact can be a barrier to rapport and trust on the part of the individuals. The link between part-time staff and the institution is much more tenuous than for full-time staff and it is undoubtedly the case that this can facilitate the establishment of a relationship since the counsellor appears in a less formal, less institutional and therefore less threatening guise. The effectiveness of part-time counsellors depends, however, to no small extent, on the training and supervision which they receive.

The counselling function in distance education can be sub-divided into four related broad areas:- referral, vocational, information provision, coping with personal study problems.

Before attempting to discuss these broad areas it would perhaps be advantageous to go back to our previous definition of counselling as advice and support to students, not patients. It is possible to over-simplify the situation by the stark juxtaposition of education and medicine but we must recognise that there is a whole gamut of individual problems which do not fall neatly under either of these headings. In all education the students' learning relationship with the institution has to be seen in the context of their general work, social and domestic environment. In the traditional forms of primary, secondary and higher education, this wider context of home and work, although it can embrace extreme variations, is normally quite narrowly circumscribed with the individuals concerned having a relatively simple social and domestic environment, particularly at primary and secondary level but usually also at the tertiary level. The same is not true in distance education and particularly the distance education of adults. Conventional students exist within a highly artificial and wholly supportive framework. For most of them their study is one stage in a continuous linear development which began at the age of 4 or 5 and embraces the best part of their first two decades. The infant class and the university tutorial group are generically similar in offering a group learning situation with face-to-face teacher/student contact and the concomitant instant feedback of an oral and visual nature. The group leaning situation itself supports the learning process not only because of the interaction between students in relation to their course of study - learning through discussion with one's peers - but also because such learning offers to individual members of the group a benchmark against which they can assess themselves. The benchmark is not the teacher whose knowledge might appear from time to time beyond the reach of the students but rather some datum point arrived at in relation to the learning demonstrated by the group. Moreover, the conventional students are normally learning within a wholly supportive domestic and social environment which exempts them from the pressures of much decision-making and the anxieties of competing claims on their time.

For the adult student in higher education, the situation is wholly different. Often they are returning to study after a hiatus of many years and their memories of learning are somewhat clouded. In any case, their perception of previous learning bears little resemblance to the entirely novel methods which they have to face in distance education. They have an experience of life and work and hence a framework into which their new learning has to be set. Often, of course, their new learning will not fit their experience in any way and extensive adjustments have to be made. In many instances, the adult students learning at a distance are engaged in part-time study and their work and families come before or even stand in the way of their commitment to study. It is simply not open to them to devote themselves with single purpose in the manner of a conventional student to learning. Moreover, the swift feedback available to the conventional student in the face-to-face learning environment is not open to them on a regular basis, if at all, and the supportive atmosphere of the peer-group together with the benchmark of achievement and, deriving from this the maintenance of the individual's confidence, is lacking.

9

Thus the counselling support services required for adult students learning at a distance are very different from those which exist in traditional teaching and because such adults are studying in the context of a broader domestic, social and work environment, a definition of the institution's support services is so much the more difficult albeit so much the more necessary.

I have, therefore, headed this list of functional definitions of counselling with referral since it is first and foremost the nettle to be grasped for any distance education institution in setting up a counselling service. Few would gainsay the fact that no distance education provider can set itself up as a 'total institution' offering complete support services on all aspects of individual student needs. Each institution must delimit and proscribe its objectives in the counselling function even if this cannot be done with strict precision and is susceptible of subjective interpretation in relation to its counselling force.

For the institution, the locus of its support service must be the students' learning. Since this learning takes place in the context of the students' broader environment, the institution must draw boundaries and these are bound to appear arbitrary from time-to-time. To a greater or lesser extent, any problem which arises for students, be it academic, social, domestic or work-related, has an impact upon the students' performance and might therefore be of interest and concern to the institution in its attempts to support the individual's study. But the distance education institution is not and cannot be a 'total institution' and hence it will need to refer its adult clients to a whole range of agencies which might more appropriately deal with what appears to be the central core of the particular problem. It is, therefore, in this area that the briefing and training of counselling staff - and in particular of part-time counselling staff if this is the medium used by the distance education institution - is of particular importance and can be so crucial for the student's success. Mediators must not appear unsympathetic or uninterested in the student's problems and yet they must be able to redirect these problems to another source which is likely to prove more profitable for the student.

The second broad area I referred to was 'vocational' and within this I embrace the individual's education and career planning. Assistance and advice to the student is available from a number of areas in this context. In many cases it may originate from the family, from work or from friends. In others, it may originate from professional agencies which exist in this or related fields. While referral to a specialist agency might be the ultimate act of the counselling function in the distance education system, there is a prior and major requirement for initial analysis of the problem solely within the context of the individual's studentship.

Studies in many parts of the world have shown that a major incentive to adult study and a major initial motivating force in their wish to study is that of career advancement. Most students, it would appear, hope that through their study they will obtain a job, win advancement in their present occupation or be able to change their occupation. However, only in a very few areas such as medicine and dentistry does the direct link between education and a specific career exist and for adult students this is even more true. There is, therefore, for the institution an obligation to interpret for the student the widespread expectation of occupational goals in the context of the educational provision of the institution.

In attempting to offer an individual support service to its students, the provision of information through its counselling service is a matter of high priority and it is in this context that the role of the counsellor as intermediary between the student and the institution becomes prominent. The institution will seek to publicise its educational programme and hence to get people to participate in this programme. It will tend to see this programme very narrowly and through rosy tinted spectacles since the programme is the culmination of an internal debate in the institution as to its best possible provision for students. It will

10

naturally see its programme as better that that offered elsewhere and will project information with the normal advertising blandishments and enticements. The function of the counsellor is to provide this information in an impartial manner to the students and assist them to use such information to plan their further education.

I come finally to the fourth function of counselling, namely coping with personal study problems. To some extent, this might be seen as generically different from the other three. Its compass is certainly wider, it is more subjective and it is the raison d'etre for the original concept of mediation. Here counsellors must appear as friend, informed friend and advisor. They must be close enough to the student to have a thorough knowledge of the student's domestic, work and study circumstances and such a requirement is a reflection on the case loading which can be given to them. Their value to the students lies in their having achieved a mutual trust and affinity while standing outside as impartial but sympathetic and above all informed advisors.

For the institution too, there is a requirement of trust, namely that having briefed and trained its counsellors to the best of its ability, they will fulfil their independent function. The institution has little or no control over the relationship of the student to the intermediary and vice versa once the relationship has been established. But it does have a control over the relationship between itself and the intermediary. It can provide the intermediary with the most up-to-date information on the student's progress as recorded on its files and it can also use the intermediary's assessement of the student to determine its formal response to a student. It is in this area of institution/counsellor relationships that there appears to me to be most room for further development. While paying lip service to the dictum that decisions are best made as close to the individual student as possible and by the person with the widest and deepest knowledge of the problem from all sides, most institutions nevertheless are loathe to establish a practice which makes this a reality. The desire for central and institutional decision-making can be defended on the grounds of the national and perhaps international face of the institution, the equality of its treatment for all its students, the maintenance of academic standards and many other equally laudable grounds. Against this must be set the individual student's circumstances. Whether we like it or not, since students are individuals, all decisions taken about them are in one sense totally unprecedented and perhaps should be presented as unique decisions taken against the fixed background of the institution and in the light of the personal circumstances of one student.

1. D.Sewart, Continuity of Concern for Students in a System of Learning at a Distance, Zentrales Institut für Fernstudienforschung, Papiere 22, Hagen 1978 and Distance Teaching: A Contradiction in Terms?, *Teaching at a Distance,* 19, 1981.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION   Roger Lewis

In this paper I cover the following issues:

. what is involved in 'counselling' in the sense in which distance
  teaching organisations customarily use the word?

. what problems have we still not solved even after several years'
  experience of providing counselling to distance learners, and how
  can we solve them by working co-operatively with one another?

WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

This word 'counselling'. I have always felt it a handicap that we
distance educators have been unable to come up with another word. We are,
first, open to attack from the profession of counselling. The profession-
alisation of 'care' has inevitably meant that boundaries have been created
to define 'counselling' and specialist skills have been identified for
which aspirants to counsel need training. So 'counselling' has been turned
into a very special activity with a mystique all of its own.

In distance learning professional counsellors are few and far between.
We rely on other kinds of people, mainly tutors, to create a caring and
supportive context within which distance learners can work. But these
very staff are often themselves inhibited by the formidable term 'counselling'.

A recent report comments

> The term, 'counselling' seems to cause [such staff]
> much confusion

and goes on to add, rather ingenuously,

> one wonders whether this is rooted in the connotations
> this term has of 'professional' skills and expertise.   (1)

What distance teaching organisations mean by 'counselling' is usually
close to the way in which the Open University defines the term in its

early statements. These are still refreshingly positive and clear. The
'educational counsellor' has to occupy 'the centre of the teaching and
learning process'. (2)

More recently the counsellor has been described as 'a friend on whose warm
sympathy the student can rely'.   (3)

Many similar quotations could be adduced and they help to distinguish
counselling as it operates in distance learning from the counselling
offered by the new professionals. Significantly, scheme after scheme
of open learning has defined a need for just the kind of activity as
defined by the Open University. (4) What all these schemes are talking
about is the importance of creating and sustaining normal processes of
communication between teachers and learners, learners and learners and
administrators and learners. These processes <u>support</u> the distance
learner on entry to the particular system and throughout his or her
study in it. The report quoted earlier distinguishes 'support' from
'guidance' (see (1)); support is

>   a more general and ongoing form of relationship
>   making ... people feel valued....   (5)

It is not so much 'counselling' as 'befriending' the student. One way
of looking at this role is to place it as intermediate between the formal
framework of the institution on the one hand and the very informal networks
of family/friends at the other. It is a role that has been most developed
in the area of young adult support where it is variously called 'working
coach', 'jobmate' or 'godfather'. A 'godfather', for example, is an
ordinary worker who takes responsibility for one or two trainees, is
independent of the management structure and who meets the trainee
informally. As the previously quoted report says, this represents

> an interesting attempt to separate guidance and
> support roles from supervisory roles... yet
> without creating any 'professional' aura around
> them.   (6)

Interestingly, such a role is being built into new distance learning

schemes in the textile industry and it is similar to the OU counsellor's

role as it originally operated.

What skills does such a person need when supporting learners in distance

and open learning schemes? First, the skills of a befriender (if these

are in fact 'skills') and, secondly, the ability to activate those

parts of the learner's world which could themselves perform a support

function - e.g. family and friends. We can add the ability to help the

learner through the system, particularly as many distance learning systems

are complex - though fortunately not all are quite as intricate as the

OU! The supporter needs to know when to refer a learner and to whom.

All these processes also have to be managed largely by distance means -

support by telephone and letter. Experience suggests that some supporters

find it difficult to use these media to the full, for this purpose. (7)

WHAT OTHER PROBLEMS MUST WE SOLVE?

There are other tasks too but these are too onerous to put onto the

shoulders of supporters. They are priorities of the system as a whole.

Most distance learning organisations claim, for example, that they are

seeking to build up the learners' autonomy, to free the learner from

dependence on teachers and on compulsive study habits. Yet there is

disturbing evidence, and not just from the pages of Sesame, that this

isn't happening. Students still seem too dependent on the system and want

to push it towards a more conventional 'teaching' role. (8)

Another often quoted aim of distance learning organisations is to help

students to create small learning cells, or 'self help groups', to foster

the interdependence that can be so important in learning and that can

itself help learners to become <u>independent</u>. But in spite of the efforts of
many organisations this still seems to be a pipe dream, an unrealised
ambition. Schemes like the Open University and FlexiStudy admit that
self-help groups are patchy and infrequent with the clientele opting
for a tutor dominated approach, where this is possible, because this is
more familiar and less demanding.

Yet one of our priorities should still be to create a

>   small-scale, non-formal pattern of tiny modules at
>   street or house level... cosy...homely education...
>   a network of learning co-operations.   (9)

Eric Midwinter, speaking of the education of the elderly rightly points out
that

>   the challenge to the professional educator over the
>   next ten or twenty years will be to establish... such
>   a system on a massive scale.   (10)

These failures to create both autonomy and student interaction have arisen
because we have not really tried hard enough, with enough belief in
ourselves and what we are offering, to shift student perspectives and
priorities. Nor have we convinced our part-time staff who still, of
course, by and large see themselves as teachers rather than as supporters
and who are 'at home' in more conventional learning frameworks. There
is an enormous training problem which most of us still have to face.
But the problem is how do you 'train' staff to be 'ordinary' and how do
you train people who don't think they need any training because they
don't see their role as a problematic one? The role Midwinter outlines -

>   helping members [of self-help groups] with the simpler
>   tutorial methods and generally raising and maintaining
>   morale   (11)

will not eagerly be adopted by most of our part-time staff because it
underplays their own role as professional 'teachers'.

HOW CAN WE CO-OPERATE TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS?

Perhaps we should first ask: 'What has kept us apart for so long?' We have perhaps felt ourselves small and vulnerable (this is changing); distance learning has been run by academics (this is changing, e.g. with Open Tech); we have taken pride in our own institutions and have sometimes set up barriers between 'us' and 'them' and we have, simply, been engrossed in our own immediate problems and priorities, in keeping our own systems going from day to day.

What can we do together? Here are some ideas:

(1) allow institution B to use the framework of institution A when appropriate (and vice versa), (e.g. students of correspondence college A can use the advice and guidance system of university B)

A pilot project was planned jointly by the National Extension College and the Open University but postponed through lack of funding. The scattered distance learners of NEC would have gained access to the OU's network of advisory counsellors. Another possibility currently under discussion in the UK is to establish a national network of 'support centres'. Whatever their subject of study, learners could contact a source of general advice and support near at hand, located in a college, a library, a firm or some other institution. Could these or similar schemes be piloted?

(2) produce a training programme to produce supporters of the kind outlined above.

If the argument of this paper is accepted then we as distance educators are in a position to define the skills and capacities needed by supporters. These would be generalisible across our

institutions. We could go on to agree jointly a training programme which would select and equip individuals from a variety of judgments to act as supporters. We could probably also involve institutions other than those in distance learning which also need such people, e.g. MSC youth training schemes, and various voluntary oranisations.

(3) work at existing induction packages (12) and perhaps put together an inter-institution version.

Several organisations have produced these packages and there is already an apparent overlap. But as far as I know there is little evaluation of the success of the packages and of their accept-ability to tutors and students. Yet there would seem a strong case for packaged support for both tutors and students to supplement and direct other forms of contract. Again, we have this need in common, and should be able to produce something of use to us all.

(4) identify successful self-help groups and produce case studies which show how a variety of institutions might establish more of these.

Successful groups do exist and can be found. Again if this paper is accepted then readers will agree that there are generablisible lessons to be learned from a study of such groups. What are the keys to success? What is the role of the professional in helping to set them up?

(5) describe and promote schemes which have made significant use of non-professional supporters.

Alan Tough (13) found that non professionals have a far greater

influence than professionals in helping individuals to plan and carry out changes in life style. But professionals can orchestrate and build on the work of non-professionals. How have distance teaching organisations used non-professionals and, again, what are the keys to success?

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(1) Knasel, Edward G., Watts, A.G. and Kidd, Jennifer M. 'The benefit of experience: individual guidance and support within the Youth Opportunities Programme. MSC Research and Development Series No. 5, 1982. This report deals with guidance and support for young adults in employment but in many ways the context is identical with open learning.

(2) 'Teaching for the Open University'. The Open University, 1977.

(3) Sewart, D. 'Continuity of concern for students in a system of learning at a distance'. Paper presented at a conference at Fernuniversitat, 1978.

(4) For instance, in the UK, FlexiStudy, Dundee College of Education, BP Chemicals, Cotton and Textiles, Open Tech, N.E. Wales open learning scheme in sociology.

(5) As for (1). Page 5

(6) As for (1). Page 51

(7) See, for example: Lewis, R. 'Counselling in open learning: a case
   study' (NEC, 1980), and 'How to tutor in an open learning scheme'
   (CET, 1981). The Scottish region of the Open University is
   currently working on a training package which includes a section
   on counselling by telephone.

(8) Two interesting examples are:

   (a) Students' failure to use correspondence texts flexibly
       (see Brew, A. and Batten, M.A. 'Levels of thinking and Open
       University study'. Teaching at a distance No. 20, OU, 1981)

   (b) Students manipulating tutors into a formal role in tutorials
       (see Murgatroyd, S. 'What actually happens in tutorials?'.
       Teaching at a distance No. 18, OU, 1980.

(9) Midwinter, E. 'Age is opportunity: education for older people'.
   Centre for Policy on Ageing, 1982.

(10) As for (9)

(11) As for (9) . Page 80

(12) Examples: several in the Open University (central and regional),
     e.g. 'First steps', 'Getting started'; the Deakin City Package;
     NEC's'Student's Guide to FlexiStudy'.

(13) Tough, A. 'Intentional   changes. A Fresh approach to helping
     people change'. Follett, 1982.

COUNSELLING: DEFINING THE FIELD   Nigel Paine

July 1983

The aims of this paper are:

To examine the basic functions of a Tutor in distance education and outline
which of these functions can be classified as counselling.

To examine counselling activities from the student's viewpoint.
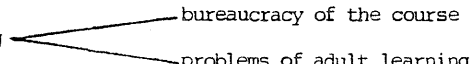
To debate whether Tutoring and Counselling are specialised and discrete
activities undertaken by different professional staff, or are they linked
enough to be covered by one staff member.

The Different Kinds of Counselling

The term 'counselling' is not a clearly defined word and has been muddled
even further in the distance learning context by its association with
professional counsellors or professional support.

Given that inbuilt confusion there are at least three separate areas where
counselling activities often take place:

Pre-course counselling: Finding the most appropriate course for a potential
student.
                                        bureaucracy of the course
In course counselling
                                        problems of adult learning

Post-course counselling: where to next.

The first category, can and often is undertaken by a specialist who directs
students into and out of particular courses.   Any failures at this end ought
to be picked up by the course Tutor in the early stages of the course.

The later category could be undertaken by a specialist but is often left to
the Tutor to conduct informally.

The in-course counselling can be Tutor or Counsellor led.

We can divide up a matrix to cover the skills required for each type of
counselling function:

Skills

Ability to articulate a student's needs	P I A	P = Pre course counselling I = In-course counselling A = Post course counselling
Knowledge of alternative courses	P(I)A	( ) Useful but not essential
Knowledge of support or introductory courses	P I	
Ability to match need with course	P(I)A	
Knowledge of the bureacracy of course application and enrolment	P	
Sympathy for student	P I A	
Listening skills	P I A	
Ability to differentiate between study problems and personal problems	I	
Desire to respond to student's problems quickly and efficiently	P I A	
Knowledge of the regulations governing students	I(A)	
Knowledge of possible career options	(I)A	
Wider course knowledge than own subject specialism	(P)(I)A	

Hardly any of the skills are exclusive to one kind of counselling and the in-course role requires more skills than either of the other two more specialist roles.

We can further divide up the skills into:

a) Skills requiring formal knowledge of the course bureaucracy.

b) Skills requiring general knowledge of available courses.

c) Skills based on students' learning needs and problems.

a) & b) are cognitive c) more affective.

An open learning system (of which distance education as a subset) can be catagorised into three overlapping areas:
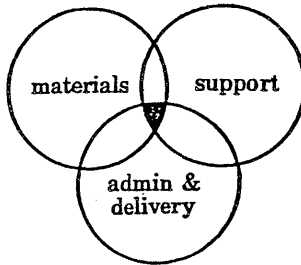
At the point of intersection lies the open learning system. Using this model it is clear that the kind of materials produced will dictate the type of support offered; and the nature of the materials will determine the delivery and this in turn affects support etc.

The crucial element is the interrelatedness of the model and the changing roles that imposes on support and delivery for any given system. There are, therefore,no hard and fast rules about what you must and must not do within the support system. Several fairly crucial guidelines have emerged that apply to wide variety of systems including distance learning systems:

1. Support must include both Tutoring and Counselling.
2. Suitable pre-course counselling can minimise early drop-out in courses.
3. Students need a lot of support shortly after beginning a course up to the cut off date of the first assignment.

4. There appears to be another hiatus mid way through the course, and a final sensitive time prior to examination.

5. Good tutoring and support can make up for questionable materials but bad tutoring will undermine the best materials.

6. Regular contact with students helps maintain course momentum.

7. Face to face sessions with Tutor and follow students can be highly stimulating and motivating.

8. If face to face is impossible, telephone tuition individually or via conference calls is a good substitute.

9. Surrogate Tutor support such as computer analysis and computer generated comments work well when well designed.

These points lead to the inevitable conclusion that:

a) Tutoring at a distance is not the same as college based tutorial work. It inevitably includes an element of counselling.

b) Tutoring and Counselling skills at a distance can be taught.

c) Tutoring at a distance does not only consist of marking and commenting although this forms a part of the role, even this clearly defined Tutor role can have a counselling element.

Given the umbrella concept of support rather than the specific role of marking and commenting, new kinds of support have emerged which displace the emphasis on marking and commenting and which reflect student need. These include:

1. Taped 'help' sequences to cover difficulties in materials.
2. A taped progress report to students.
3. Telephone discussion of poor grades.
4. An emphasis on a student's strengths rather than on a student's weaknesses.

If you assume from the start that any Tutor will also be a counsellor, this can be built into the criteria for staff selection and can also be built into in-service training.

If we return to the matrix that opened the paper, the question is where to draw the parameters for a counselling role, and when to hand over to an appropriate specialist with the required information.

Case Studies

Many apparently counselling problems simply mask an academic problem.

"I just do not have time for the course, the kids are making it impossible to study. I might as well give up the course".

This could be literally true and the counsellor could advise:

a) Some careful study-time planning.
b) Postponement of the course for a period of time.
c) A slower rate of course progress.

But it could equally well mask a general lack of understanding or a fundamental fear of the work involved. Here tutorial support rather than counselling would be necessary. A Tutor/Counsellor could shift roles as appropriate. The separate functions might well fail to get to the root of the problems.

As a general rule of thumb, I asked my Open University students if they had been in touch with their Counsellor this academic year. None had. Some (4 out of 9 present) had not been in touch with him/her since foundation year (4 or 5 year previously in one instance).

Most of these students had come to me within the first three months with what were strictly non-academic problems which included:

(1) Problems with summer school attendance.

(2) Lack of confidence in student's ability to complete the course.

(3) Pressure at work leading to the student falling behind with the course.

(4) Suggestions for other courses.

(5) Lack of motivation and interest.

(6) Study skills problems.

These were picked up and dealt with as part of the normal process of Tutoring. An assumption that my role was only that of Tutor on both my and the student's part would have significantly increased student unease and possibly drop-out.

Within every distance learning course (excluding most commercial correspondence colleges) there is the assumption within the United Kingdom that Tutoring is an abbreviation for Tutor/Counselling. The most widely used package for Tutor training is Roger Lewis' How to Tutor in an Open Learing System (CET 1981). This has a section entitled the Counselling Role of the Tutor. This includes a key question:

"What problems might open-learners experience which make 'advice, help and support' necessary?"

In Kaye and Rumble's <u>Distance Teaching for Higher and Adult Education</u>, Bernadette Robinson begins the chapter on support with:

"A vital element in any distance-education project is the nature of the support services available to students." (p 141).

There is an inbuilt assumption that the support, help and advice side of Tutoring complements the academic role. Regardless of whether the word counsellor is used in the job description, a Tutor will be inevitably called upon in a counselling role. This can be heightened by a degree of Tutor training and an acceptance of the interventionist role of the Tutor.

Many traditional correspondence courses operate exclusively on a student initiated basis. An assignment triggers a response and often the next batch of units. No contact from the student and the response system remains dumb.

There are three key interventionist periods in the OU academic year: at the start of the course, during conditional registration when the student chooses courses for the following session, and at year's end. I have flagged up one or two others for equally strenous attention. (see page 3)

Contact can take the form of a letter, telephone call as well as a face-to-face meeting. If the Tutor fails to make the first move, rarely will the student initiate any contact at all.

It is remarkable how many bottled up problems come pouring out when a non-urgent, enquiry phone call is made:

"I am glad you phoned. I have really got stuck with the Assignment."

"I was just on the point of withdrawing from the course; it really is too much for me."

"Now you are on the phone, can you help me with a problem regarding next year's course?"

"Do you honestly think I am going to pass this course or should I give up now?"

The Student's Perspective

Dundee College of Education have been running a postgraduate Diploma in
Educational Technology by distance learning for seven years. In the first
year, there were no cut-off date for assignments, only student initiated contact
with Tutors and the whole course was designed for the students to pace themselves
and sustain their own workload. The drop out was massive. Over these last five
years a number of changes have taken place:

(1) Cut off dates are strongly recommended (not enforced).

(2) An increased minimum workload in a year has been laid down.

(3) Tutor/Student contact is kept at a minimum of one contact per month.

The result has been the practical elimination of drop out (6%-7%) and a faster
completion rate of the course. All the students questioned about the course have
responded positively to the idea of pressure imposed from outside; and regular
non-urgent tutor/student contact carried out is an informal way. This carries on
right through the summer when lecturing staff are – in theory – on leave.

Here the tutor stays with the student throughout his/her career, and will mark
all the assignments for one student intake in rotation with other staff. A
marked assignment is followed by a tutor's comments, no college/student contact
occurs without notification of the tutor, and a tutor almost always acts as
supervisor for the student's major project.

Students I have talked to see the Tutor's role to get a student through the course,
and this will encompass both academic marking and commenting as well as coping
with other bureaucratic or personal problems. A tutor is often the Mr./Ms.
Fixit with the system itself. This personal contact does not overlap in the
student's mind with the Tutor's task of grading and imposing academic standards.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) All Tutors have a counselling role.

(2) This should be acknowledged in tutor training programmes.

(3) Interventionist tutoring is essential.

(4) Contact can be in a variety of forms, none of which is particularly more effective than any other.

(5) Timing and therefore payments of tutors should acknowledge this duel role.

(6) There is no contradiction or conflict perceived by students between a tutor's grading role and his/her counselling role.

(7) Efficient counselling has a marked effect on minimising drop out.

(8) Good tutor/counselling is necessary to make effective use of learning materials.

SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

COUNTRY PAPER: MALAWI   Meria Khembo

Centralised and Localised Counselling with Particular Reference to Malawi Correspondence College and Broadcasting Unit

Education System in Malawi

Eight years of Primary School, four years of Secondary School, and two to six years of post-secondary schooling is available in Malawi.

The language of instruction for the first five years of primary school is Chichewa. From the sixth year forward, it is English.

Need for Correspondence Education in Malawi

Even before Independence, the number of students receiving the Primary School Leaving Certificate PSLC) was as high as 18,000 and expected to continue rising. The country's secondary schools could only accommodate about 3,500. Two possible alternatives to alleviate the problem were studied: More secondary schools could be built and a crash programme mounted to increase the number of qualified teachers or secondary education could be offered through correspondence. The latter alternative seemed the most realistic. Correspondence education had been successful in other countries, notably Australia and New Zealand. It could also be organised and implemented more quickly. The first alternative would have needed a vast expenditure of time and money to become a reality. Following necessary surveys and consultancies, the Malawi Correspondence College (MCC) was established in 1965 with an opening enrolment of 1,178.

Initially, the College was to cater for Junior Certificate students and had the following staff:

> Principal
> Deputy Principal (Maths Tutor)
> 10 Tutors (subject specialists) and
> 13 Part-time Tutors (Tutor-Markers).

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The annual enrolment has grown to 8,500 and the staffing position has similarly increased to 106 which includes one Student Advisor. Courses offered now are Primary School Leaving Certificate, Junior Certificate, Malawi Certificate of Education and Teacher Upgrading.

A.   Objectives:
1.   To provide opportunities for secondary education to a majority of Primary School leavers who were not selected for formal secondary schools.

2.   To enable adults or those who missed the normal opportunities to reach or complete certain levels of education.

3.   To provide alternative educational opportunities and therefore prevent a drain of funds to outside countries.

4.   To provide in-service training to Primary School teachers.

5.   To enrich secondary and teacher education materials through provision of radio programmes and support materials.

B.   Activities of the College

From its establishment the College has been responsible for writing courses or commissioning writers, recruiting part-time editors and markers, typing and printing the lessons, enrolling students and tutoring them, producing radio programmes and inspection of both study centres and night secondary schools. It offers a variety of courses:

1.   Primary School Leaving Course

One year course for both pupils and adults who have completed seven years of primary school work to enable them to obtain a Primary School Leaving Certificate; and if possible to continue their education by enrolling for a Junior Certificate Course.

3.

2. Junior Certificate Course
   A two-year course for people who passed the P.S.L.
   examination but were not selected for normal seco-
   ndary school because of limited places or were not
   able to continue up to this level because of
   financial setbacks and other personal reasons. The
   majority of our students study this course.

3. Malawi Certificate of Education Course
   A two-year course offered to Junior Certificate
   holders. These are the people who were not selected
   for senior secondary school because of low pass
   grades.

4. Teacher Upgrading Courses
   These are two courses each of one year offered to
   qualified primary school teachers:

   (a) T4 - T3 Course: for teachers with a P.S.L.
        Certificate plus two years of teacher
        training.

   (b) T3 - T2 Course: for teachers with a Junior
        Certificate plus two years of teacher
        training.

For teachers in group (a) to be enrolled, they must pass
a Junior Certificate Course and have at least three years
teaching experience. For teachers in group (b) to be
enrolled, they must pass at least four subjects including
English at 'O' level plus three years teaching experience.

C. Counselling: Centralised and Localised with Special
   Reference to Malawi Correspondence College and
   Broadcasting Unit

   1. Centralised Counselling - Enrolment Periods, Test
      Marking, Regional Centres, Printed Lessons and
      Broadcasts.

(a) Enrolment Periods

From the Malawi Correspondence College Head-
quarters in Blantyre the general public is
informed of enrolment dates and procedures
through posters, the Daily Times, the Malawi
News and the radio (the Mass Media). Prospec-
tuses and enrolment forms and other information
sheets are distributed to District Education
offices, Night Secondary Schools, Centres,
Ministry of Education and Culture Headquarters
and to heads of Primary Schools.

Prospective students collect enrolment forms
from these offices. The people who cannot
follow the necessary instructions can either
call in person or use the telephone to get
clarification from the Malawi Correspondence
College. When a student is enrolled, hand-outs
on how to study, how to pay fees and sets
(printed lessons) are given out. Where a student
is unable to choose subjects to study or would
like to study two or three subjects and is not
sure which three to choose or start with, the
Student Advisor is approached for guidance.

(b) Test Marking

Enrolled students' assignments are of two types.
Self-marking exercises and tutor-marked assign-
ments called tests. Students at Centres and
Night Secondary Schools may get assistance from
the teacher-supervisors and fellow pupils if
they have problems with the self-marking exer-
cises. Home study students refer any problems
they have with the self-marking exercises to the
appropriate tutors at the College.

When a student writes a test (a tutor-marked
exercise) he submits it to the College where

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it is sorted out, put in an appropriate tutor-
marker pegion-hole ready for delivery and postage
to the tutor-markers on Friday. The tutor-marker's
responsibility is to mark students' work and assist
them to understand areas of difficulty. The
tutoring part requires the tutor-markers to give
proper guidance to the student, referring the
student to an appropriate lesson and giving some
explanatory notes which will enable the student
to understand. Since February this year, tutor-
markers write letters to students, Teachers-in-
Charge of Centres and to the College. The letter
of encouragement may be written to a student,
whilst to the Teachers-in-Charge letters may be
written when they delay to submit students' tutor-
marked tests; also for general remarks on weakness,
approach to particular questions by the whole
group. To the College, tutor-markers write to
highlight problems with a particular test or quest-
ion, faulty answer guides; and they may even comment
on the subject content. This is easily done through
an Evaluation Form which markers fill in with each
batch of tests they receive. The tutor-markers role
as academic counsellors is therefore a very impor-
tant one as they are the main communicators to
students, teacher-supervisors of Centres, Night
Secondary Schools and College tutors. They are a
link to the people involved in the Distance Teaching
System.

(c) Regional Centres/Offices

Plans are under way to establish Regional Offices
which will be responsible for regional administra-
tion, enrolment and counselling. Through these
offices, the relationship with District Education
Officers will be improved. This is a necessary
development as these District and Regional Officers
are likely to define the needs of the people in

the area and this information will enable the
College to develop new and relevant courses.

(d) Centres and Night Secondary Schools
Students enrolled at the Malawi Correspondence
College in Primary School Certificate, Junior
Certificate and Malawi Certificate of Education
who wish to supplement the sets and broadcasts
with face to face tuition have two options. If
they are of school-going age, they may join an
M.C.C. Centre where they would receive help from
qualified Primary School teachers for about five
hours a day. If students are adults or working,
they may attend Night Secondary Schools for about
two hours during late afternoons or early evenings.
Night Secondary Schools operate in secondary schools
and mostly use secondary school teachers.

Role of Teacher/Supervisors in Centres
and Night Secondary Schools

The teacher/supervisors have a dual role to play -
Academic Counselling and General Counselling. As
academic counsellors, the teacher/supervisors are
responsible for solving pupils' academic problems
within the Centre or Night Secondary School. They
are also responsible for organising study programmes,
drawing up teaching and studying time-tables and
guiding pupils to study effectively by actually
breaking the printed lessons into units of study
per day. Examination techniques are also taught
by the teacher/supervisors by actually administering
the tests through examination conditions.

Since these teacher/supervisors are available at
Centres and Night Secondary Schools every day,
they are also responsible for general counselling.
They are, especially the Heads, responsible for
solving individual pupil's problems and referring

7.

some to the appropriate authorities; for instance,
District Education Officers, if a certain pupil's
bursary has been delayed. Pupils who cannot
afford to pay the boarding fees may be advised
by these teacher/supervisors to become self-
boarders; where a school committee is available
this type of problem is referred to them, and
the school committee may also be responsible
for advising pupils on how to stay in the
boarding. At times, Heads of Centres and Night
Secondary Schools guide pupils in choosing
subjects to study. This is only possible where
a pupil approaches the Centre or Night School
Head before he is enrooled with the College.

D. Media

In view of the various descriptive words associated with
counselling i.e. information giving, guidance, counselling
per se, and therapy, student counselling at the Malawi
Correspondence College and Broadcasting Unit is generally
done through the following ways:

1. Personal Contact

This is especially true during the enrolment periods.
Prospective students call in at the Malawi Correspo-
ndence College Headquarters, at the Ministry of
Education and Culture, at District Education Offices,
in Centres and Night Secondary Schools to receive
personal advice on how/when to enrol. After enrol-
ment, students at Centres and Night Secondary Schools
depend mainly on teacher/supervisors guidance and
rarely refer problems to the College. Problems to do
with receipts and sets are always referred to the
College. Home study students can also receive
personal advice if they call at the College and see
an appropriate person.

2.   The Postal Service (Letters)

Although no proper evaluation has been done,
counselling through letters is quite common.
Tutors, Producers and the Student Advisor
respond to students' queries, questions, etc,
through the postal service quite a lot.

3.   The Radio

At times, general problems are, apart from
receiving individual attention, broadcast on the
schools programmes to benefit a larger audience.

4.   The Telephone

A few pupils, especially those within cities and
the employed class, use the telephone service
which provides them with an immediate answer or
necessary information or solution to their
problems.

5.   The Print (Sets)

Every first lesson (set) has information advising
students to write to the College tutors whenever
they have problems. They are further advised to
give the following important information when
writing: Subject, Set, Page Number and above all,
to state the problem or problems they face.

E.   How Counselling Roles to Malawi Correspondence Students
are Distributed

Four categories of people are involved. Their roles,
however, tend to overlap and this is good, for through
overlaps, certain points or issues are emphasised.

Counselling of students is done by the following people:

Tutor-Markers
Subject Officers

/9...........

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Teacher/Supervisors
Student Advisor and the
Ministry of Education and Culture

1. Tutor-Markers

Following a recent Tutor-Markers seminar and
the published Tutor-Markers Handbook, the role
of the Tutor-Marker has been defined in order
to improve their competence in handling, espe-
cially, academic problems. Tutor-Markers are
the direct pupils' assessors, academic advisors
and people through whom the College receives
feed-back on pupils' performance and the effecti-
veness of sets. The Tutor-Markers are therefore
a main link between the College and the students.
As a link, they communicate the necessary infor-
mation to the College Tutors, Teacher/Supervisors
and the students themselves. Tutor-Markers
communicate with the pupils through letters,
tutoring (marking) and friendly constructive
comments. They portray the College face.

2. Subject Officers

They are responsible for writing courses and
responding to all academic problems submitted
by pupils and Teacher/Supervisors. They offer
advice to pupils on how to study specific courses
and how to present problems to College Tutors.
This information is provided on the first page
of the set (lesson). Subject officers can
therefore be seen as main teachers who teach
through printed lessons. They have an important
role in enabling pupils to improve their academic
qualifications by passing government examinations.

3. Teacher-Supervisors

They are responsible for solving pupils' academic
and general problems within their scope; they
refer major problems to appropriate officers at
the College.

4. Student Advisor

    Responsible for pre-enrolment and post-enrolment
    counselling. With proper qualifications, the
    Student Advisor should assist pupils to choose
    subjects, should be able to explain to individuals
    how much time they should spend on study, how
    much extra reading per subject is necessary and
    what the prospects are after courses. If he can-
    not sit with most of the students he should
    prepare hand-outs to be sent to them. He is also
    responsible for solving general problems between
    students and teachers.

5. The Role Played by the Ministry of Education
    and Culture in Counselling

    The Ministry encourages pupils to enrol with the
    Malawi Correspondence College and to work hard
    by offering secondary school places at Form III
    level to pupils who pass six subjects at one
    sitting including English. The Ministry's policy
    has been publicised by politicians.

    Career talks organised by the MOEC in collaboration
    with the Rotary Club aim at providing school pupils
    and any interested person with information about
    requirements for certain jobs.

Problems of Counselling: Lack of Personnel
                           Extent of Personal Relation
                           Lack of Training Facilities

    (a) Lack of Personnel

         From the above explanation, some of the problems
         the College faces result from having no personnel
         specialised in student counselling. The people
         who counsel are those with their own special
         duties; hence they cannot concentrate on students'
         needs with a view to providing a solution.
         Secondly, it is difficult for any one of the

11.

above categories of people to spend time exploring
problems a student faces so that ways of over-
coming the problems can be identified. As indica-
ted under Student Advisor above, the necessary
duties inadequately performed by the present
incumbent because of lacking the necessary academic/
professional qualifications.

(b) Extent of Personal Relationship

Until this year, the Malawi Correspondence student
who did not join a Centre or a Night Secondary
School remained completely cut off. Tutor-Markers
marked students' tests mechanically and impersonally.
Now the system is changing in that students from
one Centre/Night Secondary School etc. have been
allocated to one Marker who is responsible for
tutoring and contacting individual pupils whenever
necessary. Although the Tutor-Marker has problems
of knowing his pupils due to large numbers of
pupils allocated to him, the College has made a
start to improve the tutor/pupil relationship and
hopes to continue increasing the number of part-time
tutors in order to improve the tutor/pupil ratio.

(c) Lack of Training Facilities

Up till now, Malawi Correspondence College has
operated in isolation, hence it has been very
difficult to learn what other countries are
doing.

In addition, most members of staff have joined the
College without prior training in distance teaching
and they worked following the trial and error
method.

Whilst Tutors and Producers have had training in
course and radio production techniques, most of
theteacher-supervisors, tutor-markers and even the
Student Advisor, have had no relevant training
in Distance Teaching.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The College is aware of its problems and is trying to identify relevant courses and funding agencies in order to uplift the standard of distance education in Malawi.

The staffing position is one which should improve in less than a year's time.

With the assistance of the newly established Research and Evaluation Unit, some of the problem areas should be researched into and possible solutions suggested. The problem of working in isolation is one to be solved through visits and exchange visits to/with institutions that offer distance education. It is gratifying that the Ministry of Education and Culture and the staff of the College have put much effort into identifying places where members could go and learn.

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COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR
DISTANT LEARNERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

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Introduction

The provision of counselling and support services for distant learners is widely and increasingly recognized as a very essential feature of any distance teaching system. Like many distance teaching institutions, the University of Zambia Correspondence Studies Department has taken practical steps towards providing such services.

However, the provision of counselling and support services is inadequate. This paper tries to show the development and nature of counselling and support services for distant learners at the University of Zambia, outlining the short-comings in this area and making suggestions for improvement.

The Nature of the Distance Teaching System

The University of Zambia established a Correspondence Studies Department, offering degrees to external students, in 1967, a year after its creation. The target population has always been adults who have had no opportunity to pursue university level education due to various reasons but have the ability to benefit from such type of education. Many of these adults cannot study full-time due to their occupational and family responsibilities.

Correspondence students are required to meet the same entry requirements as internal students. Those who do not possess minimum general entrance requirements may be admitted through the Mature Age Entrance Examination Scheme. Correspo-ndence students are taught by the same lecturers, follow the same programmes and write the same examinations as internal students. This arrangement is intended to maintain parity of standards between internal and external students.

The arrangement implies that external students should be provided with adequate tutoring, counselling and support facilities as (and probably more than) internal students.

Student Characteristics

In the 1982/83 academic year there were a total of 550 students, pursuing either of the two major degree programmes offered by correspondence; Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Arts with Education (B.A. Ed.). More than three quarters are between 25 and 35 years.[1]

About three quarters of the students are either teachers, civil servants or other government officers. There are more males than females. Only about 15% of the students are females.[2]

The majority of the external students (56%) live in two predominantly urban areas of Zambia, namely Lusaka and the Copperbelt. The rest (44%) are scattered in the seven remaining rural provinces, mainly in district and provincial centres.[3]

Provision of Counselling and Support Services

The main teaching medium utilised by the Correspondence Department of the University of Zambia is Printed Materials. As far back as 1967, it was recognised that if the Correspondence Students had to be given an equitable chance to perform competetively (in examinations) with internal students they should be given adequate support facilities in addition to lecture notes.

This is because external students are of varying academic and professional back-grounds. Their aspirations are not only different from one another but also different from those of internal students.

Additionally, external students are at a disadvantage because they do not have as much contact with either their fellow students or lecturers as internal students. They are far away from the two main libraries of the University in Lusaka and Kitwe (on the Copperbelt).

- 3 -

Correspondence Students at the University of Zambia are
therefore largely isolated and can easily get frustrated; hence
the need to help them become confident and self motivating.
The University of Zambia therefore decided that correspondence
students should, as a matter of necessity, attend a two week
Residential School at the University Campus in Lusaka once
each academic year. Those who fail to attend are withdrawn
from courses with penalty.

Residential Schools which have become a permanent feature
of the correspondence programme at the University of Zambia
give students an opportunity to:

(a)   Discuss problems of mutual interest with fellow students;
(b)   Use the library;
(c)   Buy books from the bookshop when available;
(d)   Receive academic counselling from and discuss other
      academic issues with their lecturers;
(e)   Solve administrative issues with the staff of the Depart-
      ment of Correspondence Studies.

Another measure aimed at supporting the correspondence students
instituted right at the beginning is the system of week-end
schools. Lecturers went out to main centres of student
population and conducted seminars or tutorials to supplement
lecturer/student contact. Week-end schools gave lecturers a
deeper insight of students' problems.

Senior staff of the Department of Correspondence studies
also visited students and were able to answer on the spot
any administrative queries from students. There is no doubt
that these visits were useful. The 1970-72 Annual Report of
the Department of Correspondence studies noted that:

> "Experience of the past 5 years has shown that
> students whose interest had otherwise waned
> and were on the verge of giving up their studies
> have had their interest revived by such visits."[4]

The Department of Correspondence used to produce a Bulletin containing

articles, news and announcements, sent to students free of
charge as a support to distant learners.

Unfortunately the University of Zambia abandoned the system
of week-end schools and visits by senior staff and the pro-
duction of the bulletin in the early 1970s, apparently due
to lack of money.

One support system which has continued to function is the
library postal loan system. Correspondence students are
provided with forms for ordering books from the library.
Students normally order any number of books which they may
keep for seven weeks. However, the system has not operated
well as the orders take too long to be attended to by Library
authorities.

In 1978 the Department of Correspondence Studies employed the
first Course Adviser. The Department has had two Course Advisers
since January 1983. The main job of Course Advisers is to
advise students on all matters relating to correspondence
studies through personal contact, letters and sometimes
telephone. They give guidance on methods of study, and on
choice of courses and course combinations, so that students'
present occupational needs and perceived careers may be met.

Before the posts of Course Advisers were established it was
quite common for students to study courses randomly without
due regard to their major/minor programmes. Students also
tended to choose courses which they thought were relevant to
their perceived careers but for which they had no adequate
background and competence. This contributed to high failure
rates in many courses.

Counselling of distant learners at the University of Zambia has
not been adequate. The system involves no more than Course
Advisers in the Department of Correspondence Studies. The

correspondence lecturer/tutor is supposed to play a key role
in counselling. In fact the counselling rendered by the
lecturer can be more effective than that given by Course
Advisers.

As it has been pointed out by authors like Watkins,[5] if tutor/
student feedback is inadequate students performance may be
negatively affected. Feedback (in form of writeen comments)
from the assessment of students' work can be very productive.
Indeed adequate feedback promotes personal growth and one's
mental development.

However, the correspondence teaching arrangement at the
University of Zambia makes it difficult for the lecturer to
make useful comments on students work. Due to shortage of
staff in teaching departments correspondence lecturers find
themselves handling large numbers of internal and external
students. They are over-burdened and therefore find it
difficult to devote sufficient/to the preparation of materials
and the marking of assignments. Correspondence teaching be-
comes an "extra burden".

Jenifer Rogers has pointed out that:

> "Correspondence tutoring. . . is exacting since it
> demands the ability to write full, fair thoughtful
> probing comment on the work of someone the tutor may
> possibly never meet."[6]

A Zambian Lecturer has little time (and often no interest)
to make detailed comments, and therefore no effective
teaching takes place. Assignments are often sent back to
students late. Besides this,many of the correspondence
lecturers have neither experience nor training in adult or
correspondence teaching.

Conclusions and Suggestions

As Watkins has pointed out, "counselling at a distance is a
natural and necessary development for an institution which
teaches at a distance."[7] Although the University of Zambia
has recognised this fact it has not been able to provide

adequate counselling services to its distant learners largely due to the system which does not give lecturers chance to develop a sense of commitment to correspondence teaching.

Correspondence lecturers are supposed to play a key role in counselling their students by making comments that are intended to help the learner develop   interest in the course. Ideally lecturers should write letters to students with full comments, as a means of supporting and motivating the learner and not only assessing their work. What is important is not necessarily the grade a lecturer gives to the student but the sympathy and warmth a lecturer expresses through the tone of explanation of the grade given.

If correspondence lecturers at the University of Zambia have to play an effective role in counselling their distant learners, they must be able to accept and understand their role as correspondence tutors. One way of achieving this is by giving them incentives and to allow them enough time to spend on correspondence teaching. This issue is under discussion. One of the suggestions under discussion is that lecturers involved in correspondence teaching should be released for a minimum of one term each academic year to devote much time to correspondence teaching. Senate has already accepted the proposal that correspondence teaching, be one of the criteria for promotion and retention of staff. Perhaps this and the other measures being discussed will encourage lecturers to work hard although there will still need to organize workshops on course writing and counselling for correspondence lecturers. This may not solve the problem but it will help a little.

Given the fact that study materials are not self contained and that they are of low quality, there is need for support facilities to be provided. The Department of Correspondence Studies should be given adequate funds to enable Course Advisers and other Senior members of staff to visit students to offer on the spot counselling service to students.

It is pleasant to note that the Department of Correspondence
Studies has revived the Correspondence Bulletin. The University
of Zambia Library and the Bookshop Staff, due to their involve-
ment in the correspondence studies Professional Committee, are
now more sympathetic with problems of external students and
have promised to take measures to provide adequate books to
correspondence studies. What will still lack is the inter-
action between lecturers and students, two weeks of Residential
School being too short a period. However, it is hoped that
this will be made up for by the Radio Broadcasts which have
just started and are yet to be evaluated. Also Resident
Tutors are being encouraged to organise tutorial groups for
students in their areas.

There is no doubt that the foundation for providing adequate
and affective counselling and support services for distant
learners at the University of Zambia is there. What is needed
is a bit of reogranization, commitment on the part of staff
involved directly or indirectly in correspondence studies,
and adequate funding .

- 8 -

NOTES

1.   These figures are obtained from the students' personal
     information cards.

2.   University of Zambia, Department of Correspondence
     Studies Annual Report 1982. LUSAKA: University of
     Zambia 1983 p. 17.

3.   Percentages have been worked out from 1982/83 enrolment
     figures.

4.   University of Zambia, Department of Correspondence
     Studies Report 1970-72. LUSAKA: University of
     Zambia p. 10.

5.   Watkins, R. "Counselling in Continuing Education (1)."
          Teaching at a Distance. No. 6 P. 39.

6.   Rogers, J. Adult Learning (2nd Edition) Milton Keynes:
          Open University Press 1977 p.183.

7.   Watkins, R. op. cit. p.43.

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CONCEPTS FOR COUNSELLING AND TUITION OF
FIRST-YEAR DISTANCE STUDENTS IN STUDY CENTRES

Bremen / Hildesheim, May 1983

Translated by Almut Knetter and David Whybra

1. Basic conditions

Responsibility for educational policy and educational planning in the
Federal Republic of Germany is determined by the Federal structure of the
country. According to the Constitution of the Federal Republic, the Federal
areas of jurisdiction are limited in number and extent whereas the 'Länder'
have general jurisdiction for carrying out the tasks of the government. On
this basis the 'Länder' have jurisdiction in almost all aspects of education.
The Federal Government has legislative jurisdiction, especially as regards
issuing general guidlines on the fundamental principles and structure of the
system of higher education. The same applies to the promotion of academic
research, student grants, out-of-school-professional training and career
counselling. The universities are as a rule 'Länder' institutions.

The FernUniversität in Hagen was founded in December 1974 by the Government
of the 'Land' North-Rhine-Westphalia in the Federal Republic and opened
in October 1975. At present the FernUniversität caters for more than 24,000
students in the Faculties of Mathematics, Electrical Engineering, Computer
Science, Economics and Education and Social Sciences.

The FernUniversität is a state institution financed by the 'Land' North-Rhine-
Westphalia. However, there are students from all over West Germany at the
FernUniversität. As each 'Land' has its own jurisdiction on education, North-
Rhine-Westphalia is not authorized to set up study centres in other 'Länder'.
Therefore agreements have been made to further co-operation with the other
'Länder'-governments. In 1977 the 'Länder' Bremen and Lower Saxony set up
study centres of the FernUniversität in Hildesheim, Lüneburg and Oldenburg
(Lower Saxony) and in Bremen. These four study centres have been incorporated
into the local universities; they are part of larger departments dealing with
distance study and further education. These Universities of Bremen, Hildesheim,
Lüneburg and Oldenburg make co-operative agreements with the FernUniversität
to establish ways of guidance for its students. The students have the status
of members of the FernUniversität. The study centres at the Universities of
Bremen, Hildesheim, Lüneburg and Oldenburg and their tutors are independent
of the FernUniversität; the tutors are members of the respective university
and therefore relatively free in organizing the tuitional guidance of the
students.

The fact that the study centres in Bremen and Lower Saxony are relatively independent of the FernUniversität and that only four study centres have to supply the whole of the northern part of the FRG (including students from Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein) with student and course-counselling, has led to the development of a differentiated guidance model.

In the following we want to report on counselling and guidance provisions offered by the study centres in Bremen and Hildesheim as preparation for distance study and as continuing guidance for first year students during their first course year respectively.

2.   Pre-course-programmes for first year students

Discussions with students of the FernUniversität show that for many of the first year students school, respectively,participation in further education, mostly date back several years. An inquiry in the study centre of Hildesheim at the beginning of the teaching year 1982 stated that for more than 50% of the first year students the participation in an educational course dates back at least four years.

In the teaching and course system of the FernUniversität there are up to now only a few courses on offer meeting the special requirements expected during distance study. Because of these basic conditions the study centre in Hildesheim devised practice material (pre-course-programme) in co-operation with the tutors which was offered to first year students by means of weekend-schools before the beginning of the teaching year. The pre-course-programmes are put into writing and refer at present to the preparation of studies in the Faculties of Mathematics and Economics.

The advantage of the weekend-school is that the students get to know each other in more than just the special aspects of their studies: the opportunity was also used to give information about the system of the FernUniversität and the guidance offered by the study centre in Hildesheim. Students at higher levels and tutors reported about their experience with distance study. The weekend-school lasted 2 1/2 days, the students were accommodated in boarding schools.

A survey showed that two main functions of the pre-course-event had special importance for the first year students. On the one hand, the participants

worked on their subject problems so that they would not be discouraged when receiving their first 'learning-packages' and so that they knew how to work on the courses. On the other hand, further conditions of study could be better assessed. The question as to which the most important elements were for the participants of the pre-course, was answered in the following order of rank:

- personal contacts with fellow-students
- teamwork
- brushing-up of my subject
- new assessment of my study situation
- checking my way of working
- inhibitions and fears were reduced

Another question revealed that the participants wanted to work with the fellow-students they had met during the pre-course, if the distances between their homes were not too far.

In negotiations with the FernUniversität we want to achieve that pre-course-programmes are made a firm part of distance study. The impulses and successes of the study centres in this work should encourage the FernUniversität:to grant more attention and attach such significance to them that they may be regarded as a necessary initial introduction to the courses of study.

In the following paragraphs we should like to report on provisions that have been introduced by the Universities of Bremen and Hildesheim for the guidance of first year students.

3. Counselling and guidance provisions throughout the initial introduction and the first teaching year.

Since 1982 the study centres at the University of Bremen and at the University of Hildesheim have set up a counselling and guidance system which is closely linked to the students' needs, offering assistance especially at the beginning of their studies and during their first course year. In this period there exists - following on from the pre-course-programmes - a special need for guiding and supporting aid and advice, so reducing the initial problems, increasing study-motivation and opposing abandonment of the course.

Our counsellino and ouidance system can be divided into   .
- a component applying to subject matter and
- an overlapping component.

(1) Course-counselling

Course-counselling is provided for almost all the courses during the first
teaching year. It is carried out by independent tutors and concentrates on
cognitive support of the students for their studies. That means
- clarification to help understand problems
- additional or more advanced study matter
- assistance with marked assignments
- preparation for tests.

The form and the content of the course-counselling is oriented towards the
needs of the participants and the progress of their studies. They are included
in the concept of distance study as an integrated component to create the most
important pre-conditions for success in distance study.

The basis of the tuitional course-counselling is the continuous regular
counselling. It takes place in the evenings either weekly or every fortnight
and fits in with the work-rhythm of the correspondence material and marked
assignments.

In addition to the regular counselling, day-school and weekend-school are offered.
The day-school takes place on Saturdays and serves to repeat and intensify the
work on extensive course parts as well as to prepare for tests. Interdisciplinary
topics can also be subjects of the weeekend-school (Friday to Sunday). Once a
year the study centre of Hildesheim offers a Summer-school (Bildungsurlaub).

(2) The overlapping course-counselling

In addition to course-counselling various overlapping counselling measures are
carried out during the beginning of studies, which are supposed to guarantee
effective assistance in general problems connected with distance study. So-called
'tutor-counsellors' (Vertrauensmentoren) are appointed (they also work in course-

counselling) to deal with the tasks arising. Each of the 'tutor-counsellors'
looks after a small group of students (about 30). He is supposed to help the
assigned students personally in any general problem connected with distance
study. The particular duties of a 'tutor-counsellor' are shown in the following
list.

fields of duty	particular duties
initiating and keeping contacts with distance students	− contacting all distance students at the beginning of their studies; introducing special means of contact for students who have not visited the study centre
introduction to − the running of the FernUniversität − the function of the study centre	− explanation of the structure of the FernUniversität
	− explanation of offers and significance of tuitional counselling in the study centre
	− introduction of distance students to the room organization and equipment of the study centre
course material etc.	− assistance in understanding the structure of the course material
	− assistance for distance students having difficulty in receiving course material
methodological skills and learning ability	− assistance in developing effective techniques for the work on course material
	− assistance in organizing a time-table for the various activities of the students
	− pointing out the importance of course-counselling by the respective tutors
	− introducing the students to the use of libraries
essays, marked assignments	− discussion about methods and working techniques to write essays and to do marked assignments
	− assistance for less able students through individual guidance, encouragement; if necessary contacting course-tutor
	− reminding students of important dates in their study course
group work	− discussion of the aims and various techniques of effective group work
	− initiating student study groups

choice of course
change of course
change of subject
	− information about
	  * existing courses
	  * organization of studies
	  * examination requirements

	− advice on formalities that have to be attended to when changing course or subject
tests exams	− advice on and preparation of tests and exams
abandoning course of study fees	− discussion with students and advising them if interruption of study is intended
	− explanation of administrative handling of leaving the FernUniversität
	− information about alternative study opportunities as well as about possibilities of taking up study at the FernUniversität again
	− checking the financial situation of the students; assistance with applications for grants

The course-overlapping counselling system created for the beginning of
study and carried out by the study centres of the Universities of Bremen and
Hildesheim is shown in the following plan. A short description of the main
provisions is added.

Counselling provisions during the beginning of studies 1982/83

'initial letter'	introductory counselling	circular letter	first 'phone-round'	exchange of experiences	second 'phone-round'
addressees: all first year students	addressees: all first year students	addressees: all first year students (except students of other universities "Zweithörer") who did not take part in the initial introduction	addressees: see circular letter	addressees: all first year students (except students of other universities "Zweithörer")	all first year students (except students of other universities "Zweithörer")who took part in initial introduction course counselling at the beginning of the teaching year and who have not taken part in further activities since then
topics: - invitation to introductory counselling - reference to forming study groups and first contacts with 'tutor-counsellor' - information about the study centre on a leaflet	topics: - forming groups - introduction of group members - explanation of organization and running of the FernUni - explanation of counselling activities at the study centre - support of group contacts and formation of regional study groups	topics: - information about first group meeting - reference to telephone call by 'tutor counsellor'	topics: - introduction of the 'tutor counsellor' - asking for the reasons for not participating in first group meeting - asking about willingness to take part in further group meetings	topics: - exchange of experience gained during the studies so far - discussion about organization of work, learning techniques etc.	topics: - asking the reasons for breaking off contacts to the study centre - if course of study was given up completely, asking for the reasons - giving detailed information about intended discontinuation of studies; perhaps arranging personal counselling in the study centre
date: beg. Sept.	date: 2nd Oct.	date: Oct.	date: Oct.	date: end Nov./beg. Dec.	date: beg. Jan.

1st October: beginning of teaching year

← Sept. 1982 → | ←— October 1982 —→ | ←—Nov./Dec.1982 →← | January 1983 →

(a) Introductory counselling

The introductory counselling at the study centre is essential for
- remedying lack of information and solving problems of orientation at the
  beginning of distance study
- getting to know the institutions, tasks and activities of the study centre
- establishing an atmosphere of trust between distance students and the tutors.

The two most important components in Bremen and Hildesheim for the newly-enrolled
students during the introductory counselling at the beginning of the teaching
year are an 'information-market' at the study centres and small student working-
groups.

'Information-market': boards and wall-chards inform the students about various
questions and problems of distance study, about the teaching and learning
procedures of the FernUniversität, about the course of study in the various
faculties and about the study centre. The written and illustrated material is
explained and enlarged upon by the staff of the study centre or by the tutors.

The main part of this introduction is the work in specific course groups. Here
the students can meet their 'tutor-counsellor' and other distance students of
the same faculty. Working in groups has three main points:

- participants can introduce themselves to the group, stating their aims and
  motivation to study,
- discussion of questions and problems appertaining to the beginning of
  studies and
- a short evaluation of this initial introduction making suggestions for
  changes or completion.

The initial introduction of the teaching year 1982/83 indicated that in spite
of various written material from the FernUniversität there was still a need
for more detailed information especially about the significance and the tasks
of the study centres, the tuitional counselling and guidance. All in all, the
opportunity of meeting other students and working in groups was welcomed. Some
students exchanged addresses and arranged ways of sharing the driving to the
study centre.

(b) The 'phone-round'

Telephoning, carried out after the initial introduction by the 'tutor-counsellor',

reaches those students, who have not contacted the study centre so far. In this way they get to know their 'tutor-counsellor' and are informed about the activities at the study centre. Experience up to date has shown that telephoning motivates only to a small extent any participation in counselling offers at the institutions of distance study. The positive reaction of the students to telephoning indicates that there is an interest in information and counselling. Telephoning gives the 'tutor-counsellor' a lot of important information about the learning behaviour of distance students in his group and this helps to organize the counselling.

(c) Exchange of experiences

The third course-overlapping counselling provision, an exchange of experience with the problems and difficulties of distance study is offered approximately ten weeks after term begins in combination with a day-school.

Present experiences show that learning problems are apparently related to difficulties in the different faculties. In addition to problems with learning techniques, the groups in Education and Social Sciences mentioned difficulties in their attitude towards academic work and the discussion of theories; specific questions of content were the main topics in the Faculties of Mathematics, Computer Science and Electrical Engineering; in the Faculty of Economics vocational pressure and time problems were mentioned in relation to studies. The majority of the students evaluated their further study as positive at that stage although some students thought the moment was too early to say anything about the progress of their studies.

On the whole we can say that first year students who took part in pre-course-programmes and initial introductions show steady progress in their studies. Further investigations and statistics will verify this observation.

Rosalyn Delehanty
Donald Miskiman

A Package of Shoelaces

(And Some Guidelines for Lacing and Tying)

An

Athabasca University Student Services

Orientation Program

It's not the large things that send man to the madhouse . . .

No, it's the continuing series of small tragedies

that send a man to the madhouse . . .

not the death of his love

but a shoelace that snaps

with no time left . . .

Charles Bukowski
(Mockingbird Wish Me Luck, 1972)

ABSTRACT

This paper and the orientation workshop and printed self-help
guide based on the ideas presented in the paper illustrate
a preventive counselling intervention based on Bandura's concept
of self-efficacy. Procedures used in both the workshop and
distance package focus on:

- Self-assessment of readiness for entry or return
  to school
- Preparing for changed life-style
- Efficient study
- Maintenance of self-motivation

Specific processes used in both the workshop and the print and
audio tape package are aimed at teaching students methods they
can use on their own as they proceed through their studies.

Rosalyn Delehanty
and
Donald Miskiman

A Package of Shoelaces

A Self-Efficacy Approach to Orienting Adult Distance Education Students

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

One of the most striking recent trends in higher education has been termed the "greying of the campus". Demographic projections indicate that the number of students in the over 22 year age bracket will increase rapidly while at the same time the number of students in the under 18 year old age bracket will decrease. The absolute number of middle-aged people is expected to almost double during the period between 1975 and 2000 (Fenske, 1981).

The attempt to increase educational opportunities for adults has led to expansion in part-time programs within traditional university settings (Thomas, 1975) and to the creation of unconventional universities with open admission policies and with instructional delivery systems which do not require classroom attendance or residence on or near campus.

The removal of these external institutional barriers to obtaining a university education has, however, not been sufficient to insure a high level of successful educational accomplishment by adults participating in the non-traditional programs available. Distance universities thoughout the world appear to have high drop-out rates relative to traditional universities. This drop-out phenomenon is a major concern to universities whose mandate is to provide alternative educational options (Bhatnagar, 1975; Shale, 1982).

This failure of adults to pursue an educational goal that they have chosen and that is relatively easily available to them presents a dilemma to educational institutions attempting to serve this population. Despite some evidence that dropping out may not be considered a failure by the

- 2 -

adults involved, the working assumption of post-secondary institutions appears to be that the drop out rate could be decreased (Astin, 1977).

While there are undoubtedly many contributing factors, the question for a counselling psychologist facing this phenomenon is whether a counselling intervention can be designed which will have an effect on the capacity of adults to adapt to a return to student life and increase the probability of students achieving their educational goals.

Population and Problem Components Relevant to a Counselling Intervention

Although there are some differing emphases on the nature and extent of the problems facing the adult student and especially those facing the adult student studying at a distance university system, there is substantial agreement on several characteristics that appear relevant to a counselling approach. Three of the problems outlined by Simpson (1977) represent a reasonable synthesis. He points to (1) role conflicts, (2) deficits in skills, and (3) motivational problems as concerns common to adult distance education students that are relevant to counselling. These three problem areas can clearly be seen as similar to those of younger students in traditional universities (Nicholson, 1977; Wideck, Knefelkamp & Parker, 1981). There may, however, be differences in emphasis or intensity that need to be taken into account. Although the learning capacity of adults may not have changed significantly from that of their younger days (Zahn, 1967), the situation in which his/her learning occurs has changed substantially in most cases.

Role Conflicts. The life-style which already includes having many roles with their attendent responsibilities may be strained beyond capacity when the role of student is added (Apps, 1978; Kirk, 1977).

Apps (1978) portrays adult students as having to handle many competing pressures for time. The rightness of a decision to return to school may be a

frequent source of doubt. The difficulty in adding an educational component to an already full life may well be reflected in the fact that "lack of time" is frequently given as the major reason for dropping out of school (Cross, 1981; Empire State College, 1974).

Skill Deficiencies. The problem of study skill deficiencies is clearly not unique to adult students studying at a distance but they may be intensified for the following reasons: a) there is likely to be less time available for study with the consequent need for study to be completed with efficiency, b) there is likely to have been a period of time away from study and some decrease in behavior associated with self-disciplined study, and c) the student in a self-paced home study program does not ordinarily have the same pressure or support from teachers or peers that are available to a student in a traditional educational institution (Cross, 1981).

Motivation. The motivational problem faced by adults studying through a distance university is also judged to be a major issue (Childs, 1963: Daniel & Marquis, 1979; Fisher, 1969; Mills, 1975: Moran & Croker, 1981; Thornton & Mitchell, 1978).

The sources of achievement motivation appear to be diverse (Bandura, 1982) but may be closely related to the lack of self-esteem or self-efficacy noted both in the models of adult learning motivation as well as in clinical assessments of adult students by practitioneers (Cross, 1981). There is substantial documentation of the view that successful adaptation to change or crises is associated with a sense that one has the necessary skills to deal with the circumstances at hand (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1979; Bandura, 1977, 1982; Danish & D'Augella, 1980; Kanfer, 1975; Lazarus, 1980; Marston, 1965; Meichenbaum, 1975, 1977; Rim & Masters, 1979). The importance of having realistic expectations of the task at hand as well as a sense of adequacy in the coping skills

that are needed to accomplish the task seem to be fundamental to the main-
tenance of achievement motivation (Abramson, et al; Bandura, 1974, 1982:
Mahoney, 1979).

Self-directedness. Beyond these three problem areas chosen as a
focus for counselling intervention, another characteristic of adult students
should be noted because of its possible significance for the type of counsel-
ling intervention chosen -- that is, the greater apparent need of adults for
self-direction (Knowles, 1970).

The literature on adult development suggests that adults view themselves
as more autonomous and independent than their younger counterparts (Daniel &
Marquis, 1979; Kanfer, 1975; Murgatroyd & Redmond, 1978). Sarason (1980) notes
that the myth of personal freedom and control is one our culture cherishes.
Adults may, on that account, be more reluctant to seek help when facing diffi-
culties (Knox, 1977, 1969). In addition, the possibility of seeking assistance
through face-to-face exchange with a counsellor or teacher is rare for distance
education students. And, although some studies indicate that effective counsel-
ling can be done by telephone (Orbeiter, Schmerbeck, Brickell, 1978:Dilley, Lee,
& Verrill, 1971) there is evidence that the majority of people view telephone
communications as limited and not as adequate as face-to-face communication for
counselling concerns (Orbeiter, et al 1971; Nicholson, 1977; Singer, 1981).

Both the perceived availability of "adequate" counselling assistance,
then, for students in geographically remote regions as well as general reluc-
tance on the part of adults to seek counselling assistance combine to suggest
that a counselling intervention may need to be pro-active and to enlist the
motivations associated with being autonomous, independent and in control of
one's life. The self-management techniques that may be adapted to an indivi-
dual's needs and applied with a relatively limited amount of outside support

have been chosen in response to these needs as well as in response to the inaccessibility of face-to-face counselling support for the majority of students in question.

"Induction Crisis". An additional element in the problem targeted for attention is the time at which it appears a decision is made to withdraw from attempts to cope with the coursework in which the student has registered (Daniel & Marquis, 1979). The experience of student drop-out (or "non-start" as we shall define it for our purposes) appears to occur heavily at the very beginning of an academic program or course.

There is also evidence that counselling interventions taking place prior to registration and during very early phases of coursework have been effective in reducing withdrawals and in increasing the expected achievement level of students with relatively lower educational backgrounds (Moran & Croker, 1981: Thorpe, 1978). Daniel & Marquis (1979) have termed this period the "induction crisis" and call for counselling support at this point. An orientation program offered to students prior to registration may consequently provide a counselling intervention at the time the greatest difficulty appears to be occuring.

Rationale For a Preventive Orientation Program Focusing on Self-help Skills.

If assessments that a flagging self-concept is typical of many adults re-entering education (Cross, 1981) are correct, then attention may profitably be focused on components of self-confidence (or self-efficacy) prior to the point at which withdrawal from the experience has occurred. Whether a return to formal educational environment is percieved as a challenge or a potential threat may determine whether the inevitable stress involved is handled adaptively or mal-adaptively. If, as Lazarus (1980) asserts, the major difference in adaptational outcome is awareness of having coping skills, then a preventive approach with students entering a distance education program may be to introduce the coping mechanisms available to them.

- 6 -

The helpers' role in this model is one of collaboration and is focused on instigating, teaching, and supporting efforts made by people to "...develop their own strategies for coping with present and future problems and challenges (Lecomte, Dumont & Zingle, 1981, p. 10).

Orientation programs, as the name suggests, have traditionally been a means of preventing anticipated difficulties by providing assistance to help students adapt to the new experience of being a university student. However, although most traditional universities offer an orientation program for incoming freshman (Forrer, 1974; Gardner, 1978; McCannon, 1973), a 1971 report of colleges and universities in the United States indicates that only 21 percent offer such a program for evening students and no orientations were focused specifically on the needs of adults. A survey of Canadian distance universities (Delehanty, 1982) revealed only one reporting an orientation program for its students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether an orientation program emphasizing a preventative coping skills approach will assist adults who are exposed to the orientation program and who subsequently enroll in a distance university course of study to adapt to the demands of student life and to decrease the incidence of non-starts.

The second major question is whether there is a difference in the efficacy of such a program when it is delivered through a face-to-face group process or delivered by means of distance modes of communication, i.e. printed material, audio cassettes, and the telephone.

The major outcome criterion used will be the "non-start" incidence. Secondary criteria will include students self-report of the programs usefulness and student use of institutional resources available (i.e. library, Student

Services, tutors).

A further objective of this study will be to learn, through the interactive process, more than we currently know about the nature of adult students studying at a distance and about the difficulties they encounter.

ENVIRONMENT AND SYSTEMS

IN

DISTANCE COUNSELLING

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A B S T R A C T

Traditional models of face-to-face counselling have limited possibilities in Distance Education; students located at considerable distances from the university need different forms of support based on preventative strategies and predicated on an assumption that they are healthy and should remain so. An organisational model, based on "systems of action", lends the counsellor new directions, as information gatherer, resource person and agent for change.

The paper identifies crisis periods for most students and describes programs of intervention, we hope will reduce the incidence of similar difficulties, in future.

Because the model is focused on the organisation, counsellors work through communication channels both formal and informal in our efforts to support the individual.

We are concerned to develop co-operative enterprises with other institutions and regional agencies to provide the·widest possible range of support services from which students may choose.

Through our range of communication channels, we are in a position to identify the consequences of institutional processes on staff. The paper makes a plea for staff in the belief that transitional stages affect staff as well as students. The paper concludes by inviting co-operation in designing strategies for staff support.

ENVIRONMENT AND SYSTEMS IN DISTANCE COUNSELLING

Traditional approaches to counselling assume that those who come to be counselled suffer a defect of temperament. Once the defect is identified it can be remedied by replacing "dysfunctional" behaviour with different behaviour deemed to be more appropriate, legitimate or normal. From diagnosis to remedy, a protracted series of interviews characterises these models of counselling. Outcome for the counsellee depends upon the relationship established by these encounters. Between the two protaganists, regard, rapport and trust are believed to foster a climate of acceptance in which the "disturbed" person can explore new ways of being and it is hoped, incorporate desired behaviour. In such instances the outcome of counselling is said to be successful and the client has made a satisfactory adjustment.

This Aristotelean view of the "fatal flaw" focuses on the intrapersonal, emphasises "the other", and locates the problem with that person. It is a view leading to therapeutic interventions. These may be appropriate in a clinical context but they have limited use in the counselling office of a conventiional university and almost entirely lack application in counselling for distance education. As Bramley (1977) points out, the counsellor is not "primarily concerned with supporting disturbed or sick students, but concerned to help healthy students remain healthy".

The question then, is, "How can we be most effective given the financial constraints which limit most universities?" Clearly the face-to-face model is not workable when students live at considerable distances from the university which makes visiting the counselling office impossible. Bramley (1977) remarks that healthy students need to be kept healthy so a counselling role should help to "maintain an academic environment which encourages normal academic development and personal growth". New models for counselling are needed which support a healthy environment for the most distant student. At the same time the model must provide a range of flexible roles for the counsellor which make economical use of counsellors' time and which no longer count work-load in client-contact hours.

On the basis of prime functions, Katz and Kahn (1966) propose a systems model which we have found useful in our counselling service. Five subsystems are nominated by the activities and functions they perform. This "action grouping" provides general prescriptions for roles and activities as counsellors move from subsystem to subsystem.

These five organisational systems, translated into the terms of an educational organisation are as follows:

1.   The <u>production subsystem</u> which in our terms would be those members of the organisation who are engaged in the learning process, academic staff, students and administrators. At times counsellors take part in the subsystem through their work with study skills and decision making assistance to students. At other times we are members of various committees which need information in planning to meet educational needs.

2.   The role of the <u>support subsystem</u> is to receive those inputs from the environment and to direct and support them through the organisation and out into the environment once again. Counsellors act in these roles by assisting in selection of students, through the orientation and support strategies we initiate for students during their academic progress, and through advising and notifying other subgroups in the organisation when it appears the healthy environment is at risk.

3.   An <u>adapting system</u> acts as a barometer, registering changes in the environment and alerting the organisation to these changes. This is a subsystem in which counsellors play a most important role as we note trends and changes among students, common problems within the organisation and frequently expressed needs and concerns.

As participants in this system we provide information to the organisation to assist in decisions on the appropriate use of resources. We are also able to act on the input of information to assist in adjustment and modification of factors which contribute to dysfunction in the organisation. For example, we arrange workshops for those staff who visit students in the study centres; we notify academic departments of commonly reported problems and we initiate preventative strategies when their need becomes apparent.

4.   The <u>maintenance subsystem</u>, through a system of rewards, reinforcements and norms, operates to keep the organisation in shape. This system acts to bring new elements into the organisation and it makes the rules, regulations and policies relating to these inputs.

Students in our organisation are offered an extensive induction program. The Counselling Package has proved a successful support through the early decision making process. Later workshops for enrolling students provide assistance and information. We are conscious of a deficiency in similar

...3/

provision for new staff. Counsellors through their functions in the adaptive subsystem have information which new staff need to know. Many of our new staff have removed themselves and their families to unfamiliar territory so that they need information not only about the organisation but about the external environment as well.

5.   Managerial systems also need information if they are to function effectively in a role which facilitates the processes of the organisation. As counsellors are often aware of what is happening to staff and have access to a number of informal communication networks we can provide constructive suggestions and advice to management. It is important to maintain communication with all levels of management so that the issues can be dealt with as they arise. Communication should be accommodated in the formal system, but informal networks are helpful when managers need someone to talk to, or need to know what is happening in the informal organisation.

Work In The System

In order to function effectively as resource people and as agents for change, we must be clear what issues or institutional practices are causing problems or are likely to do so. Prediction, identification and intervention call for the widest possible range of information about the environment and the processes within it.

Counsellors need to be alert to those patterns of action which provide an early warning system and to react to these danger signals when they occur.

Open Admissions, Selection and Counselling

In the bid to redress the previous shortcomings of "educational opportunity for all", policies of open admission bring the risk of failure for some who enter their educational opportunity too far along the way. Failure for these students may not be a reflection of their abilities but rather it may indicate a stage of development, not yet ready to meet the demands of tertiary education, particularly the difficult learning model represented by distance learning.

Counsellors play a valuable role in identifying students at risk during the processing of applications for admission. Written applications which include a short account of why the applicant wishes to enrol, often suggest

...4/

cultural or social deprivation, unrealistic expectations of the proposed
course, or anxiety about personal competence. Experienced counsellors can
often identify nuances which point to impediments to effective learning and
by so doing, work with the individual students to circumvent disappointment
and subsequent wastage.

Individual contact (usually by telephone) with these students is time
consuming, but I believe cost effective in the preventative goals which
direct these sessions. Such contact, also answers, in part, the moral
objections which are raised by offering an opportunity to those who have been
educationally disadvantaged, but who because of the severity of their dis-
advantage may not be able to make use of the opportunity. By far the majority
of applicants are served by the procedures for entrance described by
Pitman (1980); Gough and Coltman (1979) and as Moran and Croker (1981) point
out "combining increasing access with increasing credibility of distance
learning ... should encourage us to explore the dilemmas involved in providing
adequate support services. Not to do so would severely disadvantage students
admitted through such an open access program and curtail their learning."
Deakin has developed a Counselling Package which is sent to all new applicants
at the time admission is offered. Based on the assumption that students
will take responsibility for self counselling, it provides "a structure, a
technique which enables a student to engage in that process." (Moran and
Croker, 1981).

Seasons of Crisis

Once enrolled, contact with students is a useful measure of the way
institutional practices may impede satisfactory progress. A sudden flood of
letters and telephone calls requesting assignment extensions frequently
indicates too many converging deadlines or conflicting priorities. Counsellors
can alert academic departments to problems which are apparent from these
distress calls. Rather than requesting extensions on behalf of individual
students, a case for negotiating to change the assignment date is clearly
more useful when several B.Ed. students (usually full time teachers) telephone
to say they are unable to complete a 3,000 word essay and write the school
reports in the same week.

Apart from the difficulties that occur at random and cannot be predicted,
there is a pattern of increased incidence of contact with students which serves
to identify three critical periods during which students consider withdrawal
as a means of coping with anxiety and distress. Arrival of the first package

of study material triggers an increase in contact. Students express surprise
or shock at the amount of work the package represents. They feel confused
and overwhelmed by the collection of books, papers and tapes and seek help
to organise their material into workable units. If students are helped, over
this period, they are more likely to continue with the course and to feel
positive towards their learning experience.

To meet the needs of students at this important period of "learning to
learn", student advisors attend study centres across the country to meet with
groups of new students. Our counsellors run workshops for student advisors.
Role playing "student experience" helps to develop strategies with which the
advisors feel comfortable; at the same time the workshops provide an opportunity
for staff to explore their own experience as advisors and to share that
experience with colleagues. Common reports of difficulty direct attention to
those institutional practices which may be responsible and recommendations
for resolving such difficulties are an important "problem solving" outcome.
Action arising from these meetings may involve a counsellor's report to a
Board of Studies on a particular overload which is occurring for students
enrolled in that subject or a request to the Administration for a change in
date in an examination timetable.

Counsellors act as group leaders in the workshops and work with the
group to devise strategies for effective interventions. As one example, the
crisis of the beginner student directs attention to ways in which we can make
the first learning package less daunting and more manageable. Based on
principles of reinforcement schedules, packaging the material into smaller
modules merits consideration, particularly for foundation courses. Modules
based on eight weeks which we currently use look overwhelming to the neophyte.
Assuming the goal is satisfactory completion of the module, fortnightly
modules would provide more goal achievement and consequent positive reinforcement
is increased. We have suggested to some students that they dismantle their
study guides and readers and clip them together in fortnightly bundles, putting
aside future fortnight blocks and attending only to the material allocated
for the current fortnight. Reports from these students support this strategy
as helpful and counsellors will provide this information to the instructional
designers as a possible way of rendering early learning material more manageable
for first year students.

A second crisis point attaches to enrolling for the fourth year of study,
by which time most students have completed five semester units. Inquiries
for withdrawal or deferrment are associated with expressions of fatigue,
doubts about the value of the course, change in priorities. Students at this

time often express disenchantment with study, assert the subjects are irrelevant
or a degree is too distant to be achievable. Resolution of this critical
period will be as singular as the student situation. Recent data from our
records suggest that students who complete eight semester units, that is,
the equivalent of one third of a degree,are less likely to withdraw. Helping
students through this critical barrier may mean increasing their enrolment
thereby decreasing the time taken to complete their program; for others,
encouraging them to complete a major sequence lends shape and meaning to their
study. Goodyear (1976) points out that "Any system which could help them
to see the underlying structure of what they are doing might help reduce the
'drop out' rate."

A third critical period is beginning to emerge as our off-campus students
reach their final year. The symptoms are raised levels of anxiety, lack of
enthusiasm for study, and feelings of depression and hostility towards the.
subjects they are studying. These students express a constellation of concerns
which can best be described as "separation anxiety". Acquisition of a
degree means terminating an association which has become so important that
its loss is tantamount to bereavement. Study for such students has become
a means of identity and impending loss of study, precipitates an identity
crisis. Hayes (1981) notes that for high school seniors there are a "number
of strategies by which they avoid the loss. Many postpone the inevitability
of finishing school by applying for more of it." Similar requests are common
among our own students, many of whom assert that having acquired the taste for
learning, they propose to continue educational pursuits as part of their
life enterprise. The move towards "lifelong learning" leads McDonnell (1978)
to comment that the traditional view of tertiary education "as an initiation
process for the 18-21 year old sector" is no longer adequate to provide for
the educational needs of our community. Noting the frequent criticism of
the "mismatch between curriculum and the world outside", he suggests that
universities "initiate new programs aimed at contributing directly to the
solution of community problems and civic development."

More information is needed to determine the directions we should take
in providing graduate studies for distance learners, but it is becoming
increasingly clear that for many of our students, eagerness to continue learning
for its own sake is an energy we cannot ignore.

At these points of crisis, the direction of the flow of contact has been
largely from students to institution. Enhancing the environment for a larger

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number of students needs the flow of contact to be reversed. To achieve
this, workshops for student groups at risk are arranged at study centres and
are scheduled to coincide with the critical periods we have identified.
This intervention notwithstanding, the telephone is used extensively as a
channel for information to students. We are doubtful that psychological
counselling by telephone is sufficiently effective to warrant its use as
part of our repertoire of counselling services. The interference of uncertainty,
affects a therapeutic relationship in telephone counselling. As Northcott
(1977) points out "in a telephone conversation, if a person keeps quiet whilst
the other talks, inside a minute he'll stop talking and say 'Do you agree?' ...
He simply can't continue without the other person's verbal response". There
are clearly moral objections to inviting a person to explore, deeply felt
emotional experience, when the shortcomings of the telephone limit the
possibility of developing a therapeutic relationship. We have attempted to
meet the emotional needs of those students who need support by establishing
a directory of regional agencies which provide personal counselling and are
willing to accept our referrals. Through our membership of Australian and
New Zealand Student Services Association, we have also established an informal
co-operative network of counsellors who are willing to accept referrals from
other institutions.

     A proposal to develop more formal co-operation between institutions to
provide "geographical rather than institutional based advisors" is one which
we would like to explore further. Its feasibility is based on the belief that
"majority of problems encountered, e.g. organisation of time, being unassertive ...
are common to all students regardless of their field of study". Dorland and
de Plevitz (1982). In the prevailing economic conditions for universities it
is proper to avoid wasteful replication of regional support services. Ready
access to regional based advisors could reduce the reluctance some students
have to asking for help from what seem distant unknown others. By giving
"helping" a human face, we may circumvent some of the difficulties which inhibit
learning satisfaction. Co-operative enterprises of this type have been
assessed by Croker (1981) who believes that "the best possibility for
institutional co-operation lies in the concept of the tutor-counsellor, who
may be located in a region. Given that such a person would be student-
centred it should be feasible for two or more institutions to co-operate in
employing such a person in a region which has a significant number of students.
The person would be a major resource and could perform a range of functions
enabling students to accomplish learning goals."

     The perspective is incomplete without attending to the important matter

of keeping healthy staff healthy. Current literature on distance learning
is largely occupied with "The Distance Student" or "The Pedagogical Approach".
The same literature is curiously silent on the issues which influence the
welfare of staff. Silence can in no way be construed as indicating "no
problems", but rather suggests a reluctance to ventilate them. Our impression
is that some sections of staff, work in a suppressive environment where
utterances of frustration, doubt, role confusion and over work are unacceptable.
Admitting to difficulties is to risk being devalued or judged by superiors
or colleagues as non-coping, complaining or incompetent. Through the close
working relationships which counsellors establish with other members of staff,
as we negotiate on behalf of students, we are in a special position to
establish rapport with a wide range of people. Contact of this sort often
allows us to extend the invitation to talk. In my experience it only needs
proof of our respect for confidentiality and our non-judgemental listening
for the invitation to be eagerly accepted.

Those writers who concede difficulties which staff experience, provide
a descriptive account, hence the course team has been identified as a fraught
arena by Northcott (1978) and Livingston (1979). The hazards which they
identify as afflicting the group are not surprising in view of the volatile
nature of group dynamics. Thrust into unfamiliar roles, defensive humour
pervades the writings of those who describe the course team as an "amazing
system of knotted string", Martin (1979), whilst one academic refers to
Deakin's Course Team Handbook as "the blueprint for psychopathology". Joking
barely conceals the underlying tension of these comments. As one writer
asserts , "the course team, far from feeling like a creative structure can
become a cage, legitimising intolerable inroads into intellectual liberty"
Crick (1980).

Most of us with experience in "Human Relations" groups are aware of the
tyranny which can prevail in some groups and the unfortunate consequences for
fragile participants. Even more potential for damage resides in a group
whose leader is unaware or unwilling to disarm the group "killer". In the
highly charged atmosphere of a course team meeting, a useful adjunct could
be a counselling psychologist with special experience in sensitivity training
who would be responsible to tend the team and to provide individual support
for those group members who may need it.

A number of writers comment on the increased workload which affects staff
engaged in distance education. Others report a deep sense of alienation as
they abandon familiar pedagogical modes for the less familiar (and sometimes

...9/

undefined) roles in distance education. It is clear that for some, attempts
to adapt to new roles and attitudes can bring with it a painful dissonance
which has adverse emotional consequences.

The phenomenological approach of most writers has resulted in a catalogue
of staff experience with little attempt to accommodate this information in
existing theories of change, or to develop new understanding through systematising
what we already know. Until we have addressed this challenge it will be
difficult to formulate strategies and policies for staff wellbeing, with any
hope for valid prediction of their outcome.

One developmental description of the "New Professional" echoes Erik
Erikson's psycho-cultural stages of development. The writer, like Erikson,
ascribes developmental tasks in a stage related process for the "New Professional".
Satisfactory completion of each task permits progress to the next stage. Two
critical stages occur mid-way through the progression and represent the
"choice point" in the maze. "To get out of Estrangement which tends to be
characterised by an over-reliance on old ways ... faculty must enter a fourth
stage, Personal Confrontation. In stage four, faculty either decide to change
behaviour, return to more traditional faculty career strands, or find that
they cannot make a decision and thus return to Estrangement". (Bradley 1977).

Directional choices which characterise the stage of Personal Confrontation
are precisely those choices we challenge our students to address as they work
through the Counselling Package. We recognise that students may need encourage-
ment and support to resolve the ambivalence inherent in an Approach-Avoidance
conflict; it is not unreasonable to suppose that staff in a similar transitional
conflict may need similar support. It could be a valuable contribution to
the annals of distance education for counsellors to collaborate in developing
a Counselling Package or Staff Survival Kit.

Preservation of staff is a neglected area and one where the antecedents
of distress can, at this stage, only be hypothesised. It is an area we
cannot continue to ignore in the hope that it will go away, nor do we need
to accept that as "you can't make an omlette without breaking eggs", the
inevitable correlate is staff casualties.

To summarise the concerns of this paper:

Traditional counselling models have limited use in distance education
simply because very few of our students need that type of support. We

acknowledge that support is needed for healthy self-questioning which is far more common than morbid self-analysis. We must seek new, cost effective ways of providing that support.

In our institution, a systems model based on activity groups, has been useful for counsellors. This organisational model clearly signposts functions for the counsellor which assumes active participation in a number of roles.

Direct student contact is reduced but counsellors still maintain helping roles by supporting the activities of those who are in direct contact.

Counsellors are active in seeking and sifting information which may identify factors that adversely affect the environment, or members of the organisation.

Preventative intervention calls for counsellors to take the initiatives rather than react to calls for help. Those counselling skills of listening and interpreting equip us to identify areas which may need change, and to support programs for that purpose. As well as participating across organisational systems, we also seek ways of extending regional based support for students. We look forward to increased collaboration with other institutions in these regional activities.

At a theoretical level this model focuses on the institution rather than individuals. At the practical level it puts counsellors in the position of hearing as much from staff as from students. Counsellors are therefore in a unique position, often with privileged information, which will at times lead us to challenge the *status quo*, Our singular position imposes the obligation to maintain lines of communication which stand the greatest chance of structuring a safe environment for all who inhabit it.

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Börje Holmberg

Centralised and decentralised counselling - mediated and face-to-face communication

Whether in a distance-teaching university counselling and tuition is done centrally, regionally or locally is, as a rule, of little importance to students as long as these activities are performed by non-contiguous means, i.e. in writing, on the telephone, by recordings, by computer or similar communication procedures. Only if face-to-face elements are introduced does the choice between central and decentralised counselling and tuition become relevant to students.

Few educationists are likely to deny that face-to-face meetings between students and counsellors are valuable. The same applies - although less universally - to face-to-face tutorials as elements of distance education. If used sensibly they can effectively contribute to students' success.

This recognition of the value of certain face-to-face components ir distance education is undoubtedly an argument in favour of geographical proximity between students and tutors, and thus of decentralising counselling and tuition. This leads to two questions, first whether, where or to what degree the desired proximity can be brought about, and second if or to what extent adult distance students share educationists' enthusiasm for face-to-face contacts with tutors and fellow students.

In many parts of the world distance education is a mode of study chosen because students cannot or do not want to go to classes. Geographical distance can make their participation in classes or group activities impossible, difficult or little attractive. We need not think of extreme

cases   only (for instance individual Swedish development
workers in Africa and India preparing themselves for
Swedish degree examinations by distance education offered
by a centre in Sweden). In principle the same applies to
many people in remote and sparsely inhabited areas in
Europe (and elsewhere) who may find it acceptable once or
twice a year to travel to a centre of some kind to be
present and take part in academic activities, but to whom
frequent regular meetings with tutors and counsellors are
unthinkable.   This is, in fact, the classical rationale
of distance education and seems incompatible with any
tendency to make face-to-face counselling and tutoring a
regular feature of this type of study. This is tantamount
to querying regional and local activities as universally
desirable elements of distance education.

However, distant students do not all live in remote or
sparsely inhabited areas. On the contrary, a majority
in some countries is apparently to be found in large or
middle-sized cities with educational facilities close at
hand. Some of them have chosen distance education for lack
of traditional study opportunities suitable to adults who
are in gainful occupations or active as housewives. Among
them there is probably a sizeable group interested in face-
to-face counselling and tuition. The Open-University
experience would seem to confirm this. Others living within
easy reach of educational facilities choose distance
education because they want their study to be a totally -
or as far as possible - individual matter. They do not
want face-to-face contacts, at least not in group situations,
with tutors, counsellors and fellow-students. Explicit
statements to this effect occur in many distance-education
contexts (examples are to be found in the files of Hermods,
for instance), and the fact that only about 15 % of the
FernUniversität students ever make use of the services
of any study centre indicates some support for this
interpretation.

If, as is usually the case, the rationale of distance
education is taken to prevail in offering an alternative
to those who either cannot, refuse to or are not inclined
to go to classes, join fellow-students in groups, or
generally to make use of face-to-face contacts, this non-use
or rejection of personal counselling and tuition face to
face must be regarded as expected and in the nature of
distance education. It is important that this should be
realised by educators. Recognising this situation is,
on the other hand, no argument against face-to-face
activities for those who can and want to take part in them.

To all distant students and particularly those to whom
face-to-face meetings are unattainable, undesired or
uninteresting a mediated type of communication is essential,
which can usually be administered equally well from the
centre as from decentralised organisations. This applies
both to counselling and to tuition. For both, effective
procedures have been developed. As these are a
particularity of distance education they seem to me
to deserve more attention than any supplementary face-to-
face activity.

In my view, theoretical considerations bearing on mediated
two-way communication and practical development work in
this field belong to the most important tasks of distance
educators. How frequent the mediated communication should
be, its functions, forms and methods, who is to initiate it
('the system', tutors, counsellors or students) are examples
of matters essential for consideration and research. Cf.
Baath 1980; Clennel, Peters & Sewart 1977; Fritsch, Küffner & Schuen 19⁷
It seems immaterial if mediated two-way communication is
administered and research on it is done centrally, regionally
or locally as long as findings (and products developed) are
disseminated to all those concerned. Here central bodies
capable of developing documentation services can make -
and are making - important contributions.

There can thus be no doubt that the prime concern in
distance education is mediated communication. It is
applied to advising would-be students at a distance,
developing curricula, study-guides to scholarly literature
as well as self-contained courses, supporting students by
counselling and tuition at a distance. This tutoring
implies answering students' questions, commenting on
their work as demonstrated in assignments and papers
submitted and suggesting new approaches. As is now well
known, distance educators for these purposes have a wide
range of media such as the written word, audio and
video recordings, radio and TV, microcomputers, computer
terminals and off-line use of computers, telephone and
telex as well as various combinations of these.
Primarily, the mediated communication is the responsibility
of the central body in charge of the distance-education
facilities offered. Various supplements to the mediated
communication are possible and potentially valuable. To
these belong face-to-face counselling and tuition, no
doubt preferably tasks to be decentralised. In some
cases face-to-face sessions are necessary supplements,
for instance for dangerous experimentation and laboratory
practice, for conversation exercises in foreign languages,
in others generally useful (individual consultations,
discussions and, whenever possible, short residential courses
for traditional university activities including counselling).

Many distance educators will agree with my insistence that
mediated, not face-to-face, communication is the corner-stone
of distance education and may even characterise my statements
as unnecessary truisms. Others will disagree, not necessarily
because of a different view of the practical problems of
distance education, but for ideological reasons. Those who
believe that social learning and the search for consensus
in a group of peers is the heart of education will not
share my appreciation of mediated communication as it
primarily serves cognitive learning and individual intellectual

search for sources of knowledge. What to them is probably
a drawback but to me an advantage is that it imposes no
other social values than those of honest, as far as
possible unbiased and non-partisan scholarship.

This is not the place to discuss 'paradigms' for scholarly
work so I refrain from all argumentation on this score
(see, however, Holmberg 1982 and cf. Ford 1975). There is
one thing which I must describe as paramount in this
context, however: it is not what we as educators find
best that is decisive; the decisive approach should be
that of the individual adult student. If a student prefers
'social learning' in a decentralised system, that is what
he or she should be enabled to go in for. If, on the other
hand, he/she prefers completely individualistic study on
his/her own, we should give equal support to this
undertaking. Whereas distance education is less well
equipped for the former type of learning than residential
teaching, it evidently has remarkable potentials for
individual study based on mediated communication (which can
be supplemented by elements of face-to-face contact
centrally, regionally or locally).

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STUDENT SERVICES AT ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

THE STRUGGLE TO DECENTRALIZE

Barbara Spronk

Services to Students at Athabasca University

Athabasca University has been providing, since 1976, degree level study to adult students in the province of Alberta and throughout Canada. Services to these students, broadly defined, include the following:

- the home-study learning package

This is typically a handsomely-produced package, designed by a course team, that is complete in itself, containing all required printed materials such as study guides, text-books and workbooks, as well as cassette tapes and laboratory or project kits where appropriate.

- the telephone tutor

When students register in a course they are informed of the name, address and phone number of the tutor assigned to them. The tutor is thoroughly familiar with the course, and experienced in helping adult students. Students get in touch with their tutor by telephone during specified hours each week, and all students have toll-free access to their tutor from anywhere in Canada. Besides grading and commenting on assignments, tutors provide support and encouragement, and help with a wide range of administrative problems, by contacting each of their students at least once every three weeks.

- advice and counselling

Counsellors are available by telephone to students and prospective students every weekday during business hours, to provide help with career planning, academic counselling, advice on admissions and program selection, assistance with learning and study skills, and information on the types of financial assistance and awards available.

(1)

- library services

The Athabasca University library has a modest collection of books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials which it will mail on loan to registered students who request them. In addition, the library is part of a province-wide inter-library loan system, which can make available to students materials from any of the other three university library collections in the province. The library also offers information services to students who need answers to questions like,"What is the area of Alberta in square kilometres?" or "What information is available on the conserver society?".

- year-round registration

Students can register year-round in AU courses; official start dates always fall on the first day of the month following the actual registration date. Students may suspend study for up to six months with no penalty, and extend their contract completion dates for a modest monthly fee.

- credit coordination

For the price of admission to the University, students can have their existing credits from other post-secondary institutions assessed by the AU Registry in terms of their applicability toward AU degrees. Up to two-thirds of the credits required for a AU Bachelor of Arts degree can be transferred from other institutions, and up to one-half the credits for a Bachelor of Administration degree. To obtain the Bachelor of General Studies (Liberal Studies or Applied Studies) degrees, students need have no credits whatsoever from AU courses, and several students have graduated with an Athabasca B.G.S. degree on the strength of university level credits they had accumulated through the years from educational institutions around the world.

(2)

Decentralization - At Present

Decentralization of services can take at least two forms: decentralization of the availability of location of services (termed "regionalization" at Athabasca University); and decentralization of administrative control over those services.

To date at Athabasca University many services have been decentralized or regionalized, but control over those services has been retained in central office. In a sense all of AU's services are decentralized, to the extent that students anywhere in Canada have equal access to the University's registration, counselling, tutorial and library services by mail and by telephone. However, in-person or face-to-face services are available on a considerably more restricted basis. At the moment students can come in to receive in-person counselling, register in a course, and take away their course package in Edmonton at our central office and in Calgary at our regional office. This same level of service will be available in the city of Fort McMurray (of oil sands fame) within the next few months. In addition, there is an Athabasca University Regional Advisor located in Grande Prairie Regional College in the northwest quadrant of the province and at Medicine Hat College in the southeast, funded on a one-year basis to publicize the University in the regions served by the two colleges, and to work out transfer arrangements between the programs offered by the colleges and those offered by the University. Moreover, in all these centres plus several smaller centres the University has placed video-tape playback machines and tape collections, computer terminals, supplies of information materials, and teleconference convenor sets, in cooperation with and often under the supervision of personnel employed by other institutions and agencies.

All these arrangements are made by the Regional and Tutorial Services unit of the academic division of Athabasca University. In addition, whatever

(3)

personnel are employed by the University to staff these arrangements are
hired and supervised by Regional and Tutorial Services from within its
own budget, this despite the fact that these personnel are performing
duties which are under the control at the policy level of several administrative
units of the University, including the Registry, Course Materials, and
Student Services (the counselling and academic advising unit) , as well as
of Regional and Tutorial Services itself.

Tutors are also hired by Regional and Tutorial Services and paid
from its budget. However, supervision of tutors is given over to the
course coordinators, who are located in the two academic units of the
University, Liberal Studies and Administrative Studies. Regional and
Tutorial Services provides tutors with administrative support (contract
administration, expense claims payment, secretarial support and professional
development opportunities, such as orientations to the University,
communications skills training, and conferences. However, the primary
link between tutor and institution is seen to be the course coordinator
to whom the tutor reports. This three-way relationship is a complex
one, and frequently problematic, especially in those instances in which
courses are offered in other than the strictly home-study mode. In the
1982 - '83 academic year some 60 courses representing about 7% of
new course enrolments were delivered with the support of an in-person
or teleconference tutor rather than a telephone tutor. In locations
where the numbers of students interested in taking a particular course
are large enough, Regional and Tutorial Services will agree to provide
a seminar tutor who meets with students in a classroom setting on a
weekly paced basis, using the same home-study package that is used by
all other students in that course. Teleconferenced seminars were offered
in support of ten courses this past year on a bi-weekly basis to students in
as many as twenty sites throughout the province and beyond, linked together
by the University's own teleconference "bridge" or switchboard. Regional
and Tutorial Services makes and pays for all the arrangements for these
"deviant" delivery situations, but the final say as to whether a particular
course can be delivered in other than the home-study mode and

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whether a particular instructor is qualified to tutor it rests with the course coordinator.

Decentralization - Proposed

In accordance with the University's long-range plan for 1982 - '84, the author, as Director, Regional and Tutorial Services, prepared in September 1982 a five-year plan for further regionalizing the University's outreach activities and services to students throughout the province. The plan proposed the decentralization, not merely of services, but of administrative control over those services, by replacing the existing position of Director, Regional and Tutorial Services with a Director, Northern Region based in the yet-to-be-established downtown Edmonton office[1], and a Director, Southern Region based in the existing downtown Calgary office. These Directors would report to the vice-president of the academic division of the University, and would have responsibility for all learning centre and regional office activities and inter-institutional liaisons in the northern and southern halves of the province. In addition, like the existing Director, Regional and Tutorial Services, the proposed Directors would continue to have budgetary and administrative responsibility for tutorial staff, whether telephone, seminar, or teleconference tutors. The teleconference system would continue to be controlled and developed centrally, from the Media Services or Computing Services units, but all arrangements for placement of equipment in the various sites and supplying the supervisory and tutorial staff required would be handled regionally.

The rationale underlying the proposal was two-fold. One - it was agreed the network of regional offices, learning centres, teleconference sites and inter-institutional arrangements was becoming too extensive and complex to be managed competently by one Director, and that the

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[1]The present Edmonton location is accessible only by car and open only during the day and one evening a week, and is thereby inappropriate as the site of a major service centre.

(5)

proposed extension of this network, plus the relocation of the central office from a major ubran centre to the town of Athabasca, would render that task of management impossible. Two, having two regional directors would double the clout of regional personnel in central office decision-making, and maintain, or better, increase, the pressure on the institution to take into acount in its decision-making processes the varied needs of students and groups of students throughout the province, as well as the overall institutional and political framework within which the University operates.

The Reaction

With the provisional blessing of the executive officers, this proposal was circulated among the academic staff in December 1982. The reaction was immediate and vociferous against the administrative decentralization of Regional and Tutorial Services. There was little quarrel with the proposals to further decentralize face-to-face services to students, including setting up a downtown Edmonton office and establishing many more learning and service centres throughout the province. It was clear that in-person service could expedite registrations and increase numbers of registrants,[2] that access to equipment like computer terminals and services like exams supervision were essential to students in AU courses, and that alternate delivery modes were a clear advantage to substantial numbers of AU students. What was not accepted was the administrative structure proposed to support and manage these regional activities. This structure was seen by the academics as a makework project for bureaucrats ("fancy titles, big salaries, and the chance to stay in Edmonton"); as a potentially enormous cost to the institution, at the expense of course development and hence academic programs; and even as a subversion of the relocation of the institution to Athabasca!

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[2] With the advent of in-person registration in January 1982, the Calgary office experience a 373% increase in the volume of registrations processed over the 1981 level.

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Two things became evident in these outbursts: the academics' lack of awareness or understanding of the amount of work required to put in place and maintain a far-flung regional support system; and more important, academics' need for control over all the bits of string attached to the course delivery system. As central office staff, academics understandably prefer that control over delivery systems remain centralized. Keen on streamlining rather than complicating their operations, academics are understandably resentful of regional staff who insist on complicating their lives by proposing alternate delivery arrangements, and by bringing pressure to bear on program development priorities from other agencies and institutions who see AU's openness of access and expertise in distance education as useful complements to their own operations.

The academic preference for one director located in central office over two absentee directors located in the regions is partly a function of the nature of academic work in distance education. Academics operating in a conventional institution can more straightforwardly exercise control over the delivery of academic programs, since the primary work of such institution is carried out by solitary academics alone with their classes, books, and laboratory equipment. However, academic work in an institution dedicated to distance education is a much more frustrating business. Course content, format and delivery are all products of a team, with the result that the academic is alienated not only from the product of his labours but even from its eventual consumer, the student. Course content is mediated and filtered by a complex set of policies and procedures, with the result that academics' most important work - - communicating their ideas to their students - - is in reality beyond their control.

This is the climate in which regional staff must operate. Because academics have so much at stake in the decisions made about delivery and service systems, regional people must resign themselves to always having to negotiate for almost everything they are trying to accomplish.

(7)

This power struggle will never be resolved. In fact, it should not be, since it is this struggle which provides the internal dynamic that keeps distance education institutions such as AU innovative yet honest, hence alive.

The Outcome

As of this writing (March 1983), the outcome of the struggle at AU is still uncertain. Decentralization of services and of their administration has been approved in principle by the Athabasca University Governing Council, the highest policy-making body. However, the budget crunch may yet defeat both. For the first time AU is facing a situation of financial stringency due to belt-tightening by the provincial funding agency, which will likely mean cutbacks in services rather than extensions of them. The author is personally doubtful that, in the budget allocations being decided upon this month, regional initiatives will fare at all well, given the academics' antagonism to them. It would be overly dramatic to contend that the fate of AU hangs in the balance. However, given the dislocation that will result from relocation, the failure to fund an adequate (meaning decentralized) basis for regionalizing services to students will mean a setback of several years in the establishment of AU as a strong educational presence throughout the province, and ultimately the entire country.

EVALUATING COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The Open University Experience

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April 1983

EVALUATING COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The Open University Experience

INTRODUCTION

The Open University, although clearly a distance teaching organisation, differs from other such systems in that it provides a relatively local counselling and tutorial service to complement broadcasting and correspondence teaching.

Each student is almost certain to meet his or her counsellor at least once and as the counsellor also teaches first-year undergraduate students, there is the opportunity for regular contact. However, after the first year, much contact takes place at a distance by telephone and by letter. It is this "distance counselling", albeit supplemented by the opportunity for face-to-face meetings, on which we shall concentrate.

Open University "counselling" staff, unlike those at Athabasca University, for example, are more likely to be general educationalists rather than trained counsellors.

What is it then that the OU counselling service provides which is professional, non-teaching, and which cannot be carried out by a caring local tutor? How can such a complex part of the student support system be evaluated?

QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION : QUESTIONNAIRES

Quantitative research findings give an indication of how students regard counselling as an element within the Open University's multi-media distance teaching system. The annual survey of new courses provides, on a regular basis, national comparative data on student use and appreciation of all course components. In 1979 the survey was extended to cover nearly all undergraduate and associate courses. Figure 1 shows student use, satisfaction and helpfulness ratings for the major components on 91 undergraduate courses. Figure 2 looks more closely at ratings for counselling on foundation and post-foundation level undergraduate courses and on associate student courses.

The survey data indicates that counselling is used by approximately 1 in 3 undergraduate foundation level students and by 1 in 6 post-foundation students.

FIGURE 1

1979 UNDERGRADUATE SURVEY (91 courses) Student Use, Satisfaction and Helpfulness Ratings for Major Course Components

	CORRESPONDENCE TEXTS	SET BOOKS	TV BROADCASTS	RADIO	CASSETTES/ RECORDS	CORRESPONDENCE TUTORIALS	COUNSELLING	FACE TO FACE TUTORIALS	TELEPHONE TUTORIALS
USE %	98	90	77	63	63	90	17	59	15
SATISFACTION %	87	51	73	71	80	85	57	74	81
HELPFULNESS (1-5 Scale)	4.67	4.11	3.55	3.42	3.56	3.76	3.54	3.85	3.52

Satisfaction index: Grand Mean for all courses and all (14)components = 80%

Helpfulness Index: Grand Mean for all courses and all (14) components = 3.90

Source: derived from Grundin H.U. (1980) Audio-Visual and Other Media in 91 Open University Courses
Results of the 1979 Undergraduate Survey. Audio Visual Media Research Group Institute of Educational Technology

FIGURE 2

STUDENT USE AND APPRECIATION OF COUNSELLING

	USE %	SATISFACTION %	HELPFULNESS(1-5 scale)	STUDENTS FINDING ACCESS TOO DIFFICULT %
FOUNDATION LEVEL COURSES	36	87	3.62	4
POST FOUNDATION LEVEL COURSES	16	87	3.54	7

ASSOCIATE STUDENT COURSES	22	85	3.48	5

Source: derived from Grundin H.U. Audio Visual and other Media in the Associate Students Programme: Results of a 1979 Survey. Audio Visual Media Research Group. Institute of Educational Technology

87

In addition 1 in 5 associate students also make use of
counselling. The data also reveals that the great majority
who use counselling are satisfied with the service they receive.
The level of satisfaction among undergraduate students is higher
than the mean for all course components and equal with that for
the written correspondence texts. The helpfulness rating though
lower than for correspondence tutoring and study centre tutorials
is still on a par with TV Broadcasts. Moreover the objective of
providing a local counselling service which is readily available
to students has largely been achieved. Less than 7% of students
overall (and under 5% of foundation students) say they find
access to counselling services too difficult.

These findings seem to suggest that there is greatest demand
for counselling from students who are new to the OU system (i.e.
foundation students and associate students who are taking courses
on a one-off basis) but that counselling has a valuable role to
play for a not insignificant minority throughout their student
career.

QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION : RECORDS

Routine record keeping mechanisms or specially designed monitoring
forms can be used to document counselling activities in a systematic
and accurate manner - number of contacts between student and
counsellor; whether student or counsellor initiated; form of con-
tact - by letter, telephone, or face to face; type of contact -
individual or group; topics discussed during counselling session;
and advice or other assistance given by the counsellor.

Careful examination of this information provides a picture of the
contribution made by counselling. For example an analysis of
advisory counselling for applicants to the Associate Student Pro-
gramme showed that counsellors covered four core topics with
applicants - educational preparedness, course choice, preparatory
study and home study conditions. Timely intervention by the
counsellor helped to resolve difficulties at an early stage which
might otherwise have resulted in drop out and most of the applicants
concerned accepted the advice offered by their counsellor on whether
or not to proceed with their application.

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

Questionnaires and 'logging' mechanisms may be used to construct a

general overview of counselling, but focussed studies using
qualitative research methods often give a deeper understanding
of counselling needs and effectiveness. Though care must be taken
to ensure representativeness, structured interviews with students
and counsellors can reveal how student progress is aided by the
provision of information and assistance on matters ranging from
help in copying with rules and regulations to techniques for exam
revision.. Case studies also offer insight into the extent to
which counselling is concerned with humanizing and individualizing
a mass produced and remote teaching system. The caring supporter
role - being encouraging, giving reassurance, being willing to
listen, helping to motivate - can be crucial for the student who
is falling behind, feeling isolated or losing confidence.

ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS

We would argue that counselling is a complex area and that
narrowly defined attempts to measure effectiveness tend to produce
a superficial and often misleading image of counselling. Instead
the aim should be to evaluate counselling as a whole and this may
require a combination of different research strategies - large
and small scale studies, surveys, analysis of demographic and
administrative information, participant observation and interviews -
in order to fully examine the theory, development and value of
counselling within the context of the Open University's distance
teaching system. However we recognise that there are a number of
difficulties associated with evaluating counselling in that it is
such an integral part of the OU's teaching system. To offer just
a few examples:

1. Contribution of the Counsellor: Only rarely is it possible to
   accurately evaluate the influence of the counsellor in isolation
   from all the other factors which may have effected student pro-
   gress. Where a counsellor specifically discusses withdrawal, it
   is possible to check with student records whether the advice has
   been followed but often there are no measurable outcomes and we
   infer from the number of contacts, the topics discussed and the
   advice given that the counsellor's action has been valuable.
   One common sense approach is to ask to what extent counselling
   helps to reduce drop-out - however this criteria is not partic-
   ularly useful since an important part of the counsellor's role
   may be to help enquirers, applicants or students to decide that
   the OU is not for them.

2. Counselling needs: It is difficult to gauge the extent of counselling needs. There is no strong tradition of educational counselling in the UK and often student perceptions of counselling owe much to familiar public stereotypes such as marriage guidance or personal crisis counselling. This can have unfortunate consequences. The counsellor may be seen solely as a "last resort" if major problems arise and students become unwilling to make contact about what they consider to be minor matters. Moreover, students usually consider themselves to be responsible adults quite capable of managing their own affairs, and counselling (perceived as a rescue service) calls their competence into doubt. They may be deterred from contacting their counsellor if they regard counselling as being only for those who cannot cope, rather than as an integral part of the OU's learning support system.

3. Is Counselling Distinctive? At foundation level, tuition and counselling are combined in the tutor-counsellor role but on post-foundation courses and associate courses, students have a separate course tutor and counsellor. Despite this separation it is evident that course tutors also perform what are often regarded as counselling functions. Students can develop a close relationship with their tutors and therefore it is hardly surprising that many should not only turn to them for subject-based help but also for general support including e.g. reassurance about progress, help in dealing with the OU administration, or advice on choosing further courses. There are those who would argue that "counselling" is not a separate activity but rather an integral part of the role of the tutor.

4. Student Perception of Counselling Value: Student perception of the helpfulness of counselling is an important element of any comprehensive evaluation. Yet it is argued that successful counselling should be "invisible" because the counsellor's function is to be facilitative not prescriptive. Research has revealed many instances of invisible counselling, where it is known that a counsellor has discussed a particular course of action, but when the student is interviewed the decision taken is portrayed as the student's own.

In our workshop session we will present
examples drawn from the work of Associate
Student Counsellors and Course Tutors to
explore some of the problems of evaluating
counselling.

Participants will be invited:

. to classify counselling activities as
  reported by O.U. counsellors

. to consider whether there is a counselling
  dimension to the tutor's role

. to comment on the value of the data
  presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2

. to offer criteria for assessing
  effective counselling

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THE TUTORSHIP (*) IN THE UNIVERSIDAD
ESTATAL A DISTANCIA (UNED) DE COSTA RICA

DR. JORGE E. GUIER

The tutor is the employee in the UNED, thorough which the University maintaing academic contact with its students. The face to face relation, caractheristic of the traditional University, splendid for possibilities of cultural enrichment, it is not given, for obvious reasons in a distance university. This limitation, traditionaly appointed as a grave difficult, due to the mutilation of the paradigmatic function of the teacher, must be the stated point in order to understand the rol of the tutor in the UNED.

The existance of the "unidad didáctica" (**) as the main medium, suppose a displacement of the center of gravity of the fountains of knowledge. The professor, the class, the dinning room, the corridors of the university, leave their places in order to open the door to the printed matters, the audiovisual media and the sporadic encounters with the tutor. It is, in sinthesis, a change from the "homodidaxia" to the "heterodidaxia" (***).

It is valid in the UNED, then, instead of a reference to the traditional process of teaching-learning, to appoint the relation between the professor-teaching, in a new point of view and consider it as a process of orientation-learning. Because, as a last phase, the tutor in the UNED is an orientator.

(*) It is prefer to called this service of the Universidad Estatal a Distancia "tutorship" or "tutory" instead of "counselorship" used in anglo speaking countries, because is more adapted to the ancient meaning of "tutorship" in the spanish language which envolves also a meaning of guide to the student in others aspects, more than the formal teaching of a subject matter.

(**) An "unidad didáctica" is a book, specially conceived to help in the distance study of a specific subject matter and contents, besides the contents of the subject matter, objectives general and specific plus exercises of auto-evaluation.

(***) The first one means, generally speaking, the conduction of a class mainly based in the spoken word of the professor with the help, in some cases, of a text book; the second one, is the opening of the teaching to several media not contemplate, general speaking, in a traditional university.

Its function, more than a lineal transmition of information, is to draw
processes, ways of best learning, forms of better understanding. That is:
to develop the learning potentialities of the subject and to do him conscient
of its possibilities of self-learning. In other words, the tutor must take
conscience of the pupil over the different ways of learning (and the resolution
of the doubts about the contents of the subject-mater) in order that he can
choose those better for its personality.

This considerations take us to, in concrete terms, see four basic aspects
of the reality of the tutor in the UNED, in order to facilitate its comprehension
and to confront them with reality.

1.1.- Formal Structure:

The "Dirección de Centros Académicos" is the entity in charge of the
teaching and structuraly speaking is divided into two offices and
seven areas. To this ones are adscribes the different subject of
study, accordingly a thematic essentially criteria.

The director is the one who takes the most important resolutions.
For it, takes the advise of the "Consejo de la Dirección", formed
by the two chiefs of the offices, the seven area coordinator, the
Academic Center coordinator and the two assistance of the offices.

As a support of the Director in the process of taking resolutions,
and in an inferior grade of authority, are the chiefs of the offices,
to the which ones depends the area coordinators.

In this ones appears as many tutor coordinators as subject of study
appears. Normally, a tutor coordinator attents two subject matters
in a full work time. This funtionaire is the jerarquic superior of
the tutors. Every fifteen days has a meeting with them, and generally
discussed the following themes:

1.1.1. Problems arise in the previous tutorships with: the material,
the pupils, the administrator of the Center and with the
others helpers of the process;

1.1.2. Strategies for the nexts tutorships: It is neccesary to
mention, as something very important, that the sumative evalua-
tion is uniformed for all the pupils of the whole country.

This makes clear the importance of having general strategies.

1.1.3. Receiving and deliverance of documents: returning information from or the "Centro de Control de Calidad", and helping ways for the presencial tutorship (ATP). This are printed matter who are a reinforcement for the different themes that are previously detected as insufficient developed in the "unidad didáctica". This documents are made by the tutor for helping the pupils in a better comprehension of that themes. As it is logically suppose, as a subject matter is given more number of times, the necessity of analisis of the unidad didáctica is less, and then that meetings are dedicated to study with profundity the contents of the Unidad Didáctica.

1.2.- Administrative support:

The "Coordinación de Centros" gives all the support necessary for the normal development of the teaching. It is the entrance channel and exit channel of information for all the "Centros Académicos". The officers of the "Centros" generally lives at the location of the "Centro" with a parcial work for the administratives aspects of the Centro.

1.3.- Criterias for the face to face tutorship: For the assignation of the tutors to the different Centros it is necessary to take in account the following factors:

a) Number of students;
b) Position in the academic record of the respective subject of study;
c) Difficulty of the contents.

It is general in the UNED to look for the tutors in the central area of the country. In the places in which the Centros are located there are, also, good professionals to take charge of this work, but the UNED prefers the ones of the metropolitan area for the facilities of coordination with them. Perhaps one disavantages of this method is a concentration of tutorships in the urban zones.

1.4.- Training of the tutors:

In the UNED are given four types of tutors trainings. It is projected, for the future, a new one over the telephone tutorship.

1.4.1.   Institutional subject matter training. It is given to the
aspirants to tutorship. Includes all the necessary document
to understand the functioning of the University, such as:
regulations over students, regulations for students and
employees inscription procedures,etc.

All this is included in several booklets easy to actualized
in any moment. This course finishes with an "open book"
examination, and the aprobation of this exam is "conditio
sine qua non" in order to be nominated for the tutorship.
This type of information is necessary for the orientation
of the student in the different administratives procedures
in which must participate. In other way, finds information
over the procedures, from the point of view of the students,
which is necessary for the actualizations of them.

1.4.2.   Training in distance teaching. It is a short course for new
or in service tutors, prepared for professionals of the
University, with training in teaching. Its main purpose is
to give technics about interaction in groups, learning habits
and in general, several aspects about adults education.

1.4.3.   Training in evaluation. The evaluator tutors, in charge of
the draft of the instruments of evaluation, are trained by
the personnel of the "Oficina de Control de Calidad". They
have two consecutives courses: the first one over the drafts
of items and the second one, over the formative evaluation.

1.4.4.   Specific training. As it is said before, the summative
evaluation is uniform for all the students of the country.
An exam is applied and evaluated with the same criteria
without any differentiation. This obliged to homologate the
ways about the form in which must be seen the contents. That
is, before the begining of each term, the coordination of
tutors organized a seminar about the thematic analysis in
which is necessary an active participation of all the tutors.
Normally, the different themes of the "Unidad Didáctica" are
analysed by different tutors or persons which have high cuali-
fications about the subject matter.

- 5 -

2.   Characteristics of the tutor. Generally speaking the main character-
       istics of one tutor of the UNED are as follows:

2.1.- Generalist formation:
       As it is said before, the tutor must counsel and give orientation not
       only in thematic aspects proper of the speciality but also in adminis-
       trative aspects of interes of the student, and also in aspects psychic,
       social and biological who facilitate the auto-learning system.   These
       means that the tutor not only must be up to date with his knowlege
       of the subject matter but also to know general principles of adult
       education. It is not of interest a highly specialized tutor in only
       one subject matter, not only which formation permits him to developed
       another related subject matter to his own one. As a examnle: it is
       not of interest an expert on topology, but a professional in Mathematics,
       which could dictate courses in general mathematics and superior one as
       any other course which the University gives in this field. The degree
       required for this, as a minimum, is "bachillerato". Although more
       than a 60% of the tutors have a "licenciatura".

2.2.- Disposition to travel to any place in the country:
       The face to face tutorship is given in accordance with the registration,
       the place of the subject matter in the curriculum and the difficulty
       of its contents. For this reason is necessary to have a personnel
       dispose to travel to any place at the twenty nine Centros of the country.
       In general, a tutor visits one Centro during one semester in six times:
       each fifteen days.
       It is necessary that the tutor has good health capable of travelling
       in bus and supporting the changes of weather. In this particular the
       problems are minimum, because the pressure of the group plays an
       important factor.

2.3.- Disposition to receive training courses:
       The necessity of knowledge about the function of the University in
       order to orientate esasily the students, also as the characteristic
       of the evaluation (not individual but colective), required from the
       tutor a high discipline to work together with others and to participate
       in the different courses that the University gives, a normally before
       the begining of each academic period.

3.   Functions of the tutor:

During the second semester of 1980, and after the recollection of the experience from more than two years of working, the funtions of the tutor are actualized in the following way:

a.   Identification with the teaching materials of the different subject matter for his tutorships;

b.   Obligation to respect its working time;

c.   Information to the students of the University about the different programs of the University, its methodology and the correspondent cronology of events;

d.   To teach and to counsel the students about the practices and habits more acceptables in order to obtain a better use of the distance learning system;

e.   Resolution of doubts about the comprehension of the teaching and learning materials at the face to face tutorship or telephonic tutorship;

f.   To give, to which demand, information about the academic situation of the students;

g.   To promote and coordinate activities such as: work in the laboratory project of investigation, practices, cultural activities and other specially assigned by the superiors;

h.   Application of the evaluation proofs, to qualified them and to returned them according the regulations;

i.   To help with the development of positive relations with the community;

j.   To analize with the tutor coordinator the problems and other aditional information relative with the good developments of the subject matter in his own charge;

k.   To participate in training courses about the methodology of the distance learning and teaching and in the field of the speciality in which is working;

l.   To participate in the elaboration of the instruments of evaluation;

ll. To assits to the meetings;

m.   To give a semestral inform of its activities;

n.   To help and to work in the elaboration of materials and intervene in the correction and reelaboration of another ones according with the university regulations.

- 7 -

4.   The differents forms of tutory:
        At the University exist three different types of tutory: face to face,
        telephonic and by letter.

4.1.-   Face to face:
        It is given each fifteen days in the better of the cases. It is
        compose of a session of two hours for each subject matter in conformity
        with the schedule stablished before the beginning of each academic
        semester. During each session the tutor paid attention mainly to
        the following aspects.

        4.1.1. Resolve doubts about the contents of the subject matter in
                accordance with the general aspects appointed at the meetings
                of coordination.

        4.1.2. Orient the student in order to find correctly the right channels
                for its administrative problems.

        4.1.3. Advise the students in accordance with the best way in which
                must study the subject matter of its speciality.

4.2.-   Telephonic:
        It is offered in accordance with the inscription of students in each
        course. It is given as a minimum of four hour a week and the superior
        is forty. Each subject matter has a calendar during the which one
        the tutor received or realized telephone calls from the students. Exist
        in two types: the ordinary one, in which, in a general way, the
        student calls the tutor from any place of the country (the University
        paids this service); and the other one, the defer one, in which the
        tutor callas to the "Centros" in which is not offer the face to face
        tutory.

        The students stablished communications with the tutor through the
        telephone of the Centro; this telephones is attached to an amplifier
        in order that people listen the explanations of the tutor.

4.3.-   By letter:
        The several times that has been intended to activated this ways of
        tutorship has not been possible. Perhaps has been of influence in
        this that the country counts with and excellent telephonic system
        (a public phone for each town with a number of one thousand in habitants).

- 8 -

The students do not use this system because perhaps the University
counts with more effective ways to resolve its problems.

-000-

In the tutorship system of the Universidad Estatal a Distancia is the
responsability of the student to conduct, the so called tutory, in which he is
going to resolve its doubts.   The main purpose of it is not the complete explanation
of the subject matter but to help the student, as it has been said in two main
purposes:

a). The resolution and aclaration of it particular doubts in accordance with
the subject matter; and

b). To help the students in the personal development of its personal habits
of study in a system o distance learning.

Vocational Guidance in the Open University   Jenny Pulsford

INTRODUCTION - A HISTORICAL NOTE

Vocational Guidance in the Open University in the first decade of its
existence was seen as of minor importance. Most students were thought
to be studying purely for interest and self satisfaction, with no
thought of any occupational application of their studies. Most, too,
were already in full time employment (e.g. in the early years a third
were teachers upgrading their Teaching Certificate to a Degree
qualification) and any vocational guidance they may have needed was
seen as properly the province of the employer, or of the relevant
professional body, and not of direct concern to the University.

For the small proportion, c.10%, who were known to be genuinely inter-
ested in career change, or re-entry to the labour market, it was
considered that the locally based statutory guidance services were best
placed to help students.

By about 1980, it was apparent that a rethink was necessary. One of
the two statutory services (the Manpower Services Commissions's
Occupational Guidance Units) had closed their doors entirely, while the
other, (the Local Education Authority Careers Offices, which exist
primarily to meet the needs of young people entering the labour market)
had for a number of mainly economic reasons been unable to develop a
viable service for adult students as had been hoped for in the wake of
the Employment and Training Act of 1973.

By 1980, too, we were becoming aware that careers advice and planning was
important for more of our students than was originally thought. Surveys
of graduates were indicating that the Open University was experienced
as an agent of change: the process of studying with the University was
broadening its students' horizons, teaching new and up to date skills,
building confidence and increasing feelings of confidence. Success in
their studies had motivated many students and graduates to try for
change in the field of work. Moreover, the reports of wider perspectives,
new horizons and increased self confidence were more widespread among
women than among men, and among non-teachers and housewives than among
teachers and lecturers - in other words they were more widespread among
the groups least concerned initially with career benefit.

As a result, for the past three years, the University has been developing
a self help vocational guidance system based on established distance
teaching principles.

THE OU'S VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE SYSTEM

This has a number of components from which students can select those that
best meet their needs.

1. The Introductory Booklet - "Course Choice & Career Planning"

    This introduces the student to the OU's definition of 'career',

                                                    . . . .

which is a broad one encompassing both paid and unpaid work and the general way of life which the student wishes to adopt, and to the ways in which OU studies might influence this.

It contains an outline of the various resources available to the student, whether on paper e.g. the comprehensive series of occupational information leaflets,(see below), or through personal discussion, e.g. Regional arrangements for workshops, specialist individual counselling etc. Thirteen different Regional editions are published to meet the needs of local circumstances.

Copies are sent automatically to all first year students, and may be obtained on request by others.

2. The Occupational Information Leaflets

The series is not yet complete, but will eventually comprise approximately 45 leaflets divided into 9 coherent groups. There has been a conscious attempt to design the leaflets both as sources of factual information and as a self contained, self help guidance system. The series thus has a number of distinctive features e.g.

. a group of leaflets on careers decision making)e.g. life and career planning workbook, 'map' of the world of work, 'Getting A New Job', etc.).

. an overview sheet for each group of leaflets summarising what the occupations in that group have in common, how they differ from other occupations, indications of related occupations in other groups etc.

. extensive use of case study material (other OU students and graduates, typical work projects which might be encountered, and outlines of a typical day's activities).

. information about employer attitudes to mature entry, and (given that many of our students do have a choice) advice on whether (and how) entry to a lower level job with part OU qualifications may offer advantages over waiting for graduation before seeking a change.

. information about possible career pathways, both for mature entrants and for existing employees who might wish to seek vertical or lateral mobility on the basis of OU qualifications.

. suggestions about how to obtain a job - e.g. sample advertisements, information about where vacancies are advertised etc.

3. Computer Assisted Vocational Guidance

The system presently in operation is a fairly simple one, most suitable for students at an early stage of career thinking, and limited to occupations not requiring a specialist first degree.

. . . .

The student indicates a level of liking for each of some 50 factors commonly associated with jobs, and receives back a computer printout based on a scan of approximately 200 careers on the database.

The system was designed as an aid in discussion between careers advisers and young undergraduates, and for both reasons is only used with OU students when it is possible to provide follow up discussion with an adviser trained in the system.

The present system is discussed in more detail below.

Further development of the present system, introduction of complementary systems, and development of a comprehensive purpose designed system are all beginning to come under serious consideration.

4. Counselling

Three separate levels of counselling are available.

a) the student's own tutor counsellor, who would not normally have any specific vocational guidance expertise, is nevertheless expected to
. be aware of vocational issues
. help the student to anticipate what vocational considerations may be, or become, relevant, and to act or plan accordingly
. advise the student on where and how to make use of the more specialist components of the system.

b) a network of part time vocational counsellors, mostly either professional careers advisers or members of the OU's part time teaching and counselling staff who have expressed a wish to specialise in this area. Students would normally be referred to the vocational counsellor by their own tutor counsellor.

Vocational counsellors at present have very limited time available, and every effort is made to use this cost effectively. Their brief is not to provide extended face to face counselling but to

- teach students to make use of the self help system
- help them to interpret and evaluate the findings they obtain
- provide more intensive individual help, or if appropriate referral to external specialist services, only to students who have reached the limits of what the self help system can operate without resolving their difficulties.

c) External careers advisory agencies. These include
. the Local Authority Careers Services, which in some areas, despite the comments above, are able to help adult students
. Local Univeristy or Polytechnic Careers Services - many are happy to allow OU students to use their normally very comprehensive information rooms, while on occasion it is possible to arrange for our students to see one of their careers advisers.

. . . .

. Independent **fee-charging** agencies (the student would be responsible for the fees incurred, but often local counselling staff can advise on suitable agencies if this type of advice is sought).

COMPUTER ASSISTED VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

In developing a distance guidance system, especially in a high technology institution which already posssessed a national network of computer terminals for student use, we were encouraged to look very early on at the role that computers might be able to play.

Software System

It was immediately apparent that the use of computers in vocational guidance was at a very much earlier stage of development in Britain than was the case say in North America. For example, there is no British equivalent of complex, interactive systems such as SIGI or Project Discover capable of taking the student through the whole process of self analysis, job and labour market analysis, decision and implementation. However a number of more limited systems were available or under development, of which the most important appeared to be:

CASCAID-HE and GRADSCOPE

Two rival systems of careers advisory computer aid, both of which use student self ratings of level of interest in a number of relevant criteria to scan a list of possible jobs and produce a list of those which match most closely.

Both were developed for young undergraduates (there is also a schools version of CASCAID) and focus mainly (Gradscope) or exclusively (CASCAID) on occupations which do not require a specialist first degree.

Both require a follow-up discussion with an adviser to amplify the results and consider next steps.

JIIG-CAL (Job Ideas & Information Generator - Computer Assisted Learning)

A more recently developed and more sophisticated system which begins by analysing interests, adds in self reports on a number of other factors, and ends up with a list of job suggestions. There are a number of aspects of the system which make it look promising - although it is cumbersome to use, and designed as an integral part of a classroom teaching situation.

DOORS (Data on Occupations Retrieval System)

An occupational database developed by the Manpower Services Commission for use in Joblibraries. The data contained is impressive, and includes information relevant to adult users, but the retrieval mechanism is impractical and is in need of redevelopment.

There is a strong possibility that the system could be made available to educational institutions such as the Open University.

SELSTRA (Self Elaborated Structuring and Assessment)

Based on general purpose decision analysis principles, SELSTRA provides an interactive program with a core heirarchy of factors relevant to career choice.

A first working version has only just become available, and no evaluation of its value with Open University students has yet been attempted.

GRADDEX

An employer information and vacancy database, expected to become available in time for the 1983/84 academic year. Graddex deals specifically with graduate employment and vacancy information and is likely to be of value to Open University students, although we have not yet seen a demonstration of the system.

Our initial reaction in 1980/81 was that each system in its own way could contribute to the quality and cost-effectiveness of a vocational guidance service for students, but that none was suitable in its present form, for unaided use by students at remote locations.

A system to meet the needs of Open University students, would need to incorporate elements of each of the existing systems, and would need additional attention both to the particular needs of mature, part time undergraduate students and to the requirements of a system suitable for self explanatory distance usage.

Hardware

In theory the Open University has the capability to provide an interactive computer guidance system either

a) on a central Sperry Univac 1100, mainly used for general and student administrative purposes. VDU terminals are available normally during office hours only, in each of 13 Regional Offices.

b) through the Academic Computing Service, used mainly for student computing work, which has 3 DEC-20 computers and over 200 printer terminals at study centres throughout the country. Terminals are available on weekday evenings, and in some cases during the day.

In practice, existing usage of terminals is such that the additional terminal_intensive demands of interactive careers guidance would require the provision of additional terminals.

Microcomputers are not at present widely used in the Open University for work with or by students. However most of the software referred to above is available on microcomputer, and it may well be that we should be looking to provide a system based on microcomputer software which students can borrow for use in their own homes and on locally available micros rather than one dependent on mainframe computers.

Our Conclusions

1.   that, despite limitations, a number of the above systems could offer enough to Open University students to warrant introduction on a stop gap basis, pending development of a more comprehensive and self contained system.

2.   that initially we should introduce CASCAID-HE in a batch processing mode with telephone follow up discussions. (CASCAID-HE has the advantage for our purposes over its rival Gradscope of a more informative printout and a wider occupational database.)

3.   that experience of using interactive systems was important as a prelude to further development of CAVG, and that the micro-computer, interactive versions of both CASCAID-HE and Gradscope would be made available for this purpose. Other systems (e.g. Graddex and SELSTRA) would be added to our microcomputer range of systems for testing and development purposes as they became available.

4.   that in the longer term we would expect to become involved in some developmental work for a system which would meet our specific needs. However,

   a)   we did not at present have the practical expertise of guidance work with mature part time undergraduates on which such a system could be based,

   b)   ditto in ways of using computer assisted vocational guidance in a distance guidance context

   c)   there was the possibility of a major national undergraduate system being developed under the auspices of D.E.S. and AGCAS which might form the basis of an Open University system.

THE COMPUTER ASSISTED GUIDANCE SYSTEM AS IT OPERATES AT PRESENT

As outlined above, the CASCAID-HE syste, on a batch processing basis and with telephone follow up discussions, is the only system generally available to students at present. The system operates at Regional level, as follows:

1.   Publicity to students

This varies from Region to Region and has perhaps not been as systematic as we might wish in this, the first year of national operation. It includes:

   Written Publicity

   a)   information about the availability of CAVG is being included in future editions of 'Course Choice & Career Planning' (see above)

                                                                    ...

-7-

b) this is supplemented by Regionally initiated correspondence
    to all students in connection with the annual cycle of
    Conditional Registration meetings, in which they are
    reminded of Regional arrangements for guidance generally.

Oral Publicity

a) Part time counselling staff, who are briefed on the aims
    and availability of CAVG, are expected to suggest this to
    students who might find it helpful

b) CAVG may be introduced, or recommended, through Open Days,
    or the slowly increasing numbers of vocational guidance
    workshops and day schools being held.

2. The CAVG Process

a) The student receives the CAVG questionnaire, plus a letter
    outlining the system, either by writing to the Regional
    Office or occasionally in person from a counsellor.

    The student is asked to take the initiative in phoning the
    counsellor, but if he or she fails to do so within a
    specified time, the counsellor is instructed to initiate
    contact.

3. Take up of the System

It is too early to have clear evidence of this, and take up is inevitably
artificially limited by the absence of coverage of scientific and
technological occupations.

Initial indications are that CASCAID-HE is especially popular with
women hoping to return to work after a break for child-rearing, and
with those in clerical and secretarial occupations looking for upward
occupational mobility.

The only analysis so far undertaken on a sample of 200 (too small for
any real significance), was most striking for the extent to which
students completing the CASCAID-HE questionnaire appeared to be repre-
sentative of the undergraduate student population in general. Allowing
for the comment in the previous paragraph, and for under-representation
(but not non representation) of those in scientific and technical
occupations, this appeared equally true of occupation, of age, of prior
educational level, of sex and of stage of study reached. In other
words, it seems likely that interest in the type of help that a system
like CASCAID-HE can offer is essentially an individual matter unrelated
to existing occupation or to studies directly.

THE FUTURE ROLE OF ADVISING CENTRES AT O.L.I.

Presented to the Advisory Committee

on Educational Affairs

February 2, 1983

Prepared by:

Joan Richardt
Ethelyn McInnes-Rankin
David Kaufman

with the assistance of Doug Cronk

C O N T E N T S

I.   PREAMBLE

When advising centres were first proposed within the Open
Learning Institute, it was decided that developing them
into learning centres was not appropriate mainly because of
the difficulty of access by many students. Recently, however,
proposals have been discussed to equip advising centres with
specialized equipment which could be used by students, e.g.
video playback units and computer terminals.

Denys Meakin outlined in his October/82 memo to the Advisory
Committee, that there are some proposed O.L.I. courses which
may have to be delivered through an advising centre. He
stated that advising centres may indeed be on the way to
becoming learning centres and that, while this development may
be desirable and inevitable, the Institute should not drift
into it without considering the implications. Denys Meakin
therefore proposed that a committee be formed to explore the
future role of advising centres within the O.L.I. and to prepare
a report for consideration by the Advisory Committee on
Educational Affairs.

The committee he suggested was accepted by the Advisory
Committee on Educational Affairs. It consisted of the Senior
Advisor (Ethelyn McInnes-Rankin), the Director of Educational
Technology (Dr. David Kaufman), a non-Richmond regional advisor
(Joan Richardt), and a representative of a program area
(Doug Cronk).

II. METHODOLOGY

In light of the short time-frame for the study, the
Committee decided to use a fairly simple approach to the
preparation of this discussion paper. The approach relied
on review of relevant literature and existing internal
documents, interviews with several "key" people, and
analysis.

All papers and documents listed below have been deposited
in the OLI Library and are available for reference.

> Literature Reviewed
>
> Meakin, D. "The Role of Regional Centres" in
> Learning at a Distance: A World Perspective, Daniel, J.S.
> et al (eds.), Edmonton, Athabasca University, 1982.
> King, B., Sewart, D. and Gough, J.E. "Support Systems in
> Distance Education", Open Campus, Geelong: Deakin
> University, No. 3, Dec., 1980.
> Lewis, R. "Do Correspondence Students Need Counselling?",
> Distance Education, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1980.
> Gough, J.E. Study Centres in Distance Education, Geelong:
> Deakin University, 1980.

Internal Documents Reviewed

Keegan, D. Student Support Services at the Open Learning
Institute. A Report to the Dean of Academic Affairs.
May-June, 1982.

Meakin, D. Memo to Advisory Committee on Educational
Affairs re function of regional centres. October 21, 1982.

Report of External Team.

Scales, D. Advising Centres - Development - 1980.
OLI Advising Centres. September 5, 1980.

Self Study Sub-Committee Report on Student Support.
June 1982.

Interviews Conducted

The Committee interviewed D. Meakin, R. Scales and J. Calvert

on Nov. 23, 1982.

Meetings

The Committee met as a group five times:

Nov. 10   2 hours
Nov. 23   5 hours
Dec. 7   3 hours
Dec. 14   3 hours
Jan. 26   2 hours

Reporting Procedures

An interim verbal report was presented at the Advisory

Committee on Educational Affairs on Dec. 1. This discussion

paper was distributed in December to professional staff in

the Institute for reaction. 21 responses were received.

On Jan. 12 a teleconference call was held with Advisors, the

Senior Advisor and the Director of Student Services. A final

paper incorporating the recommendations was presented to the

Advisory Committee on Educational Affairs on Feb. 2.

III. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The Literature reviewed offers several points which are relevant to this report.

1. At the Open University, the "theory" of the Study Centre described a single place in which local services to the student are concentrated and upon which all local students focus as long as they learn within the Open University system. It was hoped that the student attached to a given study centre might also begin to identify with it. Some form of institutional identity would be achieved and a sense of community among students might emerge which would be expressed in social as well as academic activities.

This has not occurred in practice. Students focus on the local centre only at the foundation level and in the preceding advisory and induction phases (note: this might be important for us for ABE, CTV and first year university). The majority of post-foundation students do not physically attend a centre. Very little TV viewing or radio listening occurs there and little use is reported of replay facilities. Tutorials take place only in larger and often distant towns. However, computer terminals linked to the three main computers are used extensively by students, especially in the areas of mathematics, science and technology. A number of papers have been written on the success of the OU study

centre system.   The conclusion has been reached that
the two main reasons for the success of a study centre
is   (1) the tutor-counsellor,   (2) the type of
institution in which the centre is housed, (i.e. where
appropriate resources are provided).   Leaving aside
the special function as a location for a computer
terminal, it would appear that these centres can be
described simply as the place where the tutor-counsellor
frequently operates, i.e., a convenient base for the
work of the tutor-counsellor (note: advisor in our
system).

2.   In Australia, there are two types of study centres.
   (a)   Purpose-built centre, owned or maintained by an
         institution, and designed to serve its own
         students.   A variant is a leased centre.
   (b)   The centre provided by another institution or
         organization in which it allows its facilities
         to be used by students of the distance institution.
         This is the most common type.

The four major functions provided are tutorials and
meetings, library, information and advice, and video
replay.   Few students use a study centre for private
study and self-help groups tend not to use the study
centres.   Tutorials represent the single most important
function of study centres in Australia and are quite
frequent in some areas.   At Queensland, a minimum of
four students allows tutorials to be provided twice a

month and ten or more allows them to be weekly. At
Deakin, Saturday workshops or weekend schools are used and
may occur twice a semester. In both systems, attendance is
variable (about 50%) and in general, students who attend do
so regularly while some students never attend. An important
factor in determining attendance is the tutor; students
evaluate critically the ability of the tutor to help them
in their courses. Other factors such as convenience of
location, suitable seating and reasonable heating in winter
appear to be marginal in affecting attendance. A more
significant factor appears to be the general atmosphere of
the centre influenced by the coordinator and staff.
There appears to be little use made of video playback
facilities in the one institution (Deakin) which provides
these. The majority of students (about 75%) indicated that
they appreciate some contact with the centre provided it
fits their timetables, is conveniently located, focused on
their courses and may be used or not at their discretion.

The ideal post-secondary study centre in Australia appears
to have the following characteristics:
a) It should be a cooperative undertaking with other
    post-secondary institutions in a community. The
    facilities, particularly the library, will provide
    the best base upon which to establish the centre.
b) The study centre should be a physically distinguishable
    and visible entity.

c) The centre should have a coordinator and library staff should be provided, although not necessarily belonging to the centre.

d) The centre should be supported financially by the institutions involved.

IV. CURRENT STATUS OF ADVISING CENTRES AND SERVICES

A. A variety of internal papers and documents have described the status of advising services within O.L.I. A chronological summary is presented below:

1. Proposal for Establishment of Regional Educational Access and Support Centres. Paper by Denys Meakin, February 1979 presented to the Board.

The proposal for establishment of regional OLI advising centres was strongly influenced by the experience of the study centre concept within the British Open University. As well, regional centres were seen as a way of avoiding the perception of OLI as a metropolitan-based institution.

Functions of a Regional Centre. Four broad functions were proposed: Educational Access, OLI Access, Student Support, and Community Liaison.

Operation of the Regional Centres. As far as possible, it was proposed that the following conditions should apply:

a) Prominent location, not hidden in a college or school (this is essential if OLI is to access people who do not use existing institutions).

b) Open evenings and weekends, with the total
    number of hours open each week dependent on
    the size of the community and demand for service.
c) Remote terminal access to student records.
d) Staff whose primary responsibility is to OLI.

Regional staff were also to be responsible for
monitoring a student's overall progress and were to
contact a student if anything unusual became apparent.

Location of Regional Centres. It was proposed that
the initial centres should service, within a reasonable
driving time, the maximum possible number of people,
(high population areas).

Second priority was to go to smaller but still sub-
stantial population areas not served by the initial
centres. Third priority was to split centres which
became too large in order to provide more local
service.

Also to be established were small satellite centres
in more remote communities to provide low cost service
with maximum possible coverage of the province. These
centres were to be housed in appropriate existing
facilities with staff working on the basis of honoraria
or as volunteers.

2. <u>Development</u> <u>of</u> <u>Advising</u> <u>Centres</u>. Two papers
   by Dick Scales, then Senior Advisor, 1980.

   These papers suggest that with college cooperation
   local college community education centres be considered
   as OLI access centres to supplement services offered
   by the OLI regional advising office.

   > Throughout the province in smaller communities (the
   > local college CES office) in large measure is identi-
   > fied as the adult education, post-secondary access
   > and information point for that community . . .
   > Although not always clearly identified as such by
   > colleges, the local community education centres
   > almost universally regard a major role as being
   > that of educational "broker" for the community
   > served by the centre.

   As local OLI access points within colleges, these
   centres would provide accurate up-to-date information
   about OLI programs and would refer interested individ-
   uals who require further assistance to the nearest OLI
   advising centre.

   The major role of advising centres was seen as pro-
   viding ongoing student support and coordinating student
   access throughout their assigned regions. Advisors
   were to work closely with college community education
   centres to ensure that accurate information be dis-
   pensed and appropriate referrals made. Advisors were
   also to assume a liaison function with related agencies
   and institutions in their regions.

In summary, the following functions for OLI

advising centres were outlined:

1. To serve as a regional and community continuing and post-secondary education information and access centre.

2. To serve as a locally based (regional centre) for provision of student services to registered OLI students. Services provided include career information, education information, course selection, assistance with registration, study skills assistance, and financial aid.

3. To serve as a regional liaison point for OLI with College centres, school districts, apprenticeship board, W.C.B., hospitals, Human Resources and other social agencies.

3. Five-Year Educational Plan 1981-1986 (pp 64-65)

It was stated that the network of advising centres

must be enlarged over the next five years:

> Substantial areas of the Province are still not served. In addition, the ratio of students to advisors must be decreased. It presently stands at 500 to one: an unacceptable ratio by any standard. It is intended, therefore, that such centres be established in:
>
> Nanaimo (to serve the northern part of Vancouver Island)
> Cranbrook (to serve the East Kootenay)
> Dawson Creek (to serve Peace River)
> Abbotsford or Chilliwack (to serve the Fraser Valley)

4. Report of Self-Study Sub-Committee on Student
   Support, June 1982.

   The Sub-Committee found that the advising service
   has generally evolved according to its original
   mandate of establishing a decentralized network of
   highly visible centres, providing a broad range of
   services and support to students. It also concluded
   that the advisor role is changing. With increasing
   enrollments and no accompanying increase in advising
   personnel, advisors have little time for active
   individualized student support and community liaison
   activities. Tutors have taken over much of the
   responsibility of initiating personal contact and
   motivating students. The advisor role had changed
   into that of a resource person, with advisors working
   increasingly on a reactive basis.

   Advisors no longer have time to initiate personal
   contact with students on a regular basis and no longer
   are able "to monitor student progress" of students as
   indicated in the job description. Advisors, however,
   still attempt to keep track of the on-going progress
   of continuing students committed to a degree or
   certificate program.

   Although some student support functions are not being
   carried out as was originally envisaged, the Self-Study

found that students who had contact with
advisors and advising centres were positive
in their comments about the service that they
received.

In the past, advisors have played a significant
role in the promotion of OLI in their regions.
However, with increasing demands on their time
and lack of budgetary support for travelling,
advisors have substantially reduced the time
they devote to community liaison and promotional
activities. This problem is especially acute
for advisors in regions covering large geographic
areas.

Budget submissions were made by the Institute
for new advising centres and advising staff in
Nanaimo, Cranbrook and Peace River in 1981/82.
Requests for more centres and advising staff in
Cranbrook, Peace River, Fraser Valley and Nanaimo
were included in the 1982/83 Institute budget
submission. However, the funds for these centres
and staff have not been included in the Institute's
expenditure plan.

Because of lack of proposed new centres and increasing student loads, some advisor functions are not being done at the projected level:

- development of assistance with learning and study skills

- active intervention to encourage re-registration of current or recently enrolled students

- active intervention to encourage course completion

5. Student Support Services at the Open Learning Institute.

A report to the Dean of Academic Affairs. Desmond Keegan, May-June, 1982.

Dr. Keegan proposed a theoretical continuum of distance education institutions throughout the world ranked in accordance with their provision of student support services. OLI was placed close to the proprietary correspondence schools in terms of provision of student support services.

It was concluded that the OLI advisor has many of the characteristics of the Senior Counsellor in the Open University of the U.K.

Below is a summary of his analysis of the advisor role:

- Advisors are well-known local personalities in important centres in B.C. who give OLI an important regional presence.

- The excellent relations with the Ministry of
  Education Correspondence Branch and with many
  of the community colleges can be attributed
  to the presence of advisors in the regions.
- The advisor's role is not well understood by
  tutors and students.
- A pre-course counselling period for students
  is recommended.
- The idea of locating advisory centres in
  community colleges seems a mixed blessing with
  a serious identity problem developing in one
  case.

Conclusion of the Keegan Report: "Early impressions
are of a frugal, closely-managed system that did not
offer many forms of student support services found
in many comparable systems." Three options available
to management were presented:

1. Maintain and develop present system (development
   into learning centres).

2. Merge advisors' role with that of full-time
   tutors.

3. Suppress advisory service.

6. <u>Report</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>External</u> <u>Team,</u> <u>October</u> <u>1982.</u>

   The report of the External Team raised a number
   of issues with regard to student support and
   recommended the following:

   - That the Institute consider developing a
     mechanism for assessing basic skill levels.
     (3.2.7, Page 10)
   - That the Institute make an early decision
     with regard to the future of regional advising
     centres. (7.2, Page 30)
   - That existing staff situations in Student
     Support Services be carefully considered when
     decisions to expand programs and increase the
     number of student registrations are taken.
     (7.6, Page 32)

B. <u>Recent</u> <u>Developments</u>

   As of the November 1982 semester, advising centres
   have begun carrying an inventory of course packages
   for distribution to students who register in person.
   As well, a computer terminal has been installed in
   the Victoria office on a pilot basis to the end of
   the fiscal year.

C. <u>Enrollment</u> <u>Statistics</u> (taken from Advisor lists)

<u>Course</u> <u>Enrollments</u> <u>By</u> <u>Advisor</u> <u>Region</u>

	<u>Summer/81</u>	<u>Summer/82</u>	<u>Fall/82</u>
Kamloops	244	408	581
Kelowna	263	245	496
Nelson	191	281	338
Prince George	272	398	419
Richmond	702	881	1253
Terrace	157	245	265
Victoria	367	468	685

The above table clearly shows the rapid increases
in enrollments by advisor region, with an increase
of nearly 100% since Summer/81.

D. <u>Facilities</u> <u>and</u> <u>Staffing</u>

1. Square Footage.

<u>Centre</u>	<u>Square Footage</u>
Kamloops (shared with Cariboo College)	750
Kelowna	605
Nelson	945
Prince George	700
Richmond	1000
Terrace (shared with N.W.C.C.)	1132
Victoria	638

Richmond Advising Centre facilities are located
in the administrative head office. All other centres

are located in storefront facilities. If additional
staffing were to be required, in some instances,
facilities would have to be relocated to larger
premises, e.g. Victoria.

2. Centre Resources and Equipment

Course Packages: All centres have samples of course
packages and textbooks for student and prospective
student reference.

Career Resource Materials: All centres carry a
selection of career resource materials and information
to assist students in educational and vocational
decision making. Kamloops, Kelowna, Victoria and
Richmond offices have an Oxford Access File to allow
for easy, accessible storage of this type of information.

Photocopiers: None of the advising centres have
photocopying facilities in their own office. Advisors
have made arrangements to use copiers in other nearby
offices.

Exam facilities: The following centres have access
to space to allow students to write exams:
Victoria, Richmond, Terrace, Prince George,
Nelson, Kamloops.

Classroom Facilities: These centres have access
to classroom facilities: Kamloops, Terrace.

Special Equipment: In addition to basic office
equipment (desks, tables, chairs, typewriter and
answering machine) centres have the following special
equipment: Overhead projector (Terrace); computer
terminal (Victoria);

Associated Resources: Education Information Centre
in downtown Vancouver; access to Telidon in Richmond
and Downtown Centre; services of special advisor for
federal inmates - Sonia Wolowidnyk.

3. Staffing

Clerical Support:
Victoria, Prince George, Kamloops and Kelowna
centres have one full-time clerical support person.
Richmond had 1.5 (f.t.e.) clerical support services;
however, much of the support staff's time is devoted
to general student service activities (switchboard/
reception duties). Terrace has a half-time
receptionist, and Nelson has a three-quarter time
support person.

Currently, some advisors must do an extensive amount of clerical work because of inadequate support staff coverage, especially the Richmond centre (Self Study Sub-Committee Report).

Advising Staff:

Richmond: Senior Advisor (out-of-province students only), Regional Advisor, Advisor I, Women's Access Advisor (temporary).

Terrace: Advisor works approximately 2/3 of the time doing advising duties. The remaining time is spent tutoring accounting.

Remaining Centres:

One full-time regional advisor.

The number of regular Advising staff positions has remained constant since Fall 1980.

v.   CONCLUSIONS

The Committee noted the relatively large number of
existing papers and reports which addressed the role
of advising services at OLI. These documents as well
as the relevant literature all share one major theme:
The need to provide a range of decentralized support
services to students with advisors playing a key role
in their regions.

Issues that occur are:

1.   cooperative approach to regional support of
     students
2.   broad professional and coordination role for
     advisors
3.   appropriate student load and workload for
     advising staff
4.   limited levels of services currently offered
     compared to the desired commitment which is
     often stated
5.   provision of decentralized services using
     satellite centres and/or college centres.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends:

I. THAT the OLI regional offices be developed into distance education co-ordinating centres using a co-operative model which would include appropriate local resources and facilities.

   a) At the present time, OLI regional offices should not be developed into full-scale learning centres in terms of offering expanded study and learning facilities for students.

   b) Where there is a need for instructional support involvement for specialized programs at the regional level, local resources should be used as much as possible. For example, appropriate college facilities could be rented/booked for orientation or tutorial activities for the proposed programs which require face-to-face contact.

   c) Formal agreements should be made between OLI and the colleges regarding use by OLI students of appropriate college resources (e.g. VTR's, KNOW program tapes, library resources). A precedent has been set by the Nelson Regional Advising Centre where a co-operative arrangement of this nature has been worked out with the local College.

d) The coordination of new program delivery and support
activities should be undertaken by the specific program
area involved (e.g. setting up group meetings, arranging
use of local facilities). Regional advisors would act
as resource people as they now do in setting up
examination arrangements.

e) Regional Advising Centres should continue to support
and develop effective working relationships with the
regional colleges, KNOW and other organizations, and
support joint promotional and public awareness activities.

f) THAT the Regional Advising Centres continue to operate
as exam centres for those students who require special
arrangements.

II. THAT under the co-ordination of the Senior Advisor, travel
funds and official terms of reference be designated to
explore the feasibility of setting up satellite information
depots in the Advising regions, (e.g. in libraries, community
centres, college extension centres). Regional advisors
currently supply a great variety of information to these
centres in their regions (e.g. calendars, brochures, Forum,
course manuals). A more formalized structured approach
beyond this level of service is recommended. It is suggested
that a pilot project be undertaken to develop an OLI
information/orientation kit to be placed in identified sites
in one advising region. This kit would serve to introduce
and orient prospective students to OLI and its services.

III.   THAT <u>regional</u> <u>centres</u> <u>be</u> <u>provided</u> <u>with</u> <u>additional</u> <u>staffing</u>
       <u>and</u> <u>appropriate</u> <u>resources,</u> <u>as</u> <u>required.</u> It has become
       evident from available data and discussions with Advisors
       and others, that the capacity of the Advising Service to
       meet its current objectives has been reached.

IV.   THAT <u>in</u> <u>light</u> <u>of</u> <u>these</u> <u>suggested</u> <u>changes</u> <u>to</u> <u>the</u> <u>advisor</u> <u>role,</u>
       <u>discussions</u> <u>be</u> <u>initiated</u> <u>to</u> <u>clarify</u> <u>the</u> <u>respective</u> <u>functions</u>
       <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>advisor</u> <u>and</u> <u>tutor</u> <u>with</u> <u>regard</u> <u>to</u> <u>enrolled</u> <u>student</u>
       <u>support.</u> Discussions have already begun with groups of
       tutors and Advisors.

V.   THAT <u>a</u> <u>clear</u> <u>plan</u> <u>be</u> <u>developed</u> <u>for</u> <u>the</u> <u>phasing-in</u> <u>of</u> <u>new</u>
       <u>advising</u> <u>centres</u> <u>in</u> <u>areas</u> <u>not</u> <u>presently</u> <u>served.</u> In light
       of the current discussions regarding the 1983-84 budget,
       it is recommended that every effort be made to provide a
       new Advising Centre in the Fraser Valley region in this
       coming year.

VI.   THAT <u>as</u> <u>new</u> <u>activities</u> <u>are</u> <u>incorporated</u> <u>into</u> <u>the</u> <u>role</u> <u>of</u>
       <u>the</u> <u>regional</u> <u>advising</u> <u>centres,</u> <u>periodic</u> <u>evaluations</u> <u>be</u> <u>done</u>
       <u>to</u> <u>determine</u> <u>the</u> <u>impact</u> <u>on</u> <u>services</u> <u>delivered</u> <u>from</u> <u>the</u> <u>centres</u>
       <u>and</u> <u>on</u> <u>centre</u> <u>staff.</u>

ACTION

It is suggested that a process and model be developed
for implementing the above recommendations. A new or
expanded committee should be established immediately
to deal with this issue and to ensure that the impetus
for improvements to the Advising Services is not lost.

At the time of writing of this report, another study
of the Advising Service at OLI has been completed by
M. Battistel. The recommendations of this report are
given in Appendix I and should also be addressed.

THE USE OF PROJECTIVES
IN TELEPHONE COUNSELLING

A paper submitted to the
International Workshop on
COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION
September, 1983
Downing College, Cambridge
United Kingdom

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Academic and vocational guidance and counselling has long been regarded as an indispensable component of traditional campus based post-secondary education. In distance education, however, we are only beginning to recognize counselling as an important part of the learner's educational experience (Mitchell and Thornton, 1978). At Athabasca University, we believe that counselling can be a powerful catalyst in strengthening the student's commitment to study. As Moore (1980) points out, "Adults who work at their real needs are highly motivated, do not drop out, and rarely fail". We believe that for those individuals returning to school for career reasons, the counsellor can play a key role in helping students to more specifically identify the aspirations and motivations which they bring to their study, and then to set goals, and develop realistic plans.

Career counselling in this context does not mean simply helping the student to make a decision. The goal of career development is to find and maintain an optimal match between the needs and goals of people and the requirements of work situations in society. For the individual student, career development requires awareness of self (interests, values, motivations, aspirations, and skills), and awareness of careers (job levels and fields, opportunities, and requirements), as well as skill in decision-making. Specific knowledge about oneself makes career awareness manageable and relevant by defining the occupational areas to be explored. The first task of the counsellor then is to help students become more aware of the interests, skills, and values which are most important to them in making a career choice. The use of projective techniques to aid in this process is a method of self-exploration which may prove particularly useful in the distance education setting. This paper is a proposal to add certain projectives to the career development program currently in use at Athabasca University. It is hoped that as a result of this paper, others will experiment with the use of projectives and will share their findings.

Projective techniques are not new. They have been used for diagnosis by

psychologists and psychiatrists since the turn of the century, and are established tools in psychotherapy (Rappaport, Gill, and Schaffer, 1976). Projectives are loosely defined as measures of personality consisting of a simple unstructured set of tasks which can elicit an unlimited number of responses. Hypotheses can then be drawn based on the responses. Projectives were developed under the medical model and as such, have been used mainly for diagnostic purposes. More recently, the counselling profession has begun to recognize the worth of projectives as part of the therapeutic process. In this model, the client and counsellor are working partners. Together they decide upon the use of projectives. The 'tests' are then administered jointly and the interpretation of results is a collaborative effort. It is this latter humanistic approach to projectives which has been used experimentally in career counselling with promising results (Amundson, 1979).

Using projectives within a counselling model not only aids in exploration of personality as it relates to career, but also has a positive influence on relationship building between counsellor and client by providing a basis for structured interviewing. Amundson (1979) notes in his description of a new model for use of projectives in career counselling that they can be used in the beginning to establish a focus and to help build a relationship, and may be used in later stages to stimulate additional discussion. It is this aspect of projectives which makes them particularly appropriate for telephone counselling in distance education.

One of the most difficult tasks in telephone counselling is the establishment of a warm, trusting relationship. Students cannot be expected to explore their concerns, difficulties, and problem situations if they have not built up the level of trust required to do so. Generally, the trust building phase of counselling is more lengthy in telephone counselling, and consequently, entering into exploration of personality can be anxiety provoking for both counsellor and student. The use of images and written projective exercises which counsellor and client can see simultaneously and discuss might help them to establish their relationship more quickly while aiding in collection of valuable data which will later aid the

student during the decision-making process. Counselling can take the form of a series of structured interviews and feedback sessions, with the projectives and structured materials allowing the counsellor to work with the student in accomplishing tasks rather than just talking. As the client and counsellor work collaboratively on the projective tasks, a working alliance will develop, allowing for deeper exploration.

Amundson (1978) and others have developed a number of projectives specifically for use in career planning with adults which can be adapted to a variety of counselling situations. Six of these projectives have been chosen for use within the framework of the Athabasca University career development program. Our program is based on a mixture of the trait and factor (structured/one point in time) approach and the developmental (process) approach to career planning. The student collects information about self and alternatives at a point in time and learns how to "recycle" the process over a longer period of time as they recognize and deal with changes in interests and career values. The model has three phases: 1)Exploring - the goal is for the client to explore self in relation to the world of work, e.g. work task preferences, occupational personality type; 2)Understanding - the goal is decision-making, i.e. a goal is identified through evaluating alternatives according to values and priorities; and 3)Action - the goal is to build a comprehensive career action plan to reach the identified goal, i.e. objectives are identified for the plan by evaluating self according to occupational requirements.

The student is assisted through the program by a counsellor and with the use of packaged materials which are mailed. The packaged materials fall into three categories: 1)Explanatory - introductions, overview; 2)Information Generating - standardized tests, occupational information, etc.; and 3)Processing Materials - exercises which provide application opportunities. The counsellor's role is to help the student to identify the major tasks in the model required to suit his/her individual situation and then to facilitate by providing feedback and assistance throughout the process. My plan is to use projectives in the first two phases of the Athabasca model. According to Amundson (1979),

the information produced through use of projectives can be a very useful

supplement to standardized interest inventories and tests of aptitude. He

lists the follwing dimensions as areas where projectives can provide infor-

mation:

    A.   Relationships--methods of dealing with others (peers and
    authority figures), ability to work with others, ability and
    preference for working alone.
    B.   Self Concept.
    C.   Motivation--money, status, job satisfaction, security.
    D.   Work Habits and Attitudes--industry and initiative, drive
    and energy, persistence and follow through, cooperation and
    friendliness, objectivity, creativity, attention to detail.
    E.   Aspirations--minor role, leadership.
    F.   Working Conditions--safety on the job, hours of work,
    holidays.
    G.   Mobility--rural, urban.
    H.   Level of Commitment--temporary, long term.
    I.   Training--time and energy which the person is prepared
    to devote for training purposes, desire for academic or
    vocational training.

    The following are projectives which I believe will be effective additions

to our career planning program, both for building the working alliance and to

collect information which is not easily accessible in other ways. These

particular projectives were chosen because of their suitability for adults

and their adaptability to our model of career planning.

    Phase One-Exploration: 1) Picture Stories (reference: Amundson, 1978)

                     2) The Party Exercise (reference: Bolles, 1976)

                     3) Five Enjoyable Activities (reference: Bolles,
                       1976)

    Phase Two-Understanding: 1) Career Exploration Questionnaire (reference:
                       Amundson, 1978)

                     2) Incomplete Sentence Blanks (reference:
                       Amundson, 1978)

                     3) Decision-Making Structure (this is simply
                       a pictorial representation of a force field analysis)
    When the student initially requests help, the counsellor will explore

the student's situation to determine whether career planning is the appropriate

action. If so, the model will be explained and the first package of materials

will be mailed to the student. The introductory materials will contain the

regular explanatory notes and standardized tests (Strong-Campbell and VIESA

Interest Inventories). In addition, materials for the first projectives are included: pictures for stories (chosen by the counsellor on the basis of the initial interview), and a pictorial representation of The Party. When the student receives the package, he/she will complete and return the standardized tests and make an appointment for a telephone interview with the counsellor.

During this first session, the discussion will focus on initial explora- tion of interests, work attitudes, aspirations, relationships, and self concept. Other information (motives, values, training, etc.) will be noted by the counsellor but not brought up for discussion until Phase Two unless the student expresses a desire to do so. The counsellor's goal for this initial session should be bonding--the development of a warm, trusting relationship--and to illicit as much information as possible about the student's occupational profile.

The counsellor will start with the picture stories. The student will be asked to choose three pictures from a group of several that were mailed earlier, to describe what is happening in terms of a work situation, and then tell why the pictures were chosen. My hypothesis is that students will find it easier to respond to this kind of interview than one where there is nothing to focus upon except the stranger on the other end of the line. The photographs are a common image. The student can picture the counsellor looking at the same photograph at the same time that he/she is describing it. I believe that this will result in earlier bonding because the client will find a level of comfort in this common focus on a specific task while getting to know their counsellor better. It provides purpose and bounds in the interview that are pre-determined. The student has fewer unknowns to deal with and can get to know the counsellor in what for most people should be a less threatening situation than a open-ended interview over the telephone. At the same time, counsellor and client will be uncovering information which is usually difficult to illicit in a first telephone call, and is essential to the self exploration process.

The picture stories will be followed by an exerciese called The Party. The

student is asked to look at a pictorial representation of a party in a hexagonal room. In each corner of the room there is a different group of people representing an occupational personality type (Holland occupational themes). The student will be asked which group they would like to speak to first, second, and third. Their choices and reasons are discussed and noted.

Following The Party exercise, they will be asked to list five activities which they enjoy. These will be discussed according to structured questions: What is it that makes them enjoyable? When are they most enjoyable? When not? Give specific instances. Given the reasons listed for making them enjoyable, what is the key reason?

The session can be concluded by identifying central themes from the three exercises and brainstorming as many occupations as possible which are suggested by the themes. These should all be noted. Before the next session, the results of the standardized tests and the next set of materials including the Career Exploration Questionnaire, Sentence Completion Blanks, and the Decision-Making Structure should be mailed to the student.

The second session will be arranged for when the results of the standardized tests have been received by the student. During this session, the objective results of these tests can be compared to the more subjective results obtained from the projectives. The goal should be to narrow alternatives to about ten or fewer choices. The student should be instructed to complete the Career Exploration Questionnaire and the Sentence Completion Blanks before the next session.

The third session will start the Understanding Phase where alternatives are compared and evaluated according to values and priorities. The goal of this session will be to produce a list of the student's occupational values and priorities which can be used for this purpose. As well, the student will be prepared for change by using the Decision-Making Structure. The session will begin with discussion of responses on the Career Exploration Questionnaire.

The counsellor should attempt to show the student how to extract his/her occupational values from their responses by asking further questions, and supplying feedback. Detailed notes should be kept by counsellor and student. The same format can be used for discussing the Incomplete Sentence Blanks. At this point, the student should have a good understanding of his/her occupational priorities and be in a position to start examining his/her alternatives in light of this information. The homework assignment will be to gather detailed information about each of their choices in an attempt to find out how well each meets their identified needs. Before the session ends, the counsellor and student should discuss the consequences of career change vs. no career change using the Decision-Making Structure. This is a pictorial representation of a force field analysis, a chart which the student fills in showing the advantages and disadvantages of both change and no change. The purpose of this is to prepare the student for change in a very real way. Our experience is that students often experience anxiety in the Understanding Phase as they approach the decision-making task. Many students do not call in for their next appointment when they reach this point. Using the Decision-Making Structure before the student actually faces the final decision making task could possibly lessen this anxiety. The counsellor can help the client bring their fears into the open and compare them to the benefits of change. The ready-made structure of the Decision-Making Chart will make discussing an anxiety provoking subject over the telephone somewhat easier. Again, both student and counsellor have the same image in front of them and can focus on the task of force field analysis by filling in the chart. The session will end with instructions being given for the homework assignment. The student may need guidance on how to find occupational information.

The next session should be the conclusion of the Understanding Phase and the beginning of the Action Phase. The counsellor can begin by debriefing

the homework assignment. If the student has successfully identified a goal, he/she can move on to the Action Phase. The counsellor should work with the student to identify objectives to meet the requirements of his/her occupational goal and to write these into a step by step career action plan. This may take more than one session.

At the conclusion of the program, the student should have a fairly clear goal, and a plan to reach it. More importantly, they should have skills which will enable them to recycle the career development process as their interests and priorities change. I believe that the addition of projectives to the program provides a ready-made structure for the tasks of exploration which will result in earlier formation of the working alliance between student and counsellor, and consequently, will allow for discussion of attitudes, values, and motivations which are crucial to the career planning process, but are usually difficult to access and discuss by telephone. The student will experience a more complete and balanced assessment with the information from the projectives providing a much needed supplement to the standardized tests. During the process, the student should become more aware of their occupational needs as well as their interests and aptitudes, and consequently, be clearer on the benefits of career change. Their commitment to study should deepen and their motivation should be strengthened as a result. The addition of projectives to the career planning program will not be just an addition of quantity of information provided to the student, but one of quality where both the student/counsellor relationship and the actual change process are enhanced.

144

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Workshop Session on Telephone Counselling   Judith George

The telephone has become a regular medium for teaching and counselling
in the Open University over the past six years or so, especially in
the regions with a wide scatter of remote students - Wales and Scotland.
In Scotland, for example, nearly a third of all students have to
rely on the phone as the sole means of contact with other students
and with their tutor since they are so widely scattered over the
Highlands and Islands and the Border regions. As a matter of policy
students always have a counsellor nearer at hand than a tutor -
experience has shown that there is a marked decrease in drop-out
of remote students if there is someone local available for contact
and counselling, even if the student numbers in the area cannot
support a specialist course tutor.   So the phone is used more for
tuition than for counselling.   But even so it is a vital link
between a local counsellor and his students in most of these remote
areas where there may easily be a round trip of some 80 miles
between the Study Centre and the student's home, often over single track
roads, or between islands.   These counsellors and students have to
become adept at effective contact by phone as soon as they join the
Open University.   Even in more central areas the phone can be the
only link for the housebound and disabled and the most frequent
means of contact for the higher-level student who finds it easier to
contact his counsellor for advice this way rather than by wasting
valuable time on a journey to a Study Centre.

The phone is used the three ways: in one-to-one individual calls, in
loudspeaker phone group work and in conference call group work.
Each of these has its own peculiar advantages.   One-to-one calls are
clearly best suited to individual counselling and problem solving.
Both forms of group work are useful in that they offer the extra
dimension of discussion and peer-support which can give a student an
invaluable sense of identity and support.   The loudspeaker phones
are used in locations where there are sufficient students to meet
together face-to-face for discussion, but too far distant for the counsellor
to be present.   The counsellor can then phone through from his home
to the loudspeaker phone in the Study Centre to be 'present' at the
meeting, though in voice alone.   These phones have the disadvantage
that students must travel to use them and often in these areas, as
we have explained already, even this is not easy.   So conference
call group work is the best form of contact to keep together a group
scattered, for example, over the islands of Shetland.   In a conference
call individual phones are linked together by telephone bridging
equipment so that a student group and their counsellor, each one at
his/her home phone, can 'meet' by phone and talk together as a group.

In this context the phone has tremendous advantages as a means of
communication.   It is flexible, immediate; it saves time, energy and
money in travel.   Against its effective use, though, is set the
common British aversion to the phone for anything except the most
brief and essential calls.   Even when it is explained that the
University is providing the phone contact free as the most cost-
effective form of putting a counsellor in touch with a student,
people express reluctance to use the phone.   They - counsellors and

students alike - often say that they dislike using the phone at all and feel it forbiddingly expensive.

This basic antipathy has first to be overcome and people accustomed to the phone as a parallel and alternate form of contact to a face-to-face meeting.   It is also important that people should recognise the nature and demands of the medium and its difference from face-to-face communication before they attempt a teaching or counselling session of any complexity.   If this is not done, too often they are frustrated or disappointed by some avoidable mishap or confusion and thereafter are convinced that 'my subject can't be taught by phone' or 'you can't <u>really</u> discuss something on the 'phone'.

The most central feature of phone, in contrast to face-to-face contact, is that it is a non-visual medium.   Once the implications of this feature and others are recognised and counselling skills adapted appropriately, research indicates that a good teacher or counsellor in face-to-face situations is equally good in general, on the phone, though not all tasks are as suited to one medium as to the other.   To facilitate this adaptation a structured training programme is necessary.   It is also important because this is a relatively new and fast-developing field of communication.   A training programme can pass on tried and tested approaches and stratagems, as well as keeping people in touch with developments in the technology.

During this workshop session we will work through a few sections of a training pack for telephone contact which has been developed in the Open University in Scotland.   The object of the session is twofold:

1)   to highlight for discussion important facets of this medium.

2)   to demonstrate an approach to training counsellors in telephone work.

Judith George.

Judith George

February 1983

JG/vb

3.

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ECCTIS

EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING AND CREDIT TRANSFER INFORMATION SERVICE

In January 1983, the development of the Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service began.   This project, which is being funded by the Department of Education and Science, is the latest stage in a plan which could eventually have a major effect on students' range of opportunities and choice in further and higher education in the United Kingdom.   The project's aims are to encourage the transfer of credit between educational institutions and to improve the advice which is available to students, and prospective students, on the course options.   It will provide, for the first time, comprehensive information about courses on offer in further and higher education and the level of qualifications which are accepted for entry to them.

The Need

The expansion and innovation which has taken place in British education during recent years has made choosing the most appropriate course a complex process.   Finding one's way through the educational system has been likened to trying to find one's way through a forest, where even seasoned explorers get lost if they stray from familiar territory. The movement from rigid syllabuses to more modular structures and the increasing variety of courses on offer add to the difficulty of selecting the one which best suits individual needs.   Just maintaining an awareness of what is on offer is an onerous and time consuming task.

To make the most of this rich and varied educational system it is important that students can obtain full information about the choices which are available to them, before, during and after taking a course.   It is important too, if time consuming and expensive duplication of effort is to be avoided, that they can benefit by obtaining credit for previous educational achievement.   This, and the growing need for updating and development in professional and technical careers, will lead to increasing numbers of requests for credit transfer and advance standing - the exception from parts of a course and/or examination on the strength of previously obtained qualifications or

- 2 -

experience.

The Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) is being established to satisfy the need for information in all of these areas. It will help students, educational institutions and employers.

The Service

ECCTIS will provide students, prospective students and students' advisors, including those in schools, with information to help match individual needs to available courses leading to recognised qualifications. This information will include details of courses which are available in an area of study, in a geographical area or at a particular level of study. For each course the normal entry requirements will be given and, where appropriate, any alternative or partial qualifications which may be accepted for entry or advanced standing will also be indicated.

A major objective of ECCTIS is to encourage credit transfer and the service will provide information to help educational institutions and professional bodies, when they are considering entry applications from students who do not offer the prescribed qualifications, or who apply for advanced standing. More detailed information on the courses will be available for this purpose including the quantitative content of the course and, where possible, its degree of acceptance by other institutions. In this way ECCTIS will act as a catalyst for the development of general schemes of credit transfer between institutions and courses.

As a service to employers, ECCTIS will be able to provide information on courses which will help them fulfil their specific needs for education and training, and the recruitment of staff with particular qualifications.

The educational institutions will be encouraged to see ECCTIS as an extension to their own information services and to ensure that the information held is correct and up to date. A computer system will be employed to maintain the database and this will be supplemented by a microfilm library containing more detailed information.

The Feasibility Study

In 1977 the Department of Education and Science became increasingly concerned

about the high rate of wastage in higher education and, with the growing
need for modular courses in continuing education, decided to commission a
study to advise on the necessity and feasibility of establishing a service
to provide information on credits given in respect of studies undertaken by
students and leading to further and higher education qualifications.   This
study, popularly known as the Toyne Report[1], after its Director, Mr Peter
Toyne, was completed in June 1979.   It concluded that there was a clear need
for an Educational Credit Transfer Information Service.   The report indicated
that there would initially be about 18,000 enquiries to the service from
institutions each year.

A more extensive study of student demand was then undertaken, covering students'
advisors as well as the students themselves.   University, polytechnic, local
authority and adult careers and guidance services were consulted.   From the
replies received it was estimated that some 50,000 enquiries a year would be
made to an effective information service, the bulk of these coming from students
in further education.   Of nearly 10,000 replies to the student survey, 20%
were from students over the age of 25.   About 95% of the students responding
considered that such a service would be useful, or very useful, and the
majority felt it reasonable to pay for it.

Even if interpreted conservatively, the evidence suggested that a substantial
number of educational and professional institutions, the bulk of student advisory
services and a great many higher and further educational students would use
ECCTIS even if charges were levied.   The response indicated that the level of
support would be sufficient to justify proceeding with the establishment of a
service and that this support was likely to grow when the service was operational
and able to demonstrate its value.   It would be particularly useful for mature
students entering or re-entering higher education, and for those seeking post-
experience vocational courses for retraining or updating their knowledge.

In May 1982, tenders were invited for the design and testing of a computerised
Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service.   The word
'counselling' being added to the title to better reflect the nature of the
service to be provided.

- 4 -

The Development Programme

The development programme, which is now beginning, has two phases, although due to the need for the service to be operational quickly, they will overlap. The first phase is the design of a computerised system which can provide a national service. The second, which is planned to be operational from January 1984, will be the testing and development of the service through a pilot operation. At this stage the information bank will include all courses at universities and polytechnics as well as most other higher education throughout the UK. It will also include all further and higher education courses which lead to a recognised qualification, other than school leaving certificates, in the pilot area of South West England.

The first task of the project team has been the establishment of an information centre. The centre is equipped with on-line computer terminals which enable the services Information Officers to both build and interrogate the database. Each Information Officer is allocated specific responsibility for the data relating to a number of participating institutions and will work closely with a 'contact' nominated by the head of the institution to obtain the information required. The service will initially take much of this from prospectuses and will take the rest in whatever form it is easiest for the institution to provide it.

Whilst undoubtedly the provision of this information will require effort on the part of the institutions it is hoped that the establishment of a comprehensive database will ultimately save them from having to supply information to a number of agencies. ECCTIS could therefore develop into a central resource, supplying information to educational publishers.

The Information Centre will provide information in response to enquiries received by telephone or post. Telephone enquirers can be given immediate answers by the Information Officers using the computer terminals. Those requiring a more detailed answer and enquiries received by post will normally be responded to within 24 hours, making full use of word processing facilities.

Whilst the Information Centre will adequately cope with institutional enquiries it is clear that the guidance services will require a local and more interactive service and the project team are currently studying ways of achieving this.

Initial studies suggest that microfiche packs would be a cost effective way of providing the vast amount of information in a manageable form. Viewdata - the use of television type terminals linked to the computer database by an ordinary telephone line - also offers considerable potential. These terminals are widely available in educational establishments and in public libraries. Prestel, the public viewdata service, is also currently encouraging their use in schools by supplying terminals and also by enabling a wide range of micro-computers to connect to the database. A decision on this aspect of the service will be taken shortly.

The Future

The development programme is financed for three years and, if successful, it is expected that a full national service will follow this. The national service is intended to operate as an independent and self-financing body, providing an authoritative source of up to date information. Such a service will provide a big stimulus to improving educational guidance and to the establishment of accreditation schemes. It should have a major impact on students' choice of post-school education.

P E Frogbrook

June 1983

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LEARNING DESIGNERS AS LEARNING COUNSELLORS: SOME ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES
IN FACILITATING ADULT DISTANCE LEARNING
by Elizabeth J Burge

INTRODUCTION

This paper tries to strengthen some ties between distance
course designers and tutor-counsellors. It selects five
counselling issues which warrant more attention by instructional
designers if we are to improve the quality of distance learning
and help the work of tutor-counsellors. Six learning design
principles are presented as a useful framework for designers and
counsellors alike. The principles emerge from a learner centred
view of adult learning - one which seems particularly appropriate
in theory for distance learners, even if its implementation still
presents major challenges. This view of learning recognizes the
individuality and inherently self-directing tendencies of adults
(e.g. Cross 1981, Knowles 1978) and stresses a facilitative
approach to helping adults learn as distinct from a consistently
directive approach. (Mezirow 1981, Rogers 1983). A key assumption
for this paper is that instructional designers, or, more
appropriately, learning designers (LD) share with their partners,
tutor-counsellors, (TC) some basic concerns around the facilitation
of cognitive and affective learning processes. Both work toward
efficient and effective learning, and have to consider differences
in learning styles, needs, skills and conditions as part of their
assessment and support work. Another assumption of this paper is
that distance education can embrace many more applications of a
facilitative approach than it presently gets (institutional
requirements not withstanding).

COUNSELLORS AND DESIGNERS: EQUAL PARTNERS

The extent and depth of discussion and writing on counselling
in distance education provides an increasingly broad series of
options for helping learners. The range of terminology reflects
the range of helping functions of TC's - key ones are communication,
motivation, social contact, mediation of course materials,
assessment and grading, learner advocacy and remedial. Northedge's
terms of "caring supporter", "efficient manager" (Northedge 1975),
is a good summary of that range. Specific TC tasks have been
listed (e.g. Robinson 1981), and perceived differences between
effective and ineffective counselling documented (Thomas 1974).
Models of counselling services reflect many types of learner
support, from individual letters to group meetings of various sizes
and intensity, using different technologies. Responsibility for
these services rests on a continuum from total institutional
direction to student-initiated informal self help (Bailey 1983).

Most relevant to a learner centred view of all this activity
are the categorizations of learner needs and problems (e.g.
Robinson 1981). Often discussed are low motivation for learning,
drop out, lack of confidence, inadequate learning how to learn
skills, pressures from other life roles and crisis points which
trigger dysfunctional stress. (One wonders sometimes just how far
these "problems" are caused or exacerbated by the student being
"processed" through institutional administrivia and or confronting
inappropriately presented learning materials).

Two points about these discussions are worth noticing here.
(i) They are always placed in the tutor-counsellor's arena, in
the book chapters headed "Counselling" or "Student Support
Systems", well removed from all the guidelines on "good"
instructional design.
(ii) They have also grown to the extent where they now compete
in size and emphasis with the body of writing on course design
and materials production. The discussions support a recent
contention that the quality of both components of distance
education, ie., materials preparation and learner confrontation
with materials, is critical for successful distance learning
(King, Stewart & Gough 1980). Certainly, general but separate
acknowledgement is made that the L.D. and the T.C. play equally
important roles.

STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP

If LD's and TC's play equally important roles, and if their
work is seen jointly within a facilitative approach to learning,
then several questions emerge:

o If they are concerned with the same learning processes
  and outcomes, to what extent are LD's and TC's talking
  seriously with each other?

o To what extent do some TC's have to act as "antidotes"
  for inappropriate work by LD's?

o Which counselling issues can be addressed by LD's so
  that the facilitating work of TC's can be enhanced?;
  in short,

o How can LD's better help TC's?

The remainder of this paper discusses five issues which affect
TC and LD alike. Each issue relates strongly to a learner-centred
view of learning: motivation, individuality, development of
learning skills and styles, stages of learning, and interaction.
No attempt is made to include comprehensive lists of traditional
and innovative strategies for each issue, nor "cover the waterfront"
in terms of the use of interactive technologies. Readers will
supply their own contexts! In part, the discussion extends
similar concerns about "counselling and course construction"
expressed by Murgatroyd (1976).

THE ISSUES

1. Motivation

To educators who acknowledge and model that adult learning is
problem, task, or life-change associated, motivation as it is
traditionally used, ie., "keeping them interested," is a non issue.

The real issue is the removal of blocks to learning and the
enhancement of innate action tendencies to produce organized
behaviour. These two tendencies can be distinguished as i) a
trend to "autonomous independent behaviour" (mastery) and ii) a
trend to harmonious "interdependent behaviour" (Brundage and
Mackeracher 1980, p.38). As adults, we organize and control in
order to survive and feel self esteem (mastery); and we belong
to various groups and partnerships in order to enhance our
security and sense of connectedness with significant others
(belonging).

     Interventions from teachers, tutors, and learning designers
de-motivate mastery tendencies when they reject or ignore the
learner's sense of self, de-value the learner's perception of
her/his world, or take control away from the learner. Those
interventions can be experienced by the learner as a loss of
self, puzzlement or helplessness. Interventions de-motivate
belonging tendencies when they reject or don't use the learner's
past experience, create unpredictable or discontinuous learning
situations, or reduce opportunities for interpersonal interactions.
Those interventions can be experienced as a self estrangement,
self doubt and isolation (Brundage & MacKeracher 1980).

     Using this framework, LD's, as well as TC's, would therefore
be looking for indirect and direct ways to develop learner self-
esteem, learner organization and control, and sustained connections
for the learner between peers and other supportive people.
Consider for example, the point of first real contact between
learner and institution - the arrival of course materials,
especially all of them! That this is all too often a crisis
point for the learner may result not only for the learner
having inadequate learning skills, but also from a feeling of
being overwhelmed by the quality and size of those materials.
Inadvertent institution-induced stress occurs, despite other
precautions. Learner feelings of mastery and belonging could be
increased here for example by the sending of a very small package
and an initial learning contract, to be based on the learner's
perceptions of learning needs, as well as the institution's
(Knowles 1975).

2.   Individuality

     Much has been made of the differences in age, lifestyle and
life experience of adult learners, but more attention is being
paid to individual differences in cognitive styles (e.g. Messick
1976), and learning styles (Kolb and Fry 1975), and their
implications for educators (Mackeracher 1983). Messick's list
of cognitive style dimensions needs attention beyond the often
discussed field dependency - independency one: the differing
needs for example of holists vs serialists, solo vs group
learners, auditory vs visual or kinesthetic, concrete vs abstract,
reflective vs impulsive styles call for diverse learning methods
and resource formats. It would be no surprise to confirm through
more research that course writers usually impose their own

- 4 -

cognitive style on learners,despite efforts by LD's in the course
team process. LD's should be sure to include experiential
learning_strategies which tap the learner's past and present
experience, and also enable her/him to move through a cycle of
learning methods beyond the preferred one. Matching responses by
the TC, can then provide questions for the analysis of experience
and for meaningful concept building. The use of reflection
strategies (Boyd and Fales 1983) in learning from experience can
harness often-neglected right-brain activity, but they need to be
structured by LD's and followed through by TC's.

3. Development of Learning Skills

Clearly a long term goal for LD's and TC's alike is the
development of the learner's ability to use a repertoire of
learning skills and to be self directing in the use of that
repertoire. Gibb's work has helped us move away from traditional
prescriptive "how to study" approaches which took inadequate
account of individual differences in cognitive and learning styles
(Gibbs 1981). When LD's and academics can loosen up their designs
to give more_choice,   in topic areas, assignment formats and
their sequencing,& pacing: for learner diagnosis of learning styles;
for the use of learning contracts and guided project work; and for
increased learner involvement in the evaluation of her/his learning,
then we may be giving distance learners real opportunities to
develop skills and confidence for effective learning.

4. Phases and Stages of Learning

Many models exist,and they challenge LD's as well as TC's to
help learners analyse the "ups and downs" in learning and accept
the stages in their learning process. A synthesized 4 stage
model has proved very useful to this writer and is relevant in
this context: Stage 1. Entry, 2. Re-active (to perceived
environment and demands), 3. Pro-active (involved with others)
and 4. Integrative (multiple behaviours, interpretations and
information resources used) (Brundage & Mackeracher 1980).
Anyone helping the learner through these stages needs to provide
for:

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Stage 1 - a reliable and continuous environment,
Stage 2 - support for the learner's feelings and
          opinions,
Stage 3 - encouragement for collaboration and
          feedback on learner behaviour, and
Stage 4 - to encourage the development of
          internalized standards for the
          learner, and act as a co-learner.
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Trust in the learner's ability to learn to cope, without abdication
of   responsibility,is cleary an issue for TC's here; - a
corresponding challenge for the LD is how to build in appropriately
timed, indirect leadership through the course materials.

- 5 -

5. Interaction

This attracts much discussion, especially in terms of balancing independent and interdependent activity (Daniel and Marquis 1979). Several points are worth noting here in view of the earlier comments about learner-centred learning. We use configurations to describe <u>institution-initiated</u> patterns of interaction but are these comprehensive enough? For example, a 3 part configuration consists of learner-materials, learner-tutor and learner-peer learners. But a fourth part could be encouraged- the interaction between the learner and her/his past learning/ experience - so as to enhance the relevance of learning and to enable her/him to clarify personal learning objectives. Another point, but this time concerning <u>learner-initiated</u> patterns of interaction: LD's could consider developing these in terms of their cognitive aspects - analysis and synthesis of learnings and the use of wider learning resources - and in terms of affective factors - mutual support, self as resource for others, sense of control and belonging. Audio teleconferencing and electronic mail could enhance interaction, as could wider use of self-help groups, and decentralized TC services.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Clearly, these issues are already being confronted by LD's and TC's in various ways, but one cannot judge how far this confrontation is supported by articulated design principles. The following six principles represent one recent practical attempt to articulate a learner centred approach for TC and LD alike. They were used in a successful 1982 project to deliver in a distance mode 2 graduate education courses of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (an affiliate of the University of Toronto).

What follows here is a summary of each principle and its operationalization (Fales and Burge, in press).

<u>Principle 1: Facilitation</u> - learning is enhanced when it is facilitated as a process rather than content taught. Learning guides in the 2 courses presented a process approach: Detailed instructions, especially after the beginning of the 2 courses, required learners to attend to their own learning processes, refine their learning goals, select a wide variety of learning resources, and use small and larger peer learning groups. Group and individual learning was monitored through scheduled phone calls. The course tutor guided the learners to "give themselves permission" to leave the passive-dependent mode and to explore laterally or in depth, according to their interests and needs.

<u>Principle 2: Self Direction</u> - learners should be helped to plan their own learning so that it uses, as far as possible, their independence, experience and action tendencies. Learners developed their own learning goals and specific in-depth activities relevant to the given and broader academic goals. They also recorded their progress and personal analyses in a structured learning journal.

- 6 -

Principle 3: Individuality - learning is enhanced when individual cognitive and learning styles are respected and actively used in the course design. Experiential, reflective, conceptual and experimental learning activities were used (Kolb & Fry 1975). Attention was given to some cognitive style differences - auditory/ visual, individual/group, analytic/holistic and field dependent/ independent - in various choices given to learners around how they learned and how they presented evidence of their learning.

Principle 4: Relevance - learning is enhanced when it is relevant to the learner's personal and work situations. Learning activities demanded application of learned principles to personal life and work, and development of personalized objectives. They encouraged self disclosure, and guided group discussion toward effective sharing of personal experience. They also used evaluation criteria such that learners could incorporate personal learnings into more traditional academic course products.

Principle 5: Collaboration - when collaborative, rather than competitive, learning interactions are encouraged, learning is enhanced. Course structures used different levels and types of group interaction. Instructions in the learning guides stressed supportive and peer learning strategies. Tutor-evaluated course products included small group presentations given in the final face to face workshops.

Principle 6: Resource Extension - the use of resources from the learner's environment (home, work, community) will help new learning to be more effectively integrated into existing knowledge, skills and attitudes. Learners were specifically encouraged to discuss their learnings with family, friends and colleagues, to develop support and find resources within these networks, and to find and use local case studies for analysis and synthesis activities.

Clearly the operationalization of these principles would vary in other situations, but the project staff found them a very useful reference point for design and for formative and summative evaluation activity. Needless to say, their articulation was easier than their application!

If these principles provide a useful framework for other TC's and LD's, and signal   areas for closer partnership, then this selective view of learning issues will have served its purpose.

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<u>COUNSELLING NEEDS IN THE OPEN TECH PROGRAMME</u>

Stuart Dalziel and Mike Freshwater*

<u>Introduction</u>

1. The Open Tech Programme was launched in August 1982 by the Manpower Services Commission as part of its New Training Initiative. The Programme is collaborative with many other agencies, and is developmental in character. Its aim is to extend through open and distance learning the effective accessibility to adults, vocational education and training. It focusses on technician, supervisory and management levels of skill and knowledge. The projects commissioned already demonstrate the breadth of the Programme, the many kinds of institutions through which it will operate and the variety of open learning approaches and delivery and supporting activities which it will be helping to get off the ground.

2. As an exciting innovative venture, it has been recognised from the beginning that the Programme is bound to involve the need for advice, guidance and counselling. Identifying what, for whom and how best carried out will be an important subsidiary task of the Programme. We anticipate that in the process the meaning and scope of "counselling" in open and distance learning will be significantly extended.

<u>The Information - Counselling Spectrum</u>

3. We are finding already that we cannot be too narrow in our definitions. The 'umbrella' must encompass information giving, advising, guiding and client-centred counselling. Broadly speaking we include any process that requires something more than simply providing data; and which usually involves an interaction of some kind (which itself can be at a distance, using information technology). Where what is called "counselling" ends and what is called "learning/ training/education" begins will not, we think, worry us too much.

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The "Clients"

4. Equally the clients for counselling cannot be too narrowly
conceived. They are not simply the individuals at the receiving
end. When one is aiming for a fairly radical learner-centred
flexibility in vocational and work-related education and training
many others in the system will be clients as well! To move (as will
undoubtedly be the case) further along the line from a "course-
provision" orientation to a "provider flexible learning services"
orientation will involve major shifts of attitudes and structures.

5. Thus clients for counselling can be:
     . individuals as "users"
     . employing organisations both as users and as participants
       in learning material preparation, delivery and student support
     . educational and training bodies as providers of flexible learning.

6. Equally, counselling can include:
     . help to individuals and organisations in decision-making
       about what courses, modules or units or learning material
       they need or can handle
     . help to user organisations in seeing what is involved for their
       management, trainers, specialists, etc. in supporting open
       learning provision for their employees, and in being willing
       and able to provide this support
     . help to those running open learning programmes, whether based
       in or out of the education system, in adjusting their attitudes
       to a new mode of operation.

Activites

7. In the Open Tech Programme we have and are developing a number of
support activities which bear on these groups and their needs. These
are:
a. We are commissioning the National Institute of Careers Education
& Counselling (NICEC) to work through some initial OT projects, to
help us identify what kind of counselling problems and opportunities
are emerging and how best these can be met;
b. The Council of Educational Technology (CET) are already operating

-2-

with us a flexible staff training and development service to meet
the identified needs of projects under the Programme;

c. We are developing and will shortly be implementing an information
stategy so that potential users of all kinds can know about what is
available and how. This will essentially work through existing bodies,
and information networks.

8. We hope that in these ways we will be able significantly to
define and make available effective counselling services for open
learning students and providers.

PREPARATION FOR OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDIES : SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
by Sheelagh Watts

Advice and preparation have always been considered to be part of the educational counselling service provided by the Open University for its prospective students. This paper describes some recent developments in the area of advice on preparation for Open University studies. Although the developments which are described are specific to a given institution, the underlying questions and problems to which the paper refers will hopefully be shared by many of those involved in providing a pre-entry counselling service for students in a distance teaching institution.

A very brief summary of the development of policy on preparation within the Open University is included at this point in order to put current developments in context. The importance of preparatory courses for intending students was acknowledged in the Report of the Planning Committee to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, which encouraged support by the University for a network of preparatory courses in existing institutions.[1] The previous Vice-Chancellor in his Report for 1969-70 indicated that he did not consider it timely for the University to develop pre-university preparatory courses at that time but implied that it was the intention to do so at some time in the future. [2] No further general policy statements were made until July 1978, but in the meantime some faculties began to take initiatives in relation to preparation for their foundation courses. The Mathematics faculty introduced a Diagnostic Quiz linked to a set of Mathematics Preparatory modules. The Science faculty introduced a Diagnostic Quiz linked to materials designed to prepare science students for the mathematics which they would require within the Science foundation course. In July 1978 Senate approved a new policy for admissions, advice and preparation but the advice and preparation elements of this policy were never implemented owing to lack of resource. In the following two years, questions were raised concerning the provision free of charge of the preparatory materials for mathematics and science students. It was finally resolved at the beginning of 1981 that no payment should be made. Throughout this period preparatory study was available through local preparatory courses and correspondence colleges. The preparatory courses provided by local authority colleges have run into increasing difficulty over the last few years because of cut-backs in local authority spending. This has caused a reduction in the number of courses initially offered to prospective Open University students together with an increasing number of courses which are offered but do not recruit sufficient numbers to warrant starting the courses under the more rigorous number requirements now in force. It has also to be recognised that the vast majority of the University's students has not made use of external preparation provision: for financial, geographical or personal reasons.

In November 1981, the Vice-Chancellor set up a group to review the provision of preparation for Open University study. The need for such a

review had become apparent for a number of reasons. It had become widely accepted that the overall educational preparedness of many of our applicants and entrants had declined over the years. In addition, an increasing proportion of applicants who were offered places were not accepting these places. It was also the case that the lack of a clear policy on preparation had led to a wide and disparate provision resulting in duplication in some areas and the absence of any provision in others. The Review Group on Preparation produced a report containing a series of recommendations which were adopted as University Policy by Senate in July 1982.[3]

The focus of the revised policy was the setting up of a Preparation Team, modelled on an Open University Course Team. It was decided that the membership of the Preparation Team should be kept as small as possible if it was to fulfill its responsibilities effectively. It now contains a representative from each faculty, a senior counsellor and a representative from the Institute of Educational Technology. In addition, the Team is building up a network of contacts for wider consultation so that relevant members of the full- and part-time staff of the University and students can be involved in the development process.

The Preparation Team was given two major tasks: firstly, the creation of coherence from the student viewpoint in respect of advice on preparation from the time of application for a place until the commencement of formal studies; and secondly, the production of a modest package of low cost preparatory materials for each foundation course which would include a small amount of core material linked to course specific material. It is intended that each registered student should be sent free of charge the preparatory package for their chosen foundation course. This paper deals initially with the second of these tasks since this task raises a number of fundamental issues.

Discussion of the development of the preparatory packages should perhaps be prefaced by one or two introductory remarks. The Preparation Team did not begin its work until March of this year so development of materials is at an early stage. The Open University has five foundation courses covering the faculty areas of Arts, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Science and Technology, so that it is envisaged that five separate preparatory packages will be produced although there will be elements common to all the packages.

Much of the early discussion within the Preparation Team focussed on the issue of whether study skills should be dealt with in isolation or within the context of the course which the student was about to study. This topic had previously been discussed both within the Institute of Educational Technology and subsequently by the University's Advisory and Preparatory Services Committee.[4] The view at that time was that work on study skills

2

should be set within the context of courses to be, or being, studied. The Preparation Team supports this view and will endeavour within the preparatory packages to enable a student to begin to learn the necessary skills within the context of their chosen subject. There is also a strongly held view that the activities within the preparatory package should encourage the student to examine the process of learning as well as the content. This is of necessity a very brief summary of a complex area and it is not possible to raise all the relevant issues in such a paper (a list of previous and current Open University publications dealing with preparation has been included for reference [5]).

The Preparation Team has also had to come to terms with the differing perceptions within the University of the role and content of Foundation courses, and of the assumed entry and exit behaviour of the students who take them. The Preparation Team is probably the first group within the Open University which has had to confront these issues directly because of its cross-faculty membership. There is no doubt that some of the foundation courses pay considerable attention to the development of certain skills within the foundation courses themselves. There will, therefore, need to be variation in the depth of treatment of any particular topic within a faculty preparatory package, depending on the extent to which the foundation course has addressed itself to the topic.

n considering the content of each faculty preparatory package, members of the Team have identified three broad areas which should be covered: personal and contextual aspects of study, studying within the Open University system, and studying a given foundation course. The latter area would include an introduction to skills which would be further developed within the foundation course itself. It is hoped to include aspects of these three broad areas at various points within each faculty package so as to offer an integrated approach to preparation. It is planned that the packages will consist of both written materials and audio-cassettes so that students will become accustomed to using a variety of media from the start.

Although the Team is at a relatively early stage in the development of preparatory materials, it has set certain objectives which it is hoped will be realised within each faculty package:

(i)   The materials should involve active learning via self-
        assessment.

(ii)   The materials will need to strike a balance between
        sharpening a student's self-perception and allaying anxiety.

(iii)   The materials should be designed and structured to enable
        students to work through at a pace appropriate to their own
        needs.

3

In setting such objectives the Team has highlighted the dilemma to be faced in preparing students for study at a distance. It will be necessary for students to work through the preparatory packages with minimum support from tutorial staff since regular contact with a tutor does not take place until the formal commencement of the first foundation course. Hence, the preparatory materials will need to strike a delicate balance between sharpening a student's self-perception but at the same time avoiding the danger of discouraging a student at a point when there is little support from tutor or fellow students. The Team is very aware of these problems and hopes to include "triggers" within the materials to ensure that students in difficulty ask for help within a defined flexible support system. It is hoped that some faculty packages will include computer marked assignments in order to offer formative assessment. It will also be made clear to students that study of the preparatory package is not a pre-requisite for study of the foundation course.

It is proposed that a student should be sent the preparatory package for his chosen foundation course in the October prior to commencing formal studies the following February. All undergraduate students wil receive such a package free of charge. Under the Open University's admissions system, the student may have applied for a place many months earlier. However, there was a strongly held view within the Review Group on Preparation, that for the majority of students the preparatory period should not be unduly long. It was felt that the momentum created by the preparatory package should be carried forward into the foundation course. The preparatory packages will be modest in size and will provide a limited number of student study hours. The Preparation Team fully accepts that this provision will not be sufficient for those of our applicants who are severely underprepared for study with the Open University. It is in this area that the role of other providers is of considerable importance. This topic is considered further in relation to the application process in a later paragraph. At the same time as receiving the preparatory package, new students will be linked to a tutor-counsellor[6] with whom they will remain during their foundation year studies. It is envisaged that at this stage there will be one meeting between a tutor-counsellor and his group of new students to advise on the use of the preparatory package. The Preparation Team will be writing briefing materials for use by tutor-counsellors. As mentioned previously, contact between the tutor-counsellor and students between this meeting and the start of the course will be very limited.

The paper now returns briefly to the other major task for the Preparation Team, that is, the creation of coherence from the student viewpoint in respect of advice on preparation from the time of application until the commencement of formal studies.

At present applicants to the University's undergraduate programme obtain information from a number of different sources between the time of application and start of formal study. These sources include the **Guide for Applicants,** faculty materials, regional information, radio and TV programmes, and miscellaneous correspondence from various departments within the University. Until the formation of the Preparation Team, there has been no mechanism for co-ordinating the output from these sources. As a result, the applicant is faced with various sources of information lacking in overall coherence and containing inevitable duplication of information. The Preparation Team has been given the task of co-ordinating all advice concerned with preparation so that the student is given clear and coherent advice from the point of initial application. It is now policy that at the time of students' applications the University should make clear to them its preparatory strategy and indicate what support will be made available to them and when they might receive it.

The advice and support which is offered to applicants at the time of their application is the concern of a number of areas within the University. The Preparation Team is particularly concerned that the University in its publications should raise issues for the attention of the prospective student at the most appropriate time. There is a growing feeling in a number of quarters that more diagnostic activities in respect of personal/financial/educational issues should be included within the **Guide for Undergraduate Applicants** so that prospective students can make realistic decisions before deciding on whether to proceed with their applications. There is again the problem of striking a balance between realistic self-perception and the creation of anxiety. However, the **Guide for Applicants** in its current form refers applicants to the Regional Enquiry Service based in their local Regional Office if they have any queries which they wish to raise.[7] If more diagnostic activities were included this link would need to be further strengthened. There is also the possibility at this stage of referring those applicants who are most severely underprepared for undergraduate study to courses run by other providers. However, this must always raise a series of further questions on whether or not it is possible to identify accurately this category of applicants at this early stage.

In conclusion, many of the plans described in this paper are at an early stage of development. The implementation of these plans undoubtedly presents a challenge to those involved in their development. It is to be hoped that at least some of the objectives which have been set will be realised within the final products.

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References

[1] Report of the Planning Committee to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, HMSO, 1969.

[2] The Early Development of the Open University, Report of the Vice-Chancellor, January 1969-December 1970, The Open University, 1972, page 49.

[3] Report of the Review Group on Preparation, Open University paper OU/82/4

[4] Helping Student to Develop as Learners - which strategy should be adopted for the Preparation of Open University students?, Graham Gibbs, Study Methods Group, Institute for Educational Technology, May 1980.

[5] Relevant previous and current publications for students dealing with non-faculty specific preparation:

   How to Study   - distributed to all new students free of charge up until 1980.

   Preparing to Study - published by Open University Press and on sale from bookshops.

   First Year Student
   Handbook Part 2: Study
   Guide and workbook   -currently distributed to all new students free of charge.

[6] Tutor-counsellor. Students in their first foundation year are allocated to a tutor-counsellor who has responsibility for both tuition and counselling. In subsequent years the student retains the same tutor-counsellor for the counselling function but is allocated to a new tutor for each new course.

[7] Regional Office. In addition to the Open University's headquarters in Milton Keynes, there are thirteen Regional offices which are responsible for providing local student support services.

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