SECOND INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

ON

COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

15-17 September 1987
Downing College, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Editor: Alan Tait

PAPERS FOR THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
ON COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Introduction

It is sometimes said that those working in counselling and related fields in distance education do not adequately contribute to research and publication. The reasons for this can be ascribed to modesty or laziness, but in reality might arise from a number of more significant factors. The first among these, I would suggest, concerns the practical nature of day to day work of those involved in counselling and the range of associated support services, either as practitioners or managers. The demands of the day to day on counsellors in distance education do not allow much time for reflection on the practice and theory of one's activities. Where contributions arise from non-practitioners these occasionally (but not always) appear to be irrelevantly academic, and deter those whose desire to understand, and to help others understand, might otherwise develop. The second factor concerns where counsellors come from. Many colleagues, it is my impression, come into counselling in Distance Education in Universities and other kinds of institution via more complicated routes than a Lecturer in Physics, (coming from such a role into counselling, for example). This may make them particularly effective as counsellors of, say, adults resuming study or changing career, but may mean they have to learn mid-career the necessary research and writing up skills in this particular field.

The third factor concerns the international nature of our professional community, and the problems of distance and language that these represent. As for all studying at a distance, the well-timed and well-planned meeting can be crucial, and it is hoped that this second international workshop will be another such event. Nonetheless, we work substantially in isolation from our colleagues around the world, and in this regard the question of publication has a singular importance. The issue of language is fraught with practical difficulties, as well as social and political ones. Professor Holmberg, in his paper, refers in another context to countries under "anglo saxon influence", and this reminds us of the fact that the English language has attained a predominance in our field, as in others, that in effect isolates some colleagues almost entirely from our work, and gives an imbalance geographically as well as socially and politically, regardless of it desiring or deserving it. The editor of these papers is therefore very pleased indeed to welcome contributions to this volume from Zambia, Thailand, West Germany and the Netherlands, but aware that we are without contributions, for example, from the growing Hispanic areas where distance education is developing. The language problem, and all the associated implications of resource for translation, is surely one we in the ICDE need to consider.

These factors should be considered in the context of the professional development of counsellors in distance education, and might usefully be considered along with papers in this volume addressing the issue. The papers are presented in alphabetical order of author's family name. However, they address themselves to a range of topics which can be grouped, at least to some extent.

Holmberg and Newport consider the skills needed by counsellors, with the former writing from West Germany on the importance of empathy, and the latter writing in the context of the New Zealand Correspondence School around a wider range of skills, activities, and attitudes. Sylvia Rhys of the British Open University in Wales writes on related themes of personal development for counsellors and students in the context of study skills acquisition. Sally Haag's paper on "the dual-mode professor" based on Canadian experience, can also be grouped here.

A number of contributions examine the task of counselling at the pre-study stage, and are particularly concerned with its contribution towards diminishing student drop-out and failure: see for example, the papers by Birkhoff, Douwes, and Cohen, from the Open University of the Netherlands, by David Edge, from Deakin University, Australia, and by Ruby Gervais of the Laurentian University, Ontario, Canada.

The paper by Johnson and Togneri, 'Open Learning and the National Certificate in Scotland', extends concern from pre-study to in-course guidance, (as it is termed). This paper concerns work-based vocational education and we are pleased to welcome it as a development in some ways from the outline proposal 'Counselling in the Open Tech Programme' in the first collection of papers(1). Fage, of the British Open University, presents findings from an international survey of vocational guidance provision for distance students, concluding "the future is likely to see a growing need for vocational guidance amongst non-traditional students in higher education... whether the need will be met is less clear."

Dorland, from the University of New England, Australia, describes her work in creating a pack to assist students learning at a distance to cope with stress.

The particular characteristics of older students are addressed by Kelly, Cuttress and Palmer of the British Open University, and Cuttress contributes again on the development of computer-based systems for the support of students with disability. Purcell describes the counselling of British Open University students in the prisons of Ireland, suggesting that "most prison students could fit the description of those for whom the OU opportunity was intended: without the usual formal qualifications, unable to attend a traditional, full-time college or university, and initially having no strong commitment to a particular subject area ...". From Thailand, Ketkeaw describes the telephone counselling system used in that country's Open University, an area of work which appeared in our first collection of papers and of interest to so many workers in distance education.

Finally, Siaciwena describes the benefits to students and colleagues of the integration of counselling into the academic work of the University of Zambia, while Shapcott summarises proposals for the coordination and integration of study centres for all Australia (an ambitious task indeed).

The suggested difficulties I referred to initially which militate against research and publication by counsellors in distance education, and which I believe are worth recording, clearly do not prove insurmountable for a growing number of colleagues. The years between 1983 and 1987, those of our 2 work-shops, have seen the publication of further articles and books(2) in our fields, the organisation for the first time before the ICDE World Conference in Australia in 1985 of a pre-conference meeting on counselling, and the arrival of new journals in the field of distance education and open learning. In that light, it has been particularly gratifying to edit this second collection of papers for the Cambridge International Workshop. We can feel assured that our field within distance education is growing in confidence, deriving from and at the same time further contributing to the recognition of its importance.

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Alan Tait, Editor
Cambridge
July 1987
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References

1. S. Dalziel, and M. Freshwater, 'Counselling needs in the Open Tech Programme,' in Conference papers of the first International Workshop in Counselling in Distance Education, 1983, (still available at the time of writing from the editor).

2. Vivien E. Hodgsen, Sarah J. Mann, and Robkin Snell, have edited and contributed to a recent collection of essays in the field, entitled 'Beyond Distance Teaching - toward Open Learning', (Open University Press, United Kingdom 1987). A wide range of authors make frequent reference to the role of counselling in Distance Education, and anticipate its importance in Open Learning, where "everybody has both the ability and the right to create meaning and hold knowledge, (p 69). Equally important is the publication "Guidance in Open Learning - a manual of practice.", by Diane Bailey (National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, United Kingdom, 1987), which delineates for planning, training and reference purposes, models of guidance and open learning.

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INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

ON

COUNSELLING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 15 - 17

CAMBRIDGE, UK

COUNSELLING IN THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

OF

THE NETHERLANDS

Addie Birkhoff
Annette Douwes
Claudia Ghijssen Cohen

1. Introduction.

1.1 Modules in motion.

The Open university of the Netherlands was established in September 1984 as a state university for distance education, offering courses in seven "curriculum areas" in the fields of Law, Economics, Business studies and Government management, Information technology, Science, Social sciences and Liberal Arts. It is operated on the basis of a modular system of courses. One module is supposed to be a time-unit of one hundred hours of study for an "average" student. Courses consist of one, two or three modules. These courses can be used like lego bricks of different colours: students can build up short programs in higher education (8 to 27 modules) or complete degree programs (54 modules); they can opt for individual programs or follow pre-established academic programs within the range of courses. Students are free to start their course(s) at any time throughout the year. All they have to do is send in an application form and pay the appropriate fee. The only requirement is a minimum age of 18. A-level diplomas are not needed. Thus the OU-philosophy entails open entrance, freedom of choice, studying at own pace and studying at own place.

1.2 Student population.

Anybody registered for a course is considered an OU-student. Number of students as for Nov. 1st 1986: 32.783.
About 33.3% of the students are women.
Motivation for study at the OU:

- study at own pace/ at a distance: 41%
- education elsewhere not possible: 35%

There is, of course, the general motivation to improve career and/or job perspective: 50.2% of the men, 41.2% of the women. Motivation to improve their own talents is mentioned by 72.2% of the women versus 59.5% of the men. Of the students 71.8% have a paid job: 79.1% men versus 57% women.
Ca. 25 a 30% of the students actively aim for a degree.

The level of education varies greatly, but is generally high:
- technical college   34.2%
- university   7.8%
- A-levels   28.3%
- O-levels   27.4%
- less than O-levels   2.2%
70.4% have the necessary qualifications or more! This makes tutoring in groups of heterogeneously assembled students rather difficult! Courses may be (too) easy for some, yet (too) difficult for others. It can make tutoring a rather complicated affair!

48.2% of OU students are in the age-bracket of 26-35 whereas 66.4% are in the age-group of 21-40.

1.3 Study centres.

All over Holland a network of 18 study centres has been created, within 30 km. reach from students' homes. At these centres facilities are offered as a support and supplement to the printed course materials: counselling and tutoring services, course related video and computer programs, workshops and exams. For each course there are three opportunities to take an exam every year.

2. Counselling in practice.

2.1 Student counselling.

The primary task for the counsellors in the study centres consist of informing and advising students or potential students. So far this has been done in a rather passive manner, i.e. as a response to those who telephoned or visited the study centre and actively sought information and/or advise. During the first two years of its existence the Dutch OU was struggling to get on its feet and there were a lot of "nursery problems". Courses, announced in the catalogue appeared late, dates planned for the completion of degree programs had to be postponed and our young organisation had to cope with an influx of twice as many students as were expected! Only during the last six months have these uncertainties lessened and now counsellors are taking a more active part in "bringing the OU to the public". However, apart from this marketing role, counsellors are mainly the first in line as advisors in the study centres. They have an overall knowledge of the courses, curriculae and degree-programs and therefore can help (prospective) students make their decision as to their field of study and related personal, social and/or physical problems.

2.2 Deficiencies.

The policy of open entrance does create specific problems. As is demonstrated above 29,6% of students do not have the "proper" education for a university career. So far, difficulties have arisen especially in the field of mathematics, elementary knowledge of which is necessary in practically all curriculae, with the exception of the Cultural Sciences. Often, students believe themselves to lack sufficient mathematical knowledge and under-standing, while in practice this is not always the case. Sometimes it boils down to a preconceived idea that mathematics is abstract knowledge and too difficult for an "ordinary" person like themselves. At present counsellors and tutors are working on a program for students to defy this (psychological) part of the problem. Furthermore, the level of abstraction can be a stumbling block and occasionally students may show a lack of proficiency in English. Government policy does not allow the Open University tutors and staff to provide assistance in overcoming a lack of sufficient pre-university level knowledge and skills. Students with "deficiencies" will be advised to attend classes at a night school, private school or to make use of correspondence courses or private tutoring. Unfortunately this creates extra obstacles for a lot of students who may find it difficult to make extra financial and time investments on top of their problems as "lonely" students. Besides, they may have to take in an unnecessary amount of knowledge, superfluous to their particular OU studies...

2.3 Study skills.

The Open university courses are designed to help students to get a good hold over their studies. A 100 hour module consists (ideally) of 25 units of four hours of study (for the average student). Learning goals are made explicit in the introduction to every unit and are to be checked by the student through feed back questions and problems with model answers. Students do not usually send in any written assignments. Marginal notes on how to study the subject matter at hand will help the solo student. However, this is often not enough to help students develop effective methods for grappling with their studies. A lot may be learned from relating one's own experience to that of others.

Motivation alone is not enough, a study-strategy is needed and time management is an all important factor in achieving success and satisfaction. Students will probably benefit the most from course related help in improving their study skills. So far this has hardly been taken into account in course specific tutoring. Counsellors offer optional courses involving a few meetings with a small number of students, not related to any one course. The main goal in this approach is to make students aware of their own strategies and possible alternatives.

2.4   Relating the student to the course.

One of the main principles of the Dutch Open university is and has been that adult students can decide for themselves. This however does put a strain on students, especially on those with little experience in studying. The experience of the past 21/2 years has taught us that this laissez-faire attitude has its limitations and should be modified to a policy of active encouragement and support without limiting students options. The written course materials are supposed to include an aspect of tutoring and until now students have been free whether or not to make use of the services in the study centre. The only obligation as far as coming to the study centre is concerned is sitting for an exam! However, after two years of operation and after a number of 30.000 students have been registered an evaluation of the situation is called for. Statistics show that

- less students than expected are making use of the study centres or sit for an exam;
- less students than expected go on to study another OU-course after passing their first exam.

From the above some questions arise:

* Do we need an 'intake'procedure?

First of all for a number of students it might be best to get in touch with a counsellor before starting their studies, so as to relate their expectations to what the OU can actually offer. Discussion is still going on whether this personal contact should be made compulsory, as part of an 'intake'procedure, or whether this should just be strongly advised. On the one hand there are those who feel a student should realise what studying at the OU is all about and should not invest a lot of energy and money or, as is sometimes the case, should not "jump the wrong educational train". It is felt that written information only is not enough to make students sufficiently aware of all the ins and outs of distance education. On the other hand there are those who feel that naturally, (potential) students should know beforehand what they are getting themselves into, but since they are adults who can decide for themselves they don't need the OU tutors and counsellors to meddle with their decisions unless they ask them to do so.

* What about course related contact?

A second question arises as to the necessity to establish a personal contact with the course tutor, once the student has registered for a specific course, especially when it is the first one. From then on the tutor will get in touch with every individual student to find out whether or not there is a need for further assistance (i.e. group or individual tutorials, advice on exams, study skills etc.). Students may have less inhibitions to ask for assistance once a personal contact has been established. A tutor may be able to follow more closely the student's progress (or stagnation) and help them prepare for future studying.

3. Conclusion.

In a flexible system such as ours the difficulty lies in striking a balance between

a) freedom of choice and failure;

b) encouragement and patronising,

c) support and (in)dependence.

In the Dutch OU there are no obligatory introductory courses. How are we going to manage to encourage students to study effectively, without obliging them to come to a study centre regularly, at least for some time? Will it be necessary to start distance studies from a foundation course that includes study skills? So many students start their first course without taking an exam. Wouldn't it be wise to start with a registration period before students actually enlist for their first course, after a personal session with a counsellor? Will this help prevent disappointment and failure for them? Shouldn't the OU offer special deficiency-course for those who lack the necessary prior knowledge for a OU-course? So far they are sent to other educational institutions to take additional courses that do not necessarily fit in with their own specific purposes.

To these questions there is no easy answer as there are many contrary aspects involved. What is advisable for one person may be highly demotivating for another.

We are therefore looking forward to discussing these matters with you and we hope that this is going to help us find new ways to meet these challenges.

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NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNSELLING OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
COMPUTER DATABASES

NIGEL CUTRESS, THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNSELLING OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

COMPUTER DATABASES

NIGEL CUTRESS, THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The Open University has more students with disabilities than the rest of the higher
education sector.   In 1986, there were approximately 3,000 students with disabilities
registered with the OU out of a total undergraduate population of some 70,000 students
and the proportion who are disabled continues to increase rapidly.   This increase
in the number of students with disabilities reflects, on the one hand, the reputa-
tion of the University as a provider of open access distance education and, on the
other hand, the general awareness of people with disabilities of the potential of
the University.

Whilst this, unequivocably, is excellent progress, it has brought about severe
strains within the regional operation of the University because the strong growth
in demand in recent years has been against a background of retrenchment in university
budgets: attempting to provide a measure of equality of opportunity in the educational
experience of students with disabilities is always   expensive in terms of both
staff and non-staff costs.

Strong concern and apprehension was expressed within the University's Advisory
Committee for Students with Disabilities that the University was approaching the
point where the educational service would be well below the quality and standard
suggested by the University's reputation.

The centrally based Office for Students with Disabilities, whose main responsibility
is providing modified course material (e.g., audio tapes and transcripts of broad-
cast material) was able to maintain the provision of its services but, within the
regional operation, the decline in the number of specialist staff meant the care,
attention and expertise provided previously to meet the individual educational
needs of students was in serious decline.   The problem was exacerbated by the
continuing growth in the number of students.

Throughout the period of retrenchment, the University had waged an extensive
campaign pointing out the cost effectiveness of distance education and the partial
success of this campaign brought with it, in 1986, an annual ear-marked grant of

an additional £50k for the support of students with disabilities. This led to a renaissance in regional activity. New, part-time staff have been appointed, old activities re-started, or boosted, and new initiatives commenced. At the same time that the University was going through the period of retrenchment, it was actively seeking ways of reducing costs and, during 1986, powerful, sophisticated micros were introduced into the regional centres and among the software packages provided was a state-of-the-art database package.

One noteable feature of the lean years was the concentration of staff minds on the provision of support and how it was organised. Within a year, a number of databases were constructed to meet the needs of students with disabilities and are now operational.

Why have regional databases been constructed when the University already possesses a powerful mainframe student database? The answer lies in the different purposes underlying their construction. The mainframe was designed essentially to provide simple, standardised information on the whole student population both of an administrative and educational nature. The latter data is very limited in scope and,whilst a limited "sorting and searching" of data is possible, new 'fields' (subjects) of information cannot be created.

In contrast, regional databases can respond to sophisticated needs since the design of the database resides with its users. They are inherently flexible and can reflect the slightly different characteristics and needs of individual regions.

The Rationale behind the Need for Computer Database

1. Each student is unique and, to provide the appropriate resources, a Regional record is essential.

2. The number of students with disabilities is growing rapidly and has outgrown paper record systems. Index card records have been kept in many regions for a number of years but, alarmingly, they have always been extremely expensive in staff time since they re-quire continuous up-dating if they are to remain reliable. These difficulties demonstrate the need for a new medium and a fresh approach.

3. The range and scope of disabilities is increasing and there
   is an urgent need for detailed records of how the disability
   affects the students' ability to study and what strategies
   were adopted by the student and the staff for each particular
   course.   In 1986, the University offered 133 courses. Such
   records need to be accessed and made readily available in
   different regions so that 'previous experience' may be used
   beneficially throughout the U.K.

4. Linked to the above is the need for a far greater exchange
   of information, ideas and good practice between regions.
   Each region is autonomous and internal systems for a flow
   of information between staff in different regions do not
   operate as effectively as they should.

5. A staff management function.   The original paper record
   systems were almost solely indexed by student name and only
   with great difficulty could information be cross-referenced
   to provide information about the previous experience of Tutors
   or Counsellors.   A computer database may be "sorted and
   searched" easily or re-indexed to furnish such management data;
   essential in ensuring appropriate briefings and for a systematic
   programme of staff development.

6. Beyond meeting the needs of the students, databases may facilitate
   research on the success of students with disabilities in distance
   education.

What does a modern database offer?

Computing power has grown phenomenally and the software package in use by the author
offers the following scope:-
   - up to one billion individual student records;
   - each record may contain up to 128 'fields', e.g., name, course, tutor etc;
   - a 'field' may contain text, numbers, symbols, dates and may be up to
     4,000 characters long;
   - the database may be "sorted and searched" rapidly - tasks difficult
     and time-consuming with paper systems.

Coupled with the scope of the package is a range of powerful commands which can be
used to programme the database to carry out an extensive variety of functions. For
example, the author's current database has been constructed to be "menu-driven", i.e.,

from the moment the micro is switched on, it is offering the user a number of sets of data automatically and the user has only to select appropriately. The challenge and skills required are not in the programming but in deciding what information should be held and in what sequence it should be displayed. A database of virtually any sophistication can be constructed; the challenge lies in designing the content.

Besides the above virtues, the database offers two other important facilities:-

1. By linking to the mainframe, standard, routinely up-dated information held on the University's mainframe can be "downloaded" regularly thereby up-dating the database and avoiding some of the need for clerical up-dates. This is a clear advantage over the old, cumbersome paper record systems and a considerable saving in expensive staff time.

2. By networking the micros via links to the mainframe, information can be accessed readily from other terminals. This has many exciting possibilities for the flow of information between regions and particularly for enhancing the tutorial and counselling provision at residential summer schools.

The Counselling Requirements of Students with Disabilities

The counselling needs of any student may be characterised into those of a personal nature concerning their feelings about their course of study and those of a more instrumental nature, i.e., what needs to be done to ensure their access and equality of opportunity to the University's facilities. To date, the University has used a series of standard pro forma to collect information about a student's disability. its educational implications (via a functional analysis) and the support required from within the region or from the centre. This instrumental counselling information is collected systematically and dutifully by regional staff at key intervals of the academic year and, until recently, has served as the basis of the student's file in the regional centre. However, since the emphasis of these pro forma is to trigger the provision of support, they say nothing about the student's actual academic progress during the year.

An important dimension in a system where a student can expect a different Tutor each year is the briefing of the Tutor about the educational implications of the student's disability. In recent years, a number of regions have placed increasing emphasis on this briefing and, to do so, some, at the end of each year, have prepared a 'prose report' which is then sent on to the next Tutor. These prose reports, typically, are one page of A4 and are stored within the database in a special field.

In the author's region, prose reports had been prepared in three previous years for a limited number of students but, with the advent of the ear-marked funds, it was decided to produce a prose report on each student and then, at the beginning of 1987, to identify the relevant Tutor(s) who were then sent a copy of the report. This was followed by a 'phone call between the Tutor and his/her Staff Tutor to discuss the educational implications and the level of any additional resource. This exercise would have been difficult to organise without the use of a database.

The counselling service traditionally acts as the local focal point for support to students with disabilities within the OU and, for the Senior Counsellors and Staff Tutors, the introduction of the databases will mean that, as the more detailed picture of a student's needs arises, they will be faced with more challenges not just from the student perspective but also from that of the Tutor seeking information, support and advice as to how to meet the student's specific educational needs. It is here that the cross-referencing to staff who have tutored a particular course in the past with students with the same disability will be so useful since, via the networking, the search for a Tutor with a particular expertise may be extended to the whole of the U.K.

At summer school, the current information that is provided to staff is dominated by the student's daily living requirements. Networking will enable the counselling and tutorial staff to have access to the prose reports on the student's educational progress and to be in a far better position to help maximise the student's learning potential.

Much of the counselling is to do with "enabling" the student to take responsibility for his/her studies and one dimension not to be overlooked in the development of databases must be to ensure the student's active involvement not only by checking the accuracy of the data - especially prose reports - but also by encouraging active involvement in discussing their learning difficulties and what strategies might be employed to overcome them.

The Data Protection Act, Disability Rights, and the growing emphasis on the student as the consumer should enable the concept of an educational partnership between the OU and its students with disabilities to remain to the forefront.

Summary
The database has arrived! The reasons advanced above for its use have begun to create their own momentum as its exciting potential has been realised. But its potential to provide an enhanced educational experience for students with disabilities needs to be matched by continual development of the counselling skills of regional staff if the students are to be able to realise the full potential of distance education - namely, the freedom to learn.

NC/KBD (May '87)

<u>STRESS MANAGEMENT AT A DISTANCE</u>

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STRESS MANAGEMENT AT A DISTANCE

It had been said of dealing with stress that "we are dealing with a riddle wrapped in an enigma in more of the same" (Eisdorfer, 1977, p. 39). It is also generally agreed, in Australia at least, because of open entry schemes external or distance students are now a fairly mixed bunch in terms of such elements as age, social class, intellectual ability and family enviroment. Given then that stress is a rather enigmatic concept, that the students are a fairly heterogeneous population and that they are at a distance, to try to develp a stress management package is a rather daunting task.

There does seem to be agreement that stress is transactional in nature (e.g. Cox, 1978). Both the outdated environmental approach to stress, which saw stress as being produced by the environmental circumstances in which one lived (e.g. Holmes & Rahe, 1967), and the outdated person approach which saw stress as being a product of the person and his or her psychological traits (e.g. Spielberger, 1972), have been replaced by the transactional approach. This transactional approach is not merely a synthesis of the environment and person approaches, but rather takes account of the person as an active, cognitive, perceptual and emotional being who is in a constant process of reciprocity with his or her environment. As the person influences the environment, so the environment influences the person, and so one. Neither can change in isolation in order to minimize the negative effects of stress.

In the stress literature there is now a growing emphasis on the concept of coping (Roskies & Lazarus, 1980). How people cope is now viewed as more important than the stress episodes themselves. Lazarus and his colleagues are predominant among those developing coping as a concept (e.g. Lazarus & Launier, 1978). Coping is defined as "the person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources" (Folkman et al, 1986, p. 993). The key factors in this definition of coping are that it is process oriented, it is contextual, and there are no a priori assumptions about what constitutes good and bad coping. Lazarus and his colleagues also see coping as having two major functions, regulating the stressful emotions and altering the troubled person-enviroment relation causing the distress (e.g. Folkman, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1979).

What Lazarus and his colleagues are saying in a necessarily sound academic way is what we as counsellors know through our own experience that people and their situations are unique and that in order to be facilitative we need to take some sort of person-centred approach (e.g. Rogers, 1965: Kelly, 1955). Of course, the counsellor of the distance student immediately faces enormous problems as any stress management package must enable each student to explore both his or her self and environment as a unique situation.

Embedded in the problem of being person-centred at a distance is the difficulty of providing a package to serve at least two goals, prevention and therapy. Some newly enrolled students will want to use the package as a preventative measure knowing that their years as a distance student will probably be stressful, and will want to devise strategies to make sure they are as stress-free as possible. Other students, who already feel uncomfortable stressed, will want more therapeutic help. Some will realize that they are having trouble with their environment (e.g. they are over-anxious about examinations or they use their time inefficiently). Others may want help with less clearly defined goals, perhaps their bodies are telling them something is wrong but they do not know quite what it could be.

It must also be remembered that, as Lazarus and his colleagues emphasize (e.g Lazarus & Launier, 1978), stress and coping is process orientated. Students reaching out for help with stress will be in a process. For example, a newly enrolled student with a problem of a hostile spouse may well need to look at different issues to the continuing student whose spouse has become progressively more hostile as the years of study progress.

Thus far several difficulties involved in devising a stress management package have been raised. Such a package needs to be a person-centred as possible, needs to be both preventative and therapeutic in nature, needs to be mindful of process.

Given these difficulties what could the shape and form of such a package take? The fact that we are delivering to a particular population, albeit a hetero-geneous one, is helpful. Remembering that we need also to cater for general needs, there are particular problems-areas that as counsellors to distance students we know often cause difficulty. These areas include problems of isolation, problems of time management, problems with significant others, problems with inefficient or non-existent study skills, and the less tangeable problems such as low self-esteem and self-confidence, and high levels of anxiety.

Apart from providing some means for the students to explore these issues in their own context, it is also necessary to provide advice and referral suggestions which may or may not be institution-specific. For example, as well as being given a way to explore their difficulties with isolation on a personal level the student also needs some concrete suggestions as to whom to contact in the institution for various kinds of help.

Stress management needs to be tackled on three levels, the cognitive, the behavioural and the physical level. All three are equally important and intervention on any one level usually has an effect on the others. Any stress mangement package needs to contain interventions on all three levels. For example, interventions of a cognitive nature could allow the student to understand his or her constructs (Kelly, 1955) or identify his or her self-talk (Meichenbaum, 1977). Interventions of a behavioural nature could allow the student experience in planning time differently. Interventions of a physical nature could teach the student some relaxation techniques. Audio tape seems to be a useful way of delivering such a package. Most people have an audio tape recorder whereas the use of video equipment is not so wide-spread. Pen and paper exercises can be explained on a tape, the delivery can be made quite personal in nature and the recorded voice is excellent for relaxation purposes.

At the University of New England in Australia we have developed a set of two sixty-minute audio tapes on stress management, for sale at minimal cost, which any distance student may request. We also produce other tapes in the area of survival skills and study skills, all of which touch on the area of stress management. The first stress management tape takes the form of a long interview with one of the counsellors, and contains a simple yet relevant explanation of both chronic and acute stress. There follows some pen and paper exercises to identify such things as stress levels, early warning signs, stressful situations and how they are currently dealt with, and physical responses. The tape then goes on to explore time-management again using some pen and paper exercises.

From counselling distance students it seems that lack of assertive behaviour can cause an enormous amount of stress in the student. The area of assertiveness training is explored in general terms on the tape, but as this whole area needs a package in itself, the student is introduced to the ideas and referred to several books on the subject. On the first tape there is also a discussion of the benefits of relaxation for both chronic and acute stress, including instructions on how to use the second tape which contains the relaxation exercises. The discussion of relaxation includes the use of chemical means to relax. The tape ends with some cognitive, behavioural and physical interventions for dealing with examination anxiety.

Several exercises on the tapes evolved from those used at optional residential Orientation Schools which the University of New England runs for newly enrolled students. At these schools the exercises may be used by students who are seeking more of a therapeutic goal. It is also hoped that the tapes are person-centred whilst at the same time providing referral information. They certainly address specific problem areas but it is hoped that they are useful for those who see themselves as generally stressed. They are requested by a variety of students regardless of length of enrolment. The focus of the tapes are both towards regulating stressful emotions and also altering the troubled person-enviroment relation causing distress, after Fokman & Lazarus (1980).

This then, is one way of dealing with the rather enigmatic concept of stress for a fairly heterogeneous population, at a distance. In the workshop on Stress Management at a Distance it is hoped that participants will share how they deal with this area of counselling and it is envisaged that time will be spent experiencing some of the exercises mentioned in this paper.

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SELF SELECTION BY SPECIAL ENTRANTS - DOES IT WORK?

David Edge, Deakin University, Australia

SELF SELECTION BY SPECIAL ENTRANTS - DOES IT WORK?

BACKGROUND

Since 1978, Deakin University has offered undergraduate Bachelor of Arts programs in Humanities and Social Sciences for study by off-campus. Applicants may enter these programs

a) as advanced standing entrants with credit for previous tertiary studies
b) as normal entrants with higher school certificate, matriculation or their equivalent
c) as special entrants when they have not completed secondary education. (formerly termed "Mature Age")

In commenting on plans for Deakin's offcampus programs, in 1977 Eric Gough[1] wrote:

> "It is our belief that in opening the doors of the University to people who might otherwise be denied a place because of limited educational qualifications and experience it becomes our responsibility to maximise the possibility of their success. Accordingly, a counselling program is being developed which will allow intending students, especially mature age applicants, to test their motivation, to understand better the demands of university study and to anticipate the role conflicts that arise between employment and study or between demands of home and family and the demands of study."

This was consistent with the experience at the Open University[2], which when embarking on its open entry policy, recognised that it would create a demand for counselling and so created its counselling service.

In adopting this philosophy of open entry at Deakin in 1978, it was decided that applicants would not be required to pass an entry test or be actually selected for places, but that they needed some support in the process of both making a decision to enrol and in adjusting to being a student. In developing this process it was assumed both possible and appropriate for any adult considering enrolment at Deakin to engage in a process of self-counselling. The important thing then, given that an adult has a reasonable level of self-awareness and a willingness to make choices, was to provide a means whereby a person could engage effectively in the process and to have staff available who were able to provide support in working through some of the issues and questions raised.

The original intention was to establish a regional tutor/counsellor system[3] similar to that at the Open University. However the demographic characteristics of Australia are very different from England, and there were rarely sufficient students at study centres enrolled in the same course to justify the appointment of local tutors and hence academic activities. As a result, study centre staff were encouraged to provide basic information and help, and the majority of support was provided by located centrally student advisers and counsellors.

When prospective students enquire about enrolment at Deakin University they are sent a copy of a brochure, "Guide to Off Campus Studies". Part of this includes a section which encourages them to identify their basic learning goals - what they want to learn, how and where, ie a devil's advocate - "why Deakin?"

The aims of this process as described by Moran and Croker[4] are:

1. Clarification of the individual's interests and goals; a corollary is the establishment of motivation.
2. Examination of the uncertainties adults usually bring with them to the process of learning. All too often adults measure themselves negatively against the mythical paradigm of the school leaving student. Part of the process is to enable the adult to recognise the competence developed in other life areas.
3. Inducing awareness of the need to make adjustments to established life patterns. This is critical and it is clear that most adults overestimate the time available and underestimate what is required for study. Adjustment of life patterns involves effort to establish the support of family and others for the commitment of being a student.
4. Provision of help for adjusting to the idiosyncrasies of the University environment which often requires the demystifying of jargon.
5. Provision of help in learning to be a student, including information outlining resources available.
6. Establishment of a relationship between the student and staff of the University which will facilitate support in the learning process.

In making application for admission via special entry, students are required to provide a statement of approximately one page in length, clarifying the reasons for taking up tertiary study, describing the responses they developed to issues raised in the self-selection section, outlining what disadvantages they may have suffered in the past which has prevented previous access to tertiary level study, and discussing what they saw as their particular problems in doing so and what solutions they thought might be possible.

The aim is not to gather information for comparative selection purposes, but rather to ensure applicants are clear about what they want to do and to enable staff to identify misunderstandings or problems, e.g. a desire for vocational training which is misdirected, or potential study difficulties.

Applications are then reviewed by student advisers/counsellors for eligibility (ie age - not less than 21 years, nationality, etc.) They approve those which they perceive as apparently straightforward to be sent offers and this is done in chronological order of receipt until the quota of places has been filled. Accompanying the offer to the applicant is a "counselling package", a booklet which describes more fully the adjustments

required in becoming a student, the likely problems and possible solutions, and resources available to students. Applicants are invited to attend a non-compulsory "orientation day" when these issues are explored in more detail and they can meet with staff and discuss academic expectations. The objective then is to enable the decision to accept the offer to be made with as much information before them as possible.

When examining the applications, the student advisers identify those who seem to present a doubtful potential to succeed as reflected in apparent lack of motivation, underestimation of what is involved, or unclear goals. High-risk applicants are contacted by letter or telephone in order to explore the impression given and to discuss ways which may be more appropriate for the applicant to consider.

So the process remains one of self-selection with help in various forms to students to clarify their goals and to decide whether to proceed with enrolment.

OUTCOMES STUDY

To consider whether this self-selection is the most sensible approach in the case of these students, a study has been made comparing the outcomes of these high-risk applicants with others who have entered through the special entry category.

The process of identifying high-risk applicants was first introduced for those seeking entry in 1986, and it was intended to formalise a process which had been used in differing forms by student advisers and the student counsellor when reviewing the statements provided. The reason for this more formal approach was to validate a process which had been largely individual and intuitive hitherto, and to improve the consistency of it.

The only complete set of outcomes which is available therefore is for the 1986 academic year and these are shown on table A. It can be seen that there was little difference in the acceptance rates between the sexes in each case, but that the acceptance rate of "high-risks" was generally lower (7.2%) than for others.

Table A illustrates the numbers of students who successfully completed courses (subjects) in first semester. The remainder consisted of those who did not complete, deferred their enrolment for one year or withdrew altogether (whether prior to the start of semester or later), "went missing", (ie did not participate and did not request deferral or withdrawal), or failed.

The difference between the categories is again apparent; the completion rate of high-risk students was approximately 8.4% lower.

In second semester the gap can be seen to have widened in that the completion rate of high-risk students was 15.0% lower than the others. When the categories are compared with numbers at the offer stage, the difference was 15.1%.

The Australian Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission requires its institutions to include in their annually reported statistics a "student progress ratio". That is a ratio of the number of units completed, to the student load. If students withdraw from a course within the first four weeks of semester, they are deemed not to have commenced, so the enrolment is not included in the count. These figures differ in this respect from those presented in Table A, which include total enrolment, irrespective of when the student withdrew.

Using the Student Progress Ratio, table B shows the outcome of the two groups in 1986. Again there is an identifiable difference between the categories for this ratio. However when we examine the units completed per original number of students offered places, the difference between the categories becomes quite marked:

high-risk: 35 units, 56 offers, ie the ratio is 0.62
other   378 units, 370 offers, ie the ratio is 1.02

Students commencing in 1987 faced a slightly different circumstance in that the federal government introduced a Higher Education Administrative Charge (HEAC) of $250 per student. This was a flat charge irrespective of enrolment category, ie whether part or fulltime, oncampus or external. Whereas education at tertiary level hitherto had been essentially low cost, students in making their decision to enrol in 1987 had to decide whether they could or wanted to commit themselves to a non-refundable expenditure of this amount. The impact of the charge is currently under review, and it is unclear yet how it may have affected the outcome of high-risk students entering in 1987.

At the time of writing, it is too early to know the comparative outcomes for first semester, however the acceptance rates have shown some interesting trends, reinforcing further the perceived differences between the two categories in 1986. Table C shows that the gap in acceptance rates between the two categories has widened from 7.2% in 1986 to 10.9% in 1987.

The introduction of the HEAC has necessitated a closer scrutiny of Deakin University's intake policy. The fact that the fee is non-refundable has created some anger and bitterness amongst those students who find that for reasons often beyond their control they must defer their enrolment or withdraw altogether, but cannot obtain a refund.

DOES SELF-SELECTION WORK?

Eric Gough,[5] in reviewing the first intake of open entry students in 1978, stated:

"...there is no doubt that a majority of mature age students returning to study succeed admirably. Even the little that is done by way of preparation and counselling is adequate. What may be more important is to identify those incoming students who could be characterised as high risk students and to provide additional support for them..."

It has become more important than ever not only to ensure that adequate counselling is given to students prior to committing themselves to enrolment and the payment of this fee, but having done so they must be given as much support as possible to persist with studies. It therefore follows that students who have been identified as high-risk are given the benefit of such counselling in order to enhance their awareness of the costs of changing their mind or the possibility of encountering otherwise unanticipated difficulties which prevent their continuing with enrolment. Generally, the demand for places at Deakin University has remained high despite the introduction of this HEAC, and the University could be criticised for misuse of its resources in difficult times if it enrols students whose potential for a successful outcome has been perceived as doubtful, and who may be occupying places which could be more productively used.

Alan Pitman[6] reviewed the use of the counselling package in 1978 and in his study found that study difficulties stood out clearly as the most severe and widespread type of problem. He concluded:

"It is clear that counselling is important in enabling applicants to reach decisions consonant with their interests. The greatest concern to these people is in regard to their capacity to write appropriately assessable work, and to study effectively.
Future investigations should attempt to identify those skills and techniques which staff assume students bring with them, and set these against those assumed by prospective students, and those actually used by students.

... One line of useful investigation should lead to the trialling of short (five to six weeks) skill development courses prior to commencement of courses. By such means early attrition may be reduced both by moving it forward to the enrolment point for some, and by reducing early frustration for those students proceeding to studies."

However Gough and Coltman[7] showed that students can be seen as high-risk for a variety of reasons. They pointed to a range of examples such as a student with a physical disability, another with a lack of English expression, a student with a chronic history of withdrawal, and a pregnant woman wishing to undertake fulltime study.

The issue then is that in the absence of a decentralised tutor/counsellor support network at Deakin and the unlikelihood of providing increased support to high-risk students, whether the University can afford to retain a policy of self-selection.

It would seem that there are possibly three alternatives:

1.   The self-selection policy is retained as true 'open entry', and as much information as possible is provided to ensure that informed decisions to enrol are made by the applicant irrespective of our perceptions of risk level for them.

2.   The policy remains in place except for those applicants whose potential is perceived as doubtful and are therefore considered as high-risk. If Deakin adopts this approach, it then must decide also whether, as well as providing more counselling for such people, to provide for them bridging or sampling courses prior to formal enrolment.

3.   The introduction of a provisional registration[8] similar to that described at the Open University. Under this arrangement, students could elect to pay a provisional registration fee, perhaps during the latter part of the preceding year thereby receiving course materials early.   After three months of adjustment and 'trying out', they could decide whether to pay the balance of their fee and continue with their enrolment for the rest of the year.

TABLE A The outcomes of special entrants enrolled in BA programs in 1986

	Other than high risk			high-risk		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total

The numbers of applicants for special entry to whom offers were made to the BA programs

	113	257	370	25	31	56

Of these offers made, the following numbers of acceptances were received and students enrolled, (as a percentage of offers made is shown in parenthesis)

	100(88.5)	224(87.2)	324(87.6)	20(80.0)	25(80.6)	45(80.4)

Numbers of students who completed courses in first semester

	41(36.3)	130(50.6)	171(46.2)	6(24.0)	14 (45.2)	20(35.7)

First semester completion as a percentage of those originally accepted and enrolled

	41.0	58.0	52.8	30.0	56.0	44.4

Numbers of students who completed courses in second semester

	38(33.6)	97(37.7)	135(36.5)	3(12.0)	9(29.0)	12(21.4)

Second semester completion as a percentage of those originally accepted and enrolled

	38.0	43.3	41.7	15.0	36.0	26.7
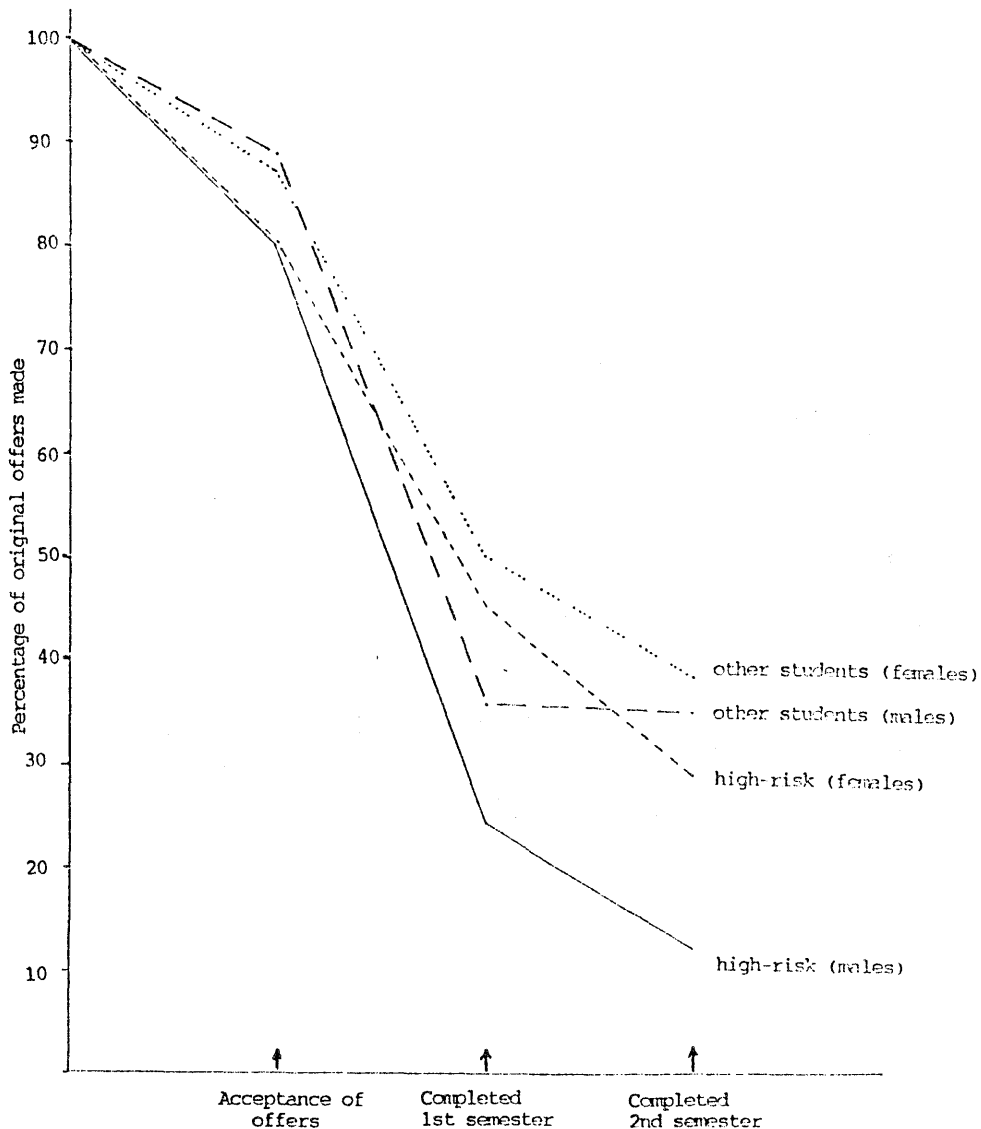
TABLE B Courses completed as a ratio to courses enrolled in for special entrants in 1986

| | Other than high risk | | | high-risk | | |
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Number of students not completing first semester						
	0/120	0/118	0/236	0/29	0/20	0/49
Number of students completing first semester only						
	3/6	34/58	37/64	3/4	5/10	8/14
Number of students completing first and second semester						
	117/118	224/227	341/345	8/8	19/21	27/29
Totals	120/242	258/403	378/645	11/41	24/51	35/92
Student Progress Unit Ratio						
	0.50	0.64	0.59	0.27	0.47	0.38

TABLE C Outcome of special entrants enrolled in BA programs in 1987

Numbers of applicants for special entry to whom offers were made to the BA programs.

| Other than high risk | | | high-risk | | |
Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
123	247	370	28	47	75

Of these offers made, the following numbers of acceptances were received and students enrolled, (as a percentage of offers made is shown in parentheses)

| 102(82.9) | 200(81.0) | 302(81.6) | 17(60.7) | 36(76.6) | 43(70.7) |

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VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE PROVISION FOR DISTANCE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SOME

FINDINGS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEY

Judith Fage, British Open University

Vocational Guidance Provision for Distance Students in Higher Education - some findings from an international survey

Judith Fage, Senior Counsellor, Open University, London Region

In September 1986 I initiated a simple international survey of provision of vocational guidance in distance adult and higher education. (I use the phrase 'vocational guidance' to encompass the range of information, advice and counselling available to students, relating to their choice of occupation and its educational implications). My interest stemmed from my involvement in the British Open University's vocational guidance provision: a combination of careers information booklets, workshops, written advice and referral, personal telephone counselling and computer-assisted guidance. (1) I wrote to 178 institutions provided from the database of our International Centre for Distance Learning, requesting information and views on any vocational guidance offered to their distance students. 56 responses have been received to date. (2)

The ICDL identifies three types of institution offering distance higher education: purely distance teaching institutions (Type A); conventional institutions with a distance teaching department (Type B); and conventional institutions which are developing a distance teaching programme (Type C). Responses from geographical areas by institution type were as follows:

	Asia	Australia	Europe	N. America	C. & S. America
Type A	4	2	2	1	
Type B	5	11	1	13	1
Type C		5	5	5	1

There are some important gaps, notably the absence as yet of any information from African institutions. Nevertheless these 56 institutions provide a range of models of vocational guidance for distance students.

The Range of Provision

The sharpest difference lay between Type A institutions, and Types B and C, which had in many cases an established on-campus counselling or careers centre already serving its younger, full-time students, providing a working base for a service to off-campus students. As a result only 9 of these out of 46 appeared to offer no specific vocational guidance, compared with 7 out of the 10 purely distance institutions, which also suffered from being more recently established. The provision for distance students in institution types B and C depended largely on two factors: how well-resourced and well-developed the existing on-campus service was; and how accessible to off-campus students.

As you would expect there was a slight tendency for type B institutions to have a clearer perception of the needs of distance students and to have adapted provision for them.

Overall the range of provision was extremely wide. Only 19 out of the 56 employed specialist careers advisors. Some offered no provision at all; sometimes because of the political context:

> 'Firms lay claim to their employees' work both during their education and after graduation. So there is no need for vocational guidance'.

> 'The need for counselling is extreme, but the government would look upon it as an unwarrantable expense, and the first steps towards "welfarism"'.

Another group of low providers referred all students to state careers services which they believed to be adequate, especially for students mainly in employment.

Sometimes financial constraints limited provision severely:

> 'There is me plus a secretary versus 12,000 students. We can offer therefore, no special services to anybody - we help as much as we can those who walk through the door. We have no computer gadgetry and no budget'.

In some cases the geographical spread was so great, or employment patterns so variable, or so unrelated to the western industrialised model, that a centralised service geared to this model was inappropriate.

The largest group comprised institutions which provided an on-campus service which was available to adult, external students but which made no special effort to attract them or provide access. These tended to experience a low level of use by distance students, which reinforced the view that there was a low level of need. Those which attempted to extend their services reported greater usage. The fact that some of their strategies were very simple suggests that recognition of need and advertisement may in themselves stimulate use. These institutions also tended to have a larger professional and support staff and a budget which allowed a reasonable level of counselling and publication. But all these factors interweave: an institution with a strong commitment both to its adult and distance students and to counselling is likely to allocate more resources, and employ more specialist staff.

Means and Methods

The full range of vocational guidance methods was found across the spectrum, in particular information leaflets and personal counselling, either face-to-face or, especially with distance students, by telephone. Some institutions ran workshops, mostly at the initial career planning stage. Surprisingly, perhaps, only three used computer-assisted vocational guidance (CAVG), all United States universities. The dilemma was put thus:

'In North America right now, the 'advising' model of career counselling has been supplanted by a more experiential group model or by computerized testing, information and self-assessment computer services. Since the latter are extremely expensive for our very tight university budgets, our career counsellors have developed group workshops for most career counselling services'.

The problem remains, however, that workshops tend to be inaccessible to distance students, and inadequate without personal support counselling for the more heterogeneous needs of adults.

Special Provision for Distance Students

Strategies adopted to overcome the barriers of access to careers services experienced by distance students included:

- Self-directed career planning materials, ranging from self-scoring questionnaires, through more substantial workbooks, to courses or modules of courses.

- Timetabling space and providing resources for vocational guidance at on-campus residential schools in the distance teaching programme, or at special day schools or evening classes.

- Arrangements for distance students to telephone on-campus advisors on a 'tollfree' telephone line for the cost of a local call.

- Television, radio and student magazines to share information.

- Personal referral to local agencies, libraries, schools, information services.

- Advisors based at local centres.

- Outreach work, both to adults generally in the wider community, including part-time and distance students, and by visits to outlying university centres.

- Adaptation of career planning and job research workshops to a weekend format at local centres.

- Use of postgraduate students as support careers advisors working to a specialist, to expand resources.

- Use of present and past distance students as part of a resource network.

The Need for Provision

The wide variation in provision found in the survey stemmed from a range of factors - political, economic and social context, resources, age of institution. Much of it, however, seemed to be due to the perception of need. This perception was related to two main factors, encapsulated

in this letter:

> 'We have no careers guidance in our Institute. The main reason
> for that is the government maintains careers guidance offices
> open to all who might need it. The other reason is that nearly
> all of our students are already employed and study with us in
> their leisure time'.

Several institutions referred to the availability of external provision,
especially in Scandinavian countries, which run nationwide employment
agencies, and in Australia, where the Commonwealth Employment Services
operate. How appropriate these state services are for adult undergraduates
and graduates is not clear: while some institutions expressed confidence
in them, others suggested they may have limitations. It is possible
that where such agencies do exist, a collaborative system involving personal
referral after initial counselling by the academic institution works
well.

Even more important was the belief, articulated in several responses,
that part-time students, mainly employed already, or caring for
children, are not looking for work or career change. In some
institutions offering specific professional updating courses this was
clearly the case. However, where undergraduate programmes were offered,
others saw adult distance students as 'probably involved in, or anticipating,
a career change' and of 'housewives' as 'the group most interested in
gaining ideas of future paid employment'. My own survey of London students
in 1986 tends to confirm this view: out of 722 students responding, 662
were in work or caring for children; but 339 were studying with a view
to getting a job or changing career. (3)

Some institutions identified pre-course vocational guidance as especially
important: 'We could do much more in this field, with a view to ensuring
that students enrol on the right course for them, and thereby reducing
the dropout rate'; one provided special career programmes for entrants,
especially single parents and homemakers.

Changes in the world economy have, in addition, increased the need:

> 'Up until the last 10 years the state has enjoyed, for the most
> part, full employment. However, in more recent times we have
> suffered an unemployment rate of 8% and there is no immediate
> likelihood of the situation changing dramatically. It is my
> impression that as a result of the competitive employment
> market, students are considering their careers more seriously'.

Future Developments

The future is likely to see a growing need for vocational guidance
amongst non-traditional students in higher education, in a climate of,
on the one hand, personal change and enhanced expectations based on
their new educational experience and qualifications, and on the other
economic and social change leading to fewer and different employment
opportunities. Whether the need will be met is less clear. Commitment
to guidance and counselling generally is variable; budgets are uncertain;
impartial student-focussed vocational guidance, rather than employer
control or abandoned self-help, may be seen as an expensive luxury,
particularly for adults. Development of computer-assisted guidance

seems frustratingly slow, and implementation is expensive. Nevertheless, the potential, the expertise and the need are there; and the beneficial effect of clear motivation on dropout may prompt a readjustment of priorities in favour of vocational guidance for the growing number of part-time, distance-learning, adult students.

Notes

1. Details of this provision can be found in 'Vocational Guidance in the Open University' by Jenny Pulsford, in the published papers from the 1983 International Workshop on Counselling in Distance Education .

2. Further responses will , it is hoped., be received in due course.

3. This trend is confirmed by the 1985 survey of Open University graduates, of which 4 out of 10 reported a change of occupation.

Steps To Your Future

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Distance Education learners are rapidly becoming the larger segment of our part-time University student population. In 1972, Laurentian University started its Distance Education programme by offering five television/correspondence courses. In an attempt to meet the growing educational needs of these students, our multi-media Distance Education programme has expanded substantially. Approximately eighty courses are currently being offered and additional courses are being prepared. We also recently acquired the bilingual name "Envision" for our Distance Education programme, thereby promoting a positive academic future for our Distance Education learners.

It is now possible for a Distance Education learner to obtain an entire Bachelor of Arts degree and Post RN BScN through Envision. Courses from several subject areas are offered through Envision. However, concentrations or majors are available in the subject areas of Law and Justice, Psychology and Religious Studies. New technologies help us meet the Distance Education learner needs for schedule flexibility and variety in the modes of delivery, including print-based, audio cassettes, audio-visual cassettes, broadcast television and teleconferencing. Through Envision, Laurentian University attempts to meet the learning needs of students who are geographically scattered over an area twice the size of France. We have also had Distance Education students from each of Canada's ten provinces as well as some students from far away places such as Nairobi, Kenya and Hamilton, New Zealand.

In 1986, Marian Croft, Director of the Centre for Continuing Education and Part-time Studies, the administrative unit within the University responsible for all studies other than regular full-time programmes made a major commitment to improving the student services available to prospective part-time students. She requested the creation of a pre-University package designed to help adults decide whether university studies could satisfy their learning needs. The result of her request was the creation of the non-credit Distant Learning package, The First Step, by Professor Cheryl Cranley. (Cranley, 1986, pg. 1) This was a great breakthrough for our Distance Education programme, Envision. By promoting the First Step kit, it is our hope to reach prospective students from various age groups, education and work backgrounds and most importantly from diverse geographic locations.

We hope to reach those adults who would not normally consider university study for themselves. Many prospective learners cite lack of confidence and fear of failure as the major deterrents to pursuing a university education. (Ironside, 1986, Pg. 13). Personal fears about returning to academic study can be confronted before students accept the challenge of following a first university course. Some adults falsely believe that university education is only available to those students who possess youth, wealth and the opportunity to study on a full-time basis. Students need to learn that there is no threat of

ridicule, that the university is open and its resources available to them. Some prospective students are geographically isolated and may be totally unaware that they too may avail themselves to the University's resources through the Envision programme. They do not know who to call or where to write for assistance.

Many Distance Education learners are admitted as "mature students". These are people twenty-one years of age or older and who have been away from school for at least one year. Every other aspect about new mature students may be different. They may have various levels of education, cultural backgrounds, study skills, etc. 'Their level of satisfaction will be based on their ability to obtain courses and programmes that fulfill their expectations.' (Paulet, 1986, pg. 6). These newly admitted students are prime candidates to benefit from the First Step kit. It is structured in such a way that prospective students make decisions about personal readiness for university work.

Envision students follow the same rules and regulations as the regular on-campus students. Therefore the general information that is regularly shared with on-campus students over the counter or by phone has been included in the First Step manual. This provides students who may be hundreds of miles away with efficient meaningful information on very short notice. The First Step is a beginning towards the formation of a positive communication link between the Distance Education learners and the university. Since the majority of student inquiries are often

similar in nature and usually arrive at peak periods, we find many problems are solved by sending out the First Step kit immediately upon request.

The First Step manual contains general information about university studies, followed by specific information about Laurentian University and a view of the university from the perspective of an adult learner. Reasons why adults return to university studies as well as the reasons for not returning are discussed at great length. Prospective learners are encouraged to consider their personal needs.

Students are expected to work through the manual, chapter by chapter without specific time limits. However, several assignments have been included for them to complete once they feel comfortable with the questions. These assignments are submitted to the First Step author, Prof. C. Cranley for her comments and the assignments quickly returned. This encourages an ongoing dialogue between the prospective student and the professor. 'Encouragement draws on motivation from within and allows them to be aware of their strengths.' (Weinberg, 1978, pg. 107). Since Prof. Cranley entered the university system as an adult learner, she is easily able to share and appreciate the concerns and reservations of the adult learners.

The various academic courses and programmes offered by Laurentian University are listed in the manual. Students are shown the various options they may wish to pursue. Sometimes,

students may register for a course without knowing how it fits into an academic programme or what other course might have been more benefical. Unless the student makes a request for academic assistance, a poor choice of course may go unnoticed until it is too late!

Simply because the majority of Distance Education learners are adults one should not assume that they are totally aware of their academic needs. Students should consider several factors when choosing a course. Although it is important to know how a particular course fits into an academic programme, it is equally important to know that it may affect their family responsibilities, financial situation, work schedule, etc. As an example, a student registering for a science course may need to work extra hours away from home to fulfill specific lab requirements. Also, if the First Step user is a current Distance Education learner, the course may help avoid any feelings of confusion or isolation that student may be experiencing . In turn, a course withdrawal may be avoided.

According to Robert Paulet, 'Representatives of distant education institutions contend that their goal is to promote an attitude of independence.' (Paulet, 1986, pg 2). Laurentian University wants to promote a positive, caring attitude towards Distance Education learners. Even though they are studying independently, they should never feel isolated from

the University. The learner's personal chances of success at
university study are discussed extensively. When an individual
has a goal he wishes to achieve and he sees the material
available to him as relevant to achieving that goal, learning
takes place with great rapidity. (Rogers, 1969, pg. 158).

The First Step manual is unusual in that it also contains
several personal letters of encouragement written by other
part-time students who eagerly gave of their time to share their
personal learning experiences. There are also three audio-
cassettes of student interviews included in the kit. It is very
reassuring for prospective students to receive positive feedback
and to hear verbal support from their peers. A great deal of
emphasis is placed on the individual's ability to achieve a
balance in life with respect to family, work and studies. Moti-
vation is the premise behind the act. They need to become
involved through participation. (Weinberg, 1986, pg. 21).
They need to develop a sense of community. The psychologist,
Robert Gagné stated an attitude can change as a result of a
single experience . (Gagné, 1977, pg. 242). In the past, lack
of accurate, appropriate information may have left some pros-
pective students in the dark, feeling isolated and confused. The
First Step kit can be a quick, positive response to the needs of
these individuals.

Distance Education Programmes across Canada face high
attrition rates. We believe course withdrawals will be reduced

substantially in our Envision programme once students are better informed about University studies through their use of the First Step kit.

As Holmberg (1985) has noted, the printed word is still the most important medium of communication in distance education. (CDIJ (1986) pg. 85). The First Step is currently being advertised in our Part-time Studies Calendar which is mailed to each current student and each prospective part-time student upon request. The First Step is advertised on a tear-off application form which can be filled out and returned by the interested individual, along with a cheque for $40.00. The kit is mailed out immediately. We hope to broaden the distribution area by eventually producing a First Step brochure. This brochure will be distributed to all schools, libraries, social service agencies thoughout northeastern Ontario, anywhere and everywhere prospective adult learners may be reached.

University study may not be an appropriate choice of study for everyone. Although the decision and commitment must come from within the individual, the learning experience of university study can be enhanced when a prospective learner takes advantage of what the First Step has to offer. Individuals need to make the best possible personal choices, acknowledge their responsibilities and set priorities. The First Step kit can help do this. All adult learners deserve a second chance to further their education, if they really want to take the first step!

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THE "DUAL-MODE PROFESSOR": THE SUBJECT

SPECIALIST AS TUTOR

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The 'Dual-Mode Professor': The Subject
Specialist as Tutor

We are no doubt all aware that some theorists in adult learning argue so strongly for student autonomy and individualisation that any tutor-initiated contact is regarded as an unwarranted assault on the adult learner's independence. On the other hand, experts such as Baath (1984 pp. 31-43) maintain that it is an essential part of any tutor's duties to make the first approach to all newly enrolled students. As Holmberg comments (1986 p. 31), "the two approaches contrasted pose a problem to many liberal distance educators who would like to treat their students as mature, responsible personalities, but who still feel there is a duty to spontaneously support them and, if at all possible, prevent their experiencing failure."

There seems not to be much conclusive evidence yet that a personal style of presentation of distance learning material and of supportive tutoring leads to greater learner satisfaction and success. However some research such as, for example, that done by Rekkedal (1985) into the beneficial effects of a personal tutor-counsellor system has been done. This study suggests higher completion rates as well as more interest, activity and involvement with course materials on the part of students working with tutor-counsellors.

To an academic subject specialist who has for almost fifteen years had the experience of first preparing the learning packages and then teaching, or tutoring, them to classes of students ranging in number from six to sixty or more, Holmberg's two contrasted approaches represent a familiar dilemma. The effort to design a package which is so user-friendly that it makes the learner as completely independent as possible is going to save its producer a very great deal of tutorial time later on, time which most university teachers these days find is in ever shorter supply.

All the same, no matter how well-designed for independent learning my course package may be, I also know from experience that many, perhaps most, of those using it need some tutorial support as well. These students appreciate the subtlety of custom-tailored reactions to their perceptions and misconceptions from their teacher, even when turnaround time is slow. As their tutor I can in part relieve their isolation, while my voice on audiocassette lectures and tutorials becomes as familiar as an old friend's.

As the subject specialist, in tutoring I can enrich the course materials for the sophisticated students, who are sometimes neglected in courses designed to be accessible even to inexperienced learners. As tutor, I can match and introduce learners to each other (recent examples include two retired professionals in Ottawa both studying classics, or two middle-aged widows, one in poor health, learning Latin in small separate rural communities). Letters, phone calls, even meetings result if both students wish to make contact. Again, as their academic tutor, I can also give advice and guidance to learners who need to acquire some general academic skills or whose basic understanding of the subject has been inadequately developed. But above all, distance learners can rely, we hope, on top quality academic support from the subject specialist.

Distance learners need three kinds of support, academic, motivational and counselling in general. Few will make use of all three often. Most distance learners become increasingly independent as they develop skills and experience and their need for support services may then diminish. However, each institution offering distance education must decide how to provide academic, motivational and counselling support to its students. The support structures, as Spronk observes (1985), should be an integral part of the distance system's design and built into its learning packages from the start as a "safety net", and they should be available before, during, and ideally even after the student's learning experience.

Academic support needs include specific subject-related tutoring: how to grasp difficult concepts, how to approach a new aspect of the material, how to work on a particular assignment. They may also include more general discussion: how course content relates to the wider discipline, how the discipline reflects prior or future experience of the learner's world, what constitutes such concepts as, for example, proof, evidence, the scientific method, inductive reasoning, academic analysis and synthesis.

Motivational support may be simply sympathetic and tactful encouragement. It may be required to help the learners get started, to carry them through the mid-course doldrums or to give them courage to face a final examination hurdle when their self-confidence is at dead low. A musician phoned me five years ago from Vancouver, three thousand miles away, on the day before the elementary Greek exam. He had decided not to write the paper. I encouraged him at least to try it, told him he had nothing to lose, and wished him luck, reminding him of his successful term's work so far. He achieved an A on the course, with a perfectly respectable job on the exam. So much for performance nerves and two or three minutes of a tutor's time! Motivational support may also include some problem-solving and provision of information. What seems to a distant student an insoluble difficulty or an incurable inadequacy can often be sorted out and a solution can be provided by a competent motivational counsellor.

Counselling in general consists of a variety of support services. These include career advice, both academic and post-academic or vocational; secondly, therapeutic counselling for personal problems, life crises and so on; thirdly, diagnostic and remedial counselling to develop study skills, effective time management, student professionalism, stress management and so on; and lastly, administrative counselling to assist students with handling the system efficiently or to act as an ombudsman in cases of conflict.

In considering what types of support providers can be made available for independent learners we may mention study groups, remedial learning packages, local resource centres, community resources, computerised responses to students' questions or assignments. Each of these deserves individual discussion, but here we are primarily interested in tutors and whether their ability to provide skilled support services can be improved.

Some types of tutor may be better at providing one kind of support rather than another. The matrix included here suggests the various tutor

types and their particular support skills. The conclusions which I am going to draw from it are that each distance learner should be able to consult with at least two and sometimes three or more tutors, advisers and counsellors. These are, first, the academic tutor, and ideally I believe this should be the course author, to provide academic and motivational support; secondly, the individual adviser who is assigned permanently to each student to provide motivational and counselling support. Both of these, the academic tutor and the assigned adviser, should have immediate access to the various counsellors who are attached to the system itself forming a professional systemwide staff of experts. In addition, a senior administrative counsellor may act as both an ombudsman and a broker on-call for any student needing help.

Each of these tutors, advisers and counsellors should form an essential link in what Sewart (1978 pp. 1-2) refers to as a "continuity of concern" for the student. These are also Sewart's "intermediaries" between the system and the individual, whose "primary concern... is not for the system itself, but rather for the individuals and although they are normally employees of the system, they seek to represent individual needs to such an extent that they force the system to take cognisance of such needs."

What can we do in practice to provide good tutor-counsellor support? The subject specialist as academic tutor should tutor students with individual and personal attention, train any graduate student markers carefully and monitor them continually, develop his or her own good motivational skills and at least some some counselling skills, and develop adequate brokering skills. (By brokering in this context I mean the ability to put the student in contact quickly with those people in the systemwide support structure who are most likely to provide the appropriate help.) The student adviser should remain with the learners permanently, keeping careful records and notes to ensure complete familiarity with their progress, act as an intermediary between the system and the student and develop good brokering skills. The administrative counsellor should develop a master-broker's skills, work closely with admissions, withdrawals or complaints committees, understand the system thoroughly and have the power to short-circuit it and act as ombudsman at need.

Unfortunately, the university at which I teach is unlikely to be the only dual-mode institution at which the jury-rigged support structures do not form an adequate safety-net for all its independent learners. The distance students who are unlucky enough to encounter an overworked professor who leaves all the marking to one graduate student this term, another the next, none of whom fully appreciate the need for supportive tutoring, can fall plummeting into failure or withdraw from further distance learning through no real fault of their own. The system may seem to them little better than a callous money making network of red-tape. A well-designed humane and responsive support system could prevent such a disastrous outcome.

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MATRIX: TYPES OF TUTORS AND SUPPORT

TYPE OF TUTOR TYPE OF SUPPORT SUPPLIED TO STUDENT

TYPE OF TUTOR	ACADEMIC	MOTIVATIONAL	COUNSELLING	COMMITMENT TO STUDENT AS INDIVIDUAL
instructor (academic author or subject specialist)	excellent	variable	usually poor	variable – sometimes good?
subject tutor (permanent, course/subject-attached)	good to excellent	good	often good	variable – usually good?
student adviser (permanent, student-attached)	poor	excellent	good to excellent	excellent
counsellor (permanent system-attached, expertise varies)	poor	good	excellent	variable – good to poor
marker (transient, department-attached, grad. teaching ass't.)	variable – good to poor	variable – good to poor	poor	variable – usually poor?

WHY DO INDEPENDENT LEARNERS WITH WELL-DESIGNED SELF-CONTAINED LEARNING PACKAGES STILL NEED A SUPPORT SYSTEM?

Two contrasted approaches

- student autonomy and individualisation

- tutor support and advice

Beneficial effects of tutor-counsellor system

- higher completion rates

- greater interest and activity

Experience suggests students benefit most from

- well-designed learning packages

- individual responses from tutor

- contact with tutor (also other students)

- enrichment for 'good' students

- remedial advice for 'poor' students

- guidance for inexperienced students

WHAT KINDS OF SUPPORT DO INDEPENDENT LEARNERS NEED?

Academic

- specific or subject-related

- general: academic techniques
          academic/intellectual experience

Motivational

- diagnostic (see 'counselling')

- sympathetic

- encouragement: information
                pre-enrolment
                in-course
                completion

Counselling

- career: academic
          post-academic/vocational

- diagnostic/practical:
    student professionalism, study skills, time management
- therapeutic/personal:
    crisis counselling, life problems

- administrative: 'ombudsman'

WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORT-PROVIDERS COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNERS?

- **Study groups** (peer groups, self-help groups)

- **Remedial learning packages** (basic knowledge, study skills, 'Are you ready for . . .?', pre-courses)

- **Resource centres** (a./v. access, computer terminals, 'visitors', teleconferences, local tutors)

- **Computerised responses**

- **Community resources** (libraries, schools, community counsellors, student networks, volunteers, clubs)

- **Tutors** (local, semi-local, central or institutional)

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TYPE OF TUTOR

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marker (transient, department-attached, grad. teaching ass't.)	variable – good to poor	variable – good to poor	poor	variable – usually poor?

WHAT IS THE IDEAL TUTOR-COUNSELLOR SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNERS?

- An academic tutor (subject specialist)

- An assigned adviser (student specialist)

- An administrative counsellor - 'broker/ombudsman' (system specialist)

PLUS a back-up (systemwide) professional staff of experts:

remedial workers, personal counsellors, study skills/basic skills providers, library/community resources advisers, registrars, technicians, vocational/career counsellors, etc.

So each student should have

- **an academic tutor**
  course/subject related
  intensive but self-limiting contact

- **an assigned adviser**
  regular contact
  permanent intermediary

- **an administrative counsellor**
  on-call as needed

WHAT CAN WE DO IN THE REAL WORLD TO SUPPLY GOOD TUTOR-COUNSELLOR SUPPORT?

Subject specialist or academic tutor should

- tutor students individually and personally

- train markers carefully and monitor continually

- develop good motivational and some counselling skills

- develop adequate brokering skills

Student adviser should

- remain with student permanently

- keep careful records and guide student with them

- act as intermediary between system and student

- develop good brokering skills

Administrative counsellor should

- act as ombudsman

- develop master-broker's skills

- work with admissions, withdrawals or complaints committees

- understand the system and have some power to shortcircuit it

EMPATHY AS A CHARACTERISTIC OF DISTANCE EDUCATION - THEORY AND EMPIRICAL
FINDINGS

Borje Holmberg

With empathy is usually meant the power of projecting oneself into and understanding someone else's work. A certain amount of empathy in relation to student's work and situation is in my view required of all distance educators.

General theoretical approach

Basically, empathy in our context would seem to denote the capacity and readiness to experience and, as it were, personally to feel student's uncertainty, anxiety and hesitation on one hand, their confidence, intellectual pleasure and eureka sensations on the other hand and share these experiences with them. Empathy in this sense is evidently conducive to counsellor behaviour likely to facilitate mutual understanding and personal contact between students and counsellors. This could – but should not – be interpreted as a handholding kind of support, as it were in loco parentis.

Distant students are usually mature adults well capable of handling problems and difficulties. Most of them have limited or no experience of what independent study beside family, social and professional commitments can be like, however, and quite a few seem to be exaggeratedly aware of their own intellectual limitations. Distance-education organisations have to pay attention to this in their course development, their tuition and their counselling. Experience fairly generally testifies to practice along these lines as far as the density of information and readability of courses are concerned. It seems more doubtful if the principles of empathy are generally adhered to in subject-matter presentation and tutoring at a distance. This hesitation would seem to apply also to counselling, which – apart from student-centred practice particularly in countries under Anglo-Saxon influence – is too often almost exclusively a pre-study activity.

Empathy in distance education implies more than understanding conducive to helping students master difficulties. I submit that in serious study most of us feel a need to share discoveries and intellectual experiences with someone else, to exchange views and through this exchange learn confidently to work with the intellectual matter concerned. This evidently implies a need for dialogue. Disregarding the face-to face elements that in some – but not most-cases supplement distance education we must find ways non-contiguously to cater for something functioning in the way dialogue does. This is evidently necessary if we wish to pave the way for the development of empathy.

Distance-education theories related to the empathy approach

Thinking along these lines has caused some theory contributions immediately relevant to distance education. These contributions are concerned with both course development and with non-contiguous communication. To the former belong Kathleen Forsythe's studies of the learning system (Forsythe 1986), Daryl Nation's evaluation of 'personal style' (Nation 1985) and others (1), to the latter John Baath's and Torsten Rekkedal's studies of assignment submission (Baath 1980, Rekkedal 1983 and (1985), while the former underline the importance of dialogue-like course presentation in the form of simulated communication, the latter concentrate on the frequency, speed and personal character of real non-contiguous communication.

Empirical findings

Two of these theoretical approaches, which have been empirically tested (Holmberg and Rekkedal), will be looked into here.

My theory of didactic conversation (2) can in this context be summarised as follows:

> If a distance-study course consistently represents a communication process felt to have the character of a conversation, then the students will be more motivated and more successful than if the course studied has an imperson textbook character.

The characteristics of this didactic conversation are taken to be :

- easily accessible presentations of study matter, clear, somewhat colloquial language, in writing easily readable, moderate density of information.

- explicit advice and suggestions to the students as to what to do and what to avoid, what to pay particular attention to and consider, with reasons provided.

- invitation to an exchange of views, to questions, to judgements of what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected.

- attempts to involve the student emotionally so that he or she takes a personal interest in the subject and its problems.

- personal style including the use of the personal and possessive pronouns.

Didactic conversation implies more than what Lewis calls internalised conversation caused by the study of a text (Lewis 1975 p. 69). It serves the purpose of establishing a personal relationship and empathy between student and course developer.

The theory has been shown to generate three testable hypotheses relevant to the empathy concept. It was subjected to rigorous testing by means of attempts to falsify the hypotheses under adverse conditions in Popper's spirit. Three series of tests were undertaken. The students taking part in the investigation stated that they felt personally involved by the conversational presentations, their attitudes were favourable to them and they did marginally better than a control group. In spite of this the results were statistically less supportive of the theory than expected. The tendential outcome supports the theory, however.

While this theory of mine was primarily concerned with course development, Rekkedal's study is relevant in this context. It tests a 'new' tutor role which integrates 'the functions of administrative measures, tuition and counselling' (Rekkedal 1985 p. 35). Each student in Rekkedal's experimental group was given one contact person in the distance-teaching organisation. This contact person was the student's tutor, counsellor and administrator answering questions about all matters connected with the study. Rekkedal investigated the outcome of this integration of supporting tasks, which included introductory letters in which the contact persons introduced themselves to their students, short turn-round times for assignments and frequent telephone contacts with students. The study comprised a comparison between an experimental group offered these services by a personal tutor-counsellor while studying 3-11 courses of a course combination leading to a professional qualification and a control group following the usual pattern of the school concerned (NKI in Oslo).

The main difference between the treatment of the experimental group and the control group was that the experimental students communicated with one personal tutor integrating administrative, teaching and counselling functions, which normally are separated.

(Rekkedal 1985, p. 9)

Statistically significant differences were found between the groups. The students in the experimental group had a higher completion rate, they were more active in their studies and completed a larger number of study units and courses during the experimental period' (Rekkedal 1985, p. 13).

Conclusion

The data mentioned and the outcomes of the other studies referred to indicate that the empathy approach is favourable to distant students. If we believe that dialogue and human contact generally are at the core of educational endeavour we may be inclined to regard empathy not only as a desirable but as a necessary characteristic of distance education. Have distance-teaching organisations and distance educators already consistently applied this thinking to the counselling work or are there conclusions for counselling still to be drawn?

Notes

1   An interesting near parallel is what in their plan for the Dutch distance-teaching university Chang et al. call paradigmatic presentation (Chang et al. 1983 p. 44).

2   In this presentation I disregard the guidance aspect, which, however, also belongs to the theory.

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OPEN LEARNING

AND THE NATIONAL CERTIFICATE

IN SCOTLAND

IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE

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OPEN LEARNING AND THE NATIONAL CERTIFICATE
IN SCOTLAND : IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE

BACKGROUND

The National Certificate, introduced in 1984, completely changed the provision of non-advanced vocational education in Scotland. Traditional courses, consisting of a year's study and external examination by several validating bodies were replaced by a large number of short modular courses, usually comprising 40 hours of study. The modules are assessed internally on a continuous basis and the delivery and assessment of modules is monitored and moderated by a single validating body - the Scottish Vocational Education Council - SCOTVEC.

RATIONALE

The rationale behind the National Certificate is fully described in the paper "16-18's in Scotland: An Action Plan" issued by the Scottish Education Department in February 1984. What has emerged is a system which facilitates the development of both broad based and specialist curricula ; and which allows easy up-date and change of curricula to meet rapidly changing employer needs. For the student, the system encourages self-reliance and independent responsibility; offers choice of curriculum for student or employer, guided where possible by staff with the right kind of expertise; and allows for varied rates of progress and opportunities for changes in direction, as well as pro- gression to University entrance.

ROLE OF SCOTVEC

The fact that an external certificate can now be awarded on the results of internal assessment means that for the certificate to have credibility/..........

credibility among employers, students, parents and other educational institutions, internal assessment must be effective and to an agreed national standard.

The design of the module descriptor, Appendix 1, clearly linking learning outcomes to performance criteria and assessment strategies, in part provides this credibility but effective delivery of the National Certificate lies with SCOTVEC and its moderation process. Through moderation by a team of national moderators and subject assessors SCOTVEC aims to ensure that all aspects of the National Certificate delivery in presenting centres are consistent with National Certificate philosophy and intended practices.

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE AND OPEN LEARNING

The availability of National Certificate modular programmes of study is inevitably unequally distributed throughout Scotland. Even the largest colleges will not be able to offer all 2,000 modules listed in the catalogue. The problem is exacerbated in small colleges in remote parts of Scotland where in some instances, only four departments are represented. The situation is more acute in schools and community education services, for example some schools in the Highlands can only offer one or two modules. In addition, despite the original title "16-18 Action Plan", it is now recognised that the National Certificate has relevance for many adult learners. They may wish to pursue a programme of vocational training; many will want to opt in on a limited basis, perhaps taking one or two modules for interest or to update their vocational expertise, e.g. an office worker may take one module in word processing to develop a new skill.

For adult learners, however, there may be constraints which make it impossible for them to attend colleges. In rural, sparsely populated parts of Scotland distance from the college will be a major barrier. In/.......

In urban situations, family commitments and work patterns prevent many adults from attending college.

It was against this background of the need for accessible continuing education that the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET) project was set up. The focus of the project was to promote and develop Open Learning packages for the National Certificate and investigate a range of ways to deliver and support them.

The project is a co-operative one, between SCET and five Scottish Regions. Ten packages were developed covering communication, numeracy, computer literacy skills and business studies. As the National Certificate is a competency based system, this had to be reflected in the packages and one common feature is the high degree of activity which each package has. The packages have been designed to cover the learning needs of a diverse range of learners from senior school pupils studying on their own, to adult learners working at home or in their own work place.

NATIONAL CERTIFICATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE

Even in conventional delivery of National Certificate there are several implications for educational guidance.

In the first place, the philosophy of the National Certificate with the emphasis on self-reliance and responsibility, and student centred learning should be explained and understood by prospective students. Also, for many students the criterion referenced assessment strategy will be new and require explanation.

Secondly, students, who, in the past, have not had any say in their curriculum should now have the skills and knowledge to negotiate an appropriate vocational programme of modules or single modules according to interest or need; guided by skilled tutors.

Thirdly, the very nature of student centred learning, implies meeting individual/........

individual interest levels or ability levels within the framework of a single module. This means that on-going guidance and support should be integral to the delivery process. This is achieved through continuous assessment – such assessment is frequent and informal allowing both student and teacher the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate action before summative (final) assessment takes place.

Finally, end of module or programme reflection should both provide feedback to the teacher which may or may not be relevant to the guidance of future students and include discussion of routes for progression.

OPEN LEARNING : IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE

This four tier approach to guidance is also relevant to Open Learning but at certain stages in the process special recognition must be given specifically to Open Learning.

In the first stage information about Open Learning as well as National Certificate should be available. The cons of Open Learning as well as the pros should be considered before students commit themselves.

Secondly, curriculum and subject guidance must go hand in hand with assessment or appropriate skills required of the student for any Open Learning modular programme or individual module. An Open Learning package with a heavy emphasis on print and reading/writing skills may not be the best way for some students to study.

Thirdly, while on-going support is as integral to Open Learning delivery as it is to conventional delivery of the National Certificate, special circumstances may be identified in Open Learning where students will require extra support or different support to that offered. For example, mentors may be appointed in the base of study, to support distance learners or texts may have to be modified or translated to

a/..........

a partially sighted student.

Finally, feedback from student to tutor and progression to further study or employment is as essential for Open Learning as it is for conventional delivery.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS : OPEN LEARNING

The National Certificate is available to a wide range of participants. Open Learning delivery extends this range and has attracted special needs groups who require the flexibility of an Open Learning approach. The particular needs of such students must be identified. For example, physically handicapped students may require access to special equipment, physical access to buildings and transport to centres or home tuition. At the end of a period of study guidance staff should be equipped with appropriate information (e.g. special needs database) to advise on progression for such students. Adults returning to study and particularly study through Open Learning may have need of special support to raise confidence and adapt to new methodologies and assessment approaches. School pupils, working independently for the first time, may require support through study skills and learning how to pace themselves.

Appendix II summarises the range of guidance needs and the possible providers.

CONCLUSIONS

It is essential for the students success in the system that they are offered provision which is appropriate to their vocational and personal needs. This support may come from several sources as indicated in Appendix II - O.L. tutors, guidance staff, subject specialists, special needs staff and mentors. The starting point for managers will be to identify with tutors their specific responsibilities within a delivering/..........

delivering system and subsequently the training needs for the support role identified. Most tutors will need help in identifying the the learner's need for support particularly when this requires diagnosing and assessing learners difficulties at a distance; adapting materials to suit needs of specific groups; pacing students learning; marking and commenting on assignments and telephone feedback and tuition; organising effective group and individual tutorials; and accessing or providing subject specialist guidance. Staff development for the training of guidance staff in Open Learning and the National Certificate is therefore a priority.

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Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET)

Video film with print support materials illustrating........
.... Open Learning Delivery Systems in Tayside 1987

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	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE MODULE DESCRIPTOR
Ref No.	71091 Session 1987-88
Title	INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTERS
Type and Purpose	A general module suitable for the student from a wide range of occupations or interests. The aim of this module is to give the student confidence in using a variety of hardware and software configurations, and to improve his/her awareness of the potential of information technology. It may be taken in conjunction with 72102 Keyboarding 1.
Preferred Entry Level	No formal entry requirements.
Learning Outcomes	The student should: 1 know the reasons for the growth in computer usage; 2 know the use of computers in meeting the needs of different categories of users; 3 know the components (processor and peripherals) of a microcomputer system; 4 use an alphanumeric keyboard in the context of computing; 5 load and run programs related to his/her occupation or special interests, programs as learning aids and programs relating to life-skills.
Content/ Context	Corresponding to Learning Outcomes 1-5: 1 Speed, accuracy, reliability, versatility and cost have all contributed to the increased use of computers. 2 The use of computers in categories of user such as: education, science, industry, government, commerce and the public services. Simple packages should be chosen to illustrate these applications.

Content/ Context (Contd)	3 Component parts of more than one microcomputer system should be specified as processor, I/O devices and backing store. The processor's components should be identified as ALU, control unit, main memory. Operational procedures for I/O devices and backing store should be introduced. Correct handling of devices and storage media. 4 In the context of microcomputing the keyboard should be used to initialise and close-down systems, with cursor control, upper and lower case characters, space-bar, etc. 5 Applications programs related to the student's occupation or special interest should be used to emphasise the applications of computers in the work-place. Examples should illustrate **speed of response and value in processing repetitive** procedures. In most cases the programs will be menu-driven.
Learning and Teaching Approaches	The teaching approach of this module will be student-centred throughout with only brief exposition by the lecturer. The student should gain sufficient practical experience to allow him/her to use a variety of computer configurations. This will probably be achieved by giving the student the opportunity to use more than one microcomputer system within the module. The use of technical jargon for its own sake should be avoided. The student need only acquire sufficient technical vocabulary to allow him/her to follow instructions. Close liaison within a course-team should ensure that appropriate learning aid packages are used by an individual student. Where a student is not clearly identified with a specific occupation he/she may be exposed to a variety of vocationally based software. Correct posture and knowledge of correct fingering should be encouraged. Although much of the work of this module will be related to the execution of menu-driven programs, the student should, where possible, be given some opportunity to control the computer himself/herself. The language LOGO in association with some proprietary 'cybernetic' devices can be used to give the student some experience in programming the computer himself/herself.
Assessment Procedures	Acceptable performance in the module will be satisfactory achievement of the performance criteria for each Learning Outcome. The following abbreviations are used below: LO Learning Outcome IA Instrument of Assessment PC Performance Criteria LO1 IA Five short response questions (written or oral) without reference to text. PC The student correctly identifies several reasons for the growth in computer usage and describes an appropriate example of each. The cutting score will be 80%.

Assessment Procedures (Contd)	LO2 IA	Five short response questions (written or oral) without reference to text.
	PC	The student correctly identifies uses of computers within different categories of user.
		The cutting score will be 80%.
	LO3 IA	Annotated diagram.
	PC	The student correctly draws and labels a diagram showing:
		(a) input; **(b) output;** **(c) central processing unit;** (d) backing storage.
	LO4 IA	Practical exercise.
	PC	The student correctly performs **the tasks listed below:**
		(a) cursor movement; (b) use shift key; (c) **use space bar;** (d) use return or enter key; (e) use appropriate key(s) to abort program; (f) use appropriate key(s) to RESET program; (g) use DELETE (or equivalent) key; (h) input numerical data; (i) input mixed upper/lower case alphanumeric data.
	LO5 IA	Practical exercise.
	PC	The student correctly:
		(a) loads and runs two programs, related to each of the following: (i) his/her occupation or special interest; (ii) learning aids; (iii) life skills; (b) performs the following tasks: (i) initialise the system; (ii) insert disk or cassette; (iii) load program from disk or cassette; (iv) interpret menu of program; (v) load printer with stationary; (vi) enable printer; (vii) produce printed output from program; (viii) remove printed output; (ix) remove media and close down system as per recognised procedure.

A SUMMARY OF NATIONAL CERTIFICATE : OPEN LEARNING DELIVERY : GUIDANCE NOTES

WHAT ?	FOR WHOM?	BY WHOM?	HOW?
1. On Entry			
About National Certificate	All students new to N.C.	Specialist O.L. Co-ord./tutor or generalist guidance staff	Printed or video information and/or Individual interviews and/or Telephone interviews
About Open Learning (and Open College)	All students new to O.L.	as above	
2. Subject based			
Subject based	All students	Subject specialist teachers or subject specialist O.L. tutors	Individual interview and/or Telephone calls with back up print literature and/or Pre-entry assessment
About special needs related to particular packages	Students with special needs e.g. physical handicap study skills problems, lack of confidence	As above or guidance staff with special needs responsibility	
3. On-going			
Support during study	All students as required	Tutors Mentors if appointed Specialist support via referral if required	Written feedback and/or Verbal feedback in face-face groups or by telephone. Specialist help according to need. Modification of packages for special needs
4. At end			
(i) Progression	(i) students	(i) tutor and/or generalist guidance staff	Evaluation sheets Access to provision database including special needs information. Individual and/or group discussion Telephone interview -
(ii) Feedback from student into the system	(ii) tutors, mentors and specialist guidance staff	(ii) students	

THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF OLDER STUDENTS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Patrick Kelly, Nigel Cutress, Fiona Palmer
For the Older Students Research Group

The Open University

THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF OLDER STUDENTS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

There are some 10 million people aged 60 or over in the United Kingdom and this age group comprises nearly 1 in 5 of the total population. [1]   Men who reach the age of 60 may expect to live for a further 16 years and women for a further 20 years. [2]   The concept of retirement as a brief bonus period at the end of the working life is changing. Many people can now expect to enjoy healthy and active lives well beyond normal retirement age.

Awareness of a greying or ageing population has been accompanied by a growth of interest in the role of education for the older adult. [3]   Research carried out in the Open University suggests that distance education has much to offer the older learner.

It was against a background of recent developments, such as the establishment of the first University of the Third Age in France, that the Open University Older Students Research Group was formed in 1981, to examine the experience and performance of older OU students taking degree level courses and to assess the impact and effects of the teaching system. [4]

A survey revealed that the majority of our over 60's students chose to study with the OU because they liked the concept of an "open" university and preferred a home based system of study. The reasons most commonly given by older students for studying were to make up for a lack of opportunities in the past and to

keep their minds active. Students single most important reason
was to continue their own personal development. Most had enjoyed
their studies and felt that they had achieved their personal
ambitions.

Personal satisfaction and enjoyment of study was matched by a
solid academic performance on the part of older students. Their
academic performance compares favourably with all other OU
students. Older students do slightly better on their continuous
assessment work than the under 60's and slightly worse in
examinations. But there is virtually no difference in the
overall pass rate, (where continuous assessment and examination
scores are combined) between older students and the rest of the
student body.

We concluded that older students did not require any special
arrangements solely on the grounds of age. However our studies
of older students in the OU and in conventional institutions and
non-formal educational settings raise issues and concerns which
have important implications for counselling and student support
services. [5]

Participation in education

There are approximately 3000 older people taking a degree with the OU. But it is important to put the level of participation into context. Studies suggest that nationally only about 2% of the over 60's population are engaged in educational programmes of any kind. [6] In addition, the older students in the OU are atypical of their generation with regard to their educational background.

In the national over 60s population less than 5% possess a university degree. The OU older student population, paradoxically, included not only nearly 20% who did not have formal qualifications but also some 8% who had a degree, with a further 20% holding a university diploma or a teaching qualification. However irrespective of qualifications they nearly all viewed their own previous educational experiences in a positive way and our recent work confirms this as an important predictor to participation in adult study programmes. [7]

A variety of reasons have been advanced to account for the low involvement in education by older people in the U.K. These include poor images of education from childhood school days, the failure of the educational system to articulate a concept of lifelong learning or to provide appropriate courses and means of

study, and negative stereotypes which strongly link old age with physical and mental decline. Almost two thirds of the older OU students surveyed were concerned about one or more aspects of their studies beforehand, but in practice students encountered far fewer difficulties than they had anticipated. There were three major worries:

Memory and Learning Styles

Although nearly half of the students were worried about their memory just over a quarter actually reported difficulties. The nature and causes of memory loss are a matter of some dispute.[8] However there is no denying that memory is seen as a significant factor by many older students. Unfortunately it is impossible to know whether the study problems experienced were due solely to memory or if, to some extent, learning difficulties common to students of any age were attributed to memory because of a stereotype which associates old age with intellectual decline. Anxiety about memory is one of the main areas of counselling need. We suspect that there are many older people who are deterred from studying because of memory related fears. Others are especially vulnerable when they begin their studies and may view any early setbacks as confirming the popular myths about being too old to learn. Encouragement, reassurance and support are needed to dispel exaggerated fears. This is a long term task and requires an emphasis on:

<u>Information and publicity</u>: to increase awareness of study programmes and to publicise the involvement and success of older people in education.

<u>Admissions counselling</u>: to provide opportunities for enquirers and applicants to discuss course demands, the system of study and their concerns.

<u>Induction</u>: to provide materials, guidance or personal contact during the preparatory period and at the start of study to help students develop learning skills and strategies and build up self-confidence.

Written Examinations

One student in four was worried by the prospect of examinations and nearly 1 in 3 felt that their worries were justified. These fears are supported by the official exam results which show a 5% poorer pass rate for older students. Interviews with older students indicated that some found it hard to maintain concentration for three hours and others became physically fatigued. One student described her experience in this way:

> "I doubt whether I think as quickly as I did thirty years ago and I know I can't write as quickly as I did thirty years ago."

Older students are probably at a disadvantage in a timed written examination. There are procedures designed to compensate for a known illness, injury or disability and a student may be awarded extra time if, for example, their ability to write is impaired by arthritis. But there is not, and cannot be, a general allowance for age. It would be pertinent to question the appropriateness of timed examinations in educational programmes geared specifically to older people but in the context of the OU undergraduate programme it is evident that older students wish to take the same course under the same conditions as everyone else and do not want what they would regard as special treatment which might devalue their achievement.

Coping with the demands of study

Four students in ten were worried about how they would cope with the pace and organisation of their studies and 3 in 10 were concerned that they might have difficulties in understanding the course material. In practice about 1 in 10 experienced problems. Older OU students did not take the decision to study lightly. They were highly motivated and willing to sacrifice other interests and activities if necessary, to find the time needed for study. They set out to master thoroughly the ideas presented in the courses and tackled their work in a diligent and well organised fashion.

However some older students may have rusty or non-existent study skills. Half of the older OU students completed their full time education at the age of 16 or earlier and their attitudes may have been influenced by the rote learning methods of their own schooling. Those who received a higher level of education could find that the nature of their subject area and analytical and practical techniques have all changed considerably. And those who have undertaken no serious study for some time need to refresh or acquire academic and study skills.

In the OU there is an emphasis on supporting students in the early phase of study through foundation courses which ease students back into degree level work and by supplying written preparatory materials and offering preparatory meetings and regular sessions for tutorial and counselling support during the academic year.

Older students find a home based learning system convenient but this does not mean that they wish to study alone. One in ten had been members of student self help groups and attendance at tutorials and satisfaction with tuition and counselling was higher than among the under 60's students. Older students show a preference for day time tutorials and if more foundation level tutorials were switched from the evening to during the day attendance might be even higher.

Older students may be worried about memory, meeting the academic requirements and examinations but many of their fears are also shared by most adults returning to study often after a gap of many years. The great advantage of the Open University and most distance education institutions is that the teaching and study systems have been designed with the needs of the adult learner firmly in mind. It is because distance education is accessible, flexible and supportive that the OU has had such appeal to older people seeking a stimulating intellectual challenge.

Patrick Kelly, Nigel Cutress, Fiona Palmer

for the Older Students Research Group

The Open University   April 1987

The members of the OSRG are : Barbara Bilston, Walter Butterworth, Stephanie Clennell, Nigel Cutress, Patrick Kelly, Fiona Palmer, Pat Proctor, Peter Varney, George Watts and the late Val Morrison.

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4. A two year research project was carried out involving analysis of the demographic characteristics and course progress data of all older OU students; a postal survey was sent to all older students in 4 of the universities 13 regions and to a random sample of under 60's students; and 60 students were interviewed. For a full report see Older Students in the Open University (1984), Older Students Research Group, Regional Academic Services, The Open University.

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TELEPHONE COUNSELLING : THE CASE OF SUKHOTHAI THAMMATHIRAT OPEN UNIVERSITY

Bira Ketkeaw

Telephone Counselling : The Case of Sukhothai

Thammathirat Open University

Bira   Ketkeaw

Background of the University

The idea of establishing an open university arose from the
desire to democratize higher education and from the stimulus provided
by the concept of life-long education. The increasing demand for
higher education led the Royal Thai Government to look for ways of
responding to this demand effectively and economically.

The distance teaching/learning system was viewed as a practical
means of supplementing the conventional university system. Given
existing financial constraints, an open education system using distance
teaching methods was considered to be the most appropriate alternative.

After three years of planning, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open
University (STOU) was established by Royal Charter in September 1978.
It was the first open university in Southeast Asia to employ a distance
teaching learning system to extend higher education to the people. Like
other conventional state universities, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open
University is under the guidance of the Ministry of University Affairs,
enjoys a great degree of autonomy, and has the right to award its own
degrees.

Distance Teaching System and Counselling Services

Distance teaching means quite simply that the students and instructors are at a distance from one another, with little opportunity for-face-to-face contact. They are, however, able to have joint educational activities through the use of various instructional media geared to facilitate learning on the part of the students. The bulk of this learning arises from self-study, at times and places convenient to the students. Distance teaching thus involves the communication of khowledge, attitudes, and skills to learners in such ways as to enable them to acquire and extend them into the conduct of their everday lives. Since communicating the above-mentioned items is the prime objective, this communication must be as efficient and effective as possible within the constraints of existing resources. In general, the criteria for determining the efficiency and effectiveness of distance teaching involves analyzing the extent to which learners have achieved the learning objectives set by the curriculum or by themselves. Ideally, an effective distance teaching system should ensure that the students find the learning experiences stimulating, interesting, enjoyable, and relevant to their aspirations and lifestyles. Thus the effectiveness of distance education depends to a large extent on the quality of the instructional media and delivery systems.

As an open university, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University provides a distance teaching/learning system which employs such educational media as correspondence materials, radio and television programs, and other methods which enable students to study independently without having to enter a conventional classroom. The "STOU PLAN" for distance teaching system can be concisely illustrated in the following chart.

"STOU PLAN"
Distance Teaching System
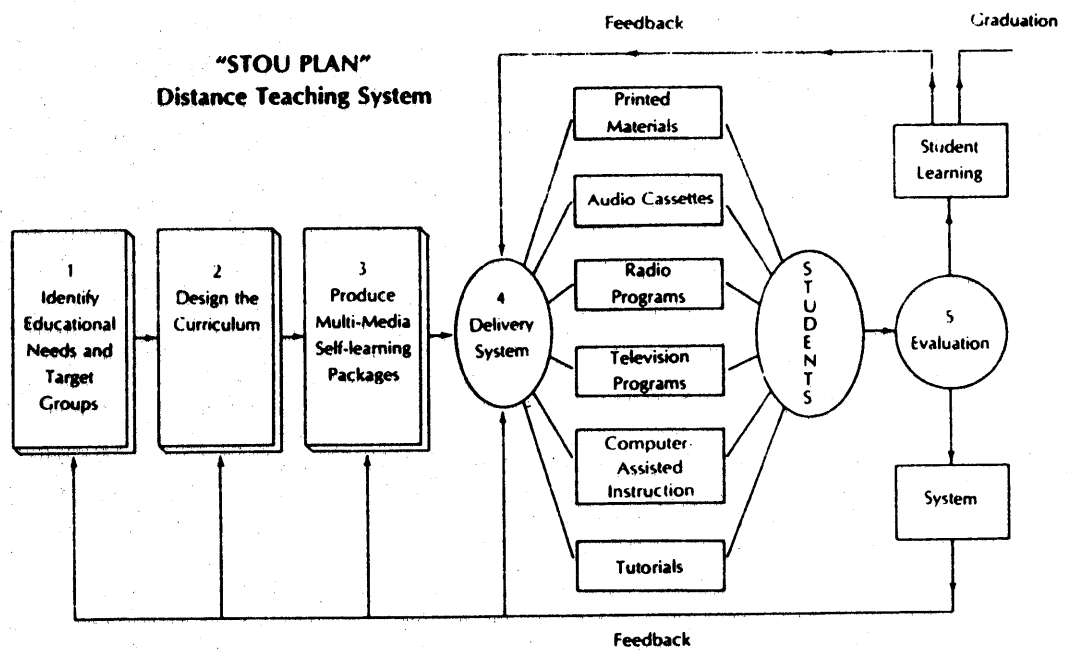
STOU students, for the most part, have to study at home which may somtimes cause them to feel lonely, not having the same opportunities to be amongst friends and instructors as students in the classroom. Even though there are many STOU students in each province throughout the country, the chances of knowing and helping one another are minimal. Because of this, the STOU counselling section has arranged the following services to students throughout the country since 1980 :

- Orientation of new students

- Counselling thru printed materials

- Counselling thru radio programs

- Counselling thru the hot-line telephone

- Counselling thru correspondence

- Post-enrollment counselling

- Face-to-face contact with counsellors, intructors, and university administrators by appointment thru students'clubs.

Telephone Counselling

STOU students and instructors are at a distance from one another, with little opportunity for face-to-face contact. They have to study at home alone which may sometimes cause them to have a lot of problems concerning their self-study. So if they have such problems, they usually contact the university by correspondence because it's save maney but they must spend a lot of time waiting for the answers. But if they need immediate answers for their problems, they will call up the counselling section by the hot-line telephone. And in the near future telephone counselling may serve students at the Area Educational Resouce Centres of the university.

At present there are various types of enquiries/problems dealt with at the counselling section which counsellors could :

- answer general enquiries about STOU, its programs,

 teaching system etc.

- give guidance on course choice/workload

- give information/advice to students on a range of

 administrative matters eg. fee payments, registration

 problems, delay in receipt of correspondence texts etc.

- provide vocational counselling

- advise on personal problems affecting academic work

- give guidance on study techniques

 Telephone counselling between the STOU student and the
counsellor can be concisely illustrated in the following chart.
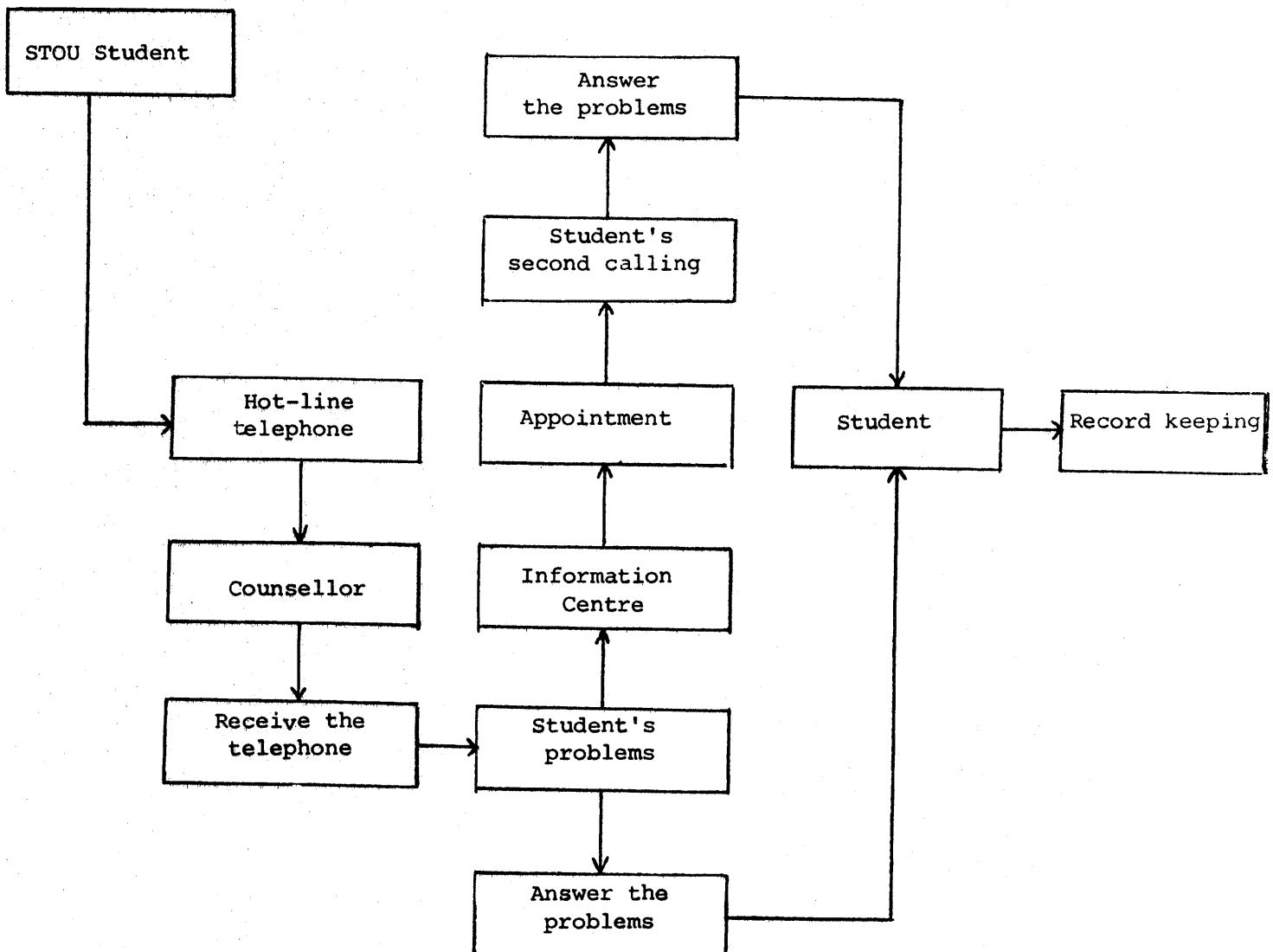
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A Carrot for the Teacher

A training package which aims to encourage Distance Educators to develop appropriate counselling skills.

One of the issues raised by Barbara Spronk in her
personal overview of the workshop on Counselling
in Distance Education in Cambridge in 1983 was the
need for staff development and counselling for those
working in Distance Education because they are some-
times isolated professionaly within Education.
This paper is an attempt to describe how the New
Zealand Correspondence School addresses the issues
of helping teachers to acquire appropriate skills.

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Introduction

Counselling is a word which has come to have many connotations and
is used in different professions to mean different things.
Traditional counselling models which require face to face interaction
between the counsellor and the client have limited use in distance
education not because face to face meetings between student and
counsellor are not valuable but because they are rarely possible.
To devise a training programme which will encourage distance
educators to develop appropriate counselling skills I believe it is
necessary to -

    a)   Define the word Counselling within the context of
            the institution.

    b)   Identify the people who are the counsellors.

    c)   Set up a system which will establish the needs of
            students.

    d)   Describe the skills which will be of use to the
            Counsellors in meeting student need.

In this paper I hope to show how the New Zealand Correspondence School
has addressed these issues, what is being done to make appropriate
training available and what the future direction might be.

Definition

In the New Zealand Correspondence School the "Counsellors" are the
class teachers in the Primary section and form teachers in the
secondary school and Part-time Adult section.   Their role can be
defined very much in the way that the Open University defines
counselling that is 'an educational counsellor' who has to occupy the
centre of the teaching and learning process' (1) and a 'friend on
whose warm sympathy the student can rely' (2) Roger Lewis (3) says
that it is not so much 'counselling' as 'befriending' the student.
I believe that the teachers who have the counsellor role in this
institution form relationships with their students which support
guide and befriend them thus giving them a sense of their own worth
and confidence to cope with the difficulties of learning at a
distance.   The work of the class or form teacher is to mediate
between the institution and the learner by -

    a)   Providing support on enrolment - this may include course
            counselling, discussion organisation of work and
            establishing a friendly relationship.

    b)   Sending work on to subject teachers for marking or
            marking it themselves.

    c)   Writing friendly letters to the students when work
            is returned and at other times when it seems appropriate.

    d)   Telephoning when there is a need.

Student need

The Principal of the Correspondence School Ormond Tate has identified the needs of students (4) as a system which -

1. Teaches them what they expect to be taught.
2. Provides lessons which teaches them effectively.
3. Marks their work thoroughly and reasonably
4. Returns their work promptly.
5. Shows a personal interest in them and their welfare.

A network has been established which can most adequately be described by the following diagram.   In order for it to be understood some positions need to be clarified.

Deans are people with administrative responsibilities for a group of full time students and their form teachers.

Resident teachers are employed by the school but live in different areas of New Zealand. They visit students in their homes, report back to the students Dean and form teacher and spend a week in the Correspondence School once a term.

Visiting teachers are primary trained teachers who are employed by local education boards to visit the homes of students where there are difficulties such as truancy or behavioural problems.

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                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │  STUDENT NEED   │
                        └─────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │ IDENTIFICATION  │
                        └─────────────────┘
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INTERNAL   EXTERNAL
Form teachers, subject teachers   Local agencies school
Deans Heads of Sections   Resident teachers
Head of Guidance Deputy Principal   Visiting teachers

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                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │  C.S. RESPONSE  │
                        └─────────────────┘
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INTERNAL   EXTERNAL

Organisational   Curriculum   Personal   Local Agencies
Short term   Short Term   Appropriate   alerted by C..S to
Special Groups   Adaptation of   contact made   take appropriate
                        individual material   by letter or   action. Discussion
                        Career Information   telephone   with parents by
                                                                    Resident teachers if
                                                                    appropriate.

Long Term   Long term   Long term
Teachers who are able   Self-pacing learning   More skills training
to be more flexible   Transition courses   for teachers.
in responding to   More appropriate Course
student need.   Materials.

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                        ┌───────────────────┐
                        │ MONITORING SYSTEM │
                        └───────────────────┘
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Dean and Form teacher   Resident teacher reports   Student comment
student conferencing   parent comment
Annual reports from senior staff discussed with Principal.

<u>Counselling Skills which will help distance educators meet the</u>
<u>needs of their students</u>.

I believe that they need personal qualities of warmth and empathy
with their students and -

1.   To be good communicators in three ways.

     a)   In writing.
     b)   By telephone
     c)   Face to face.

     The quality of the service to distance learners is affected
     by the way the providers of the service communicate with
     each other.

2.   To be able to use positive marking techniques and to understand
     the difference between praise and encouragement.

3.   To be good organisers and use time and materials effectively.

4.   Have a broad knowledge of the courses offered by the school
     and the prerequisites needed to complete a particular course
     satisfactorily.

These skills can be further divided to included those which are
relevant to all aspects of distance teaching.   Nigel Paine (5)
has listed some i.e.

     1.   The ability to articulate a student's needs.
     2.   Ability to match need with course.
     3.   Knowledge of bureaucracy.
     4.   Listening skills.
     5.   The ability to differentiate between study problems and
          personal problems.
     6.   A knowledge of possible career options.
     7.   A desire to respond to student's problems quickly and
          efficiently.

A more comprehensive list came out of group discussion in Cambridge(6).
I would add others which I believe professionally trained counsellors
can teach to colleagues.   They are the skills of -

     1.   Influencing and persuading.
     2.   Interpreting.
     3.   Confronting.
     4.   Summarising.
     5.   Decision making.
     6.   Contract setting.

Although those with counselling responsibilities have most need of these skills they are also useful to other staff. The subject teacher who is marking students' work may be so content orientated that the individual becomes last in the process. The writer may be such an expert in the subject that learner response to the material may be neglected. The administrator is in danger of becoming remote from the realities of the situations some students face. The Correspondence School is responding to all these facets of distance learning by providing training opportunities for its staff in the following way.

1.   Induction Course for new teachers
     This introduces new staff to all sections of the school and gives them an overall view of the work done and the way it is administered.

2.   It introduces them to key people who describe their responsibilities.

3.   It introduces them to some specific skills for teaching at a distance such as, letter writing, marking and commenting on students work, desk management and using the telephone effectively.

4.   It provides them with information about the student support services which include Guidance, Broadcasting and the work of Resident teachers.

Each new teacher has a mentor - a nearby colleague who is already familiar with the school, its procedures and practices. This person is able to answer any questions the new teacher may have. The Head of Department or section makes sure that the teacher is aware of the professional skills and standards expected. In this way staff gain a thorough knowledge of the Institution, how it functions and what it offers.

Class and Form Teacher training

This is primarily done at group meetings organised by the Dean or Head of Section assisted by people such as Senior form teachers, Head of Guidance Services, Librarians Resident teachers and Careers Advisers. At present the quantity and quality of such training varies from group to group and there is a need for a more comprehensive training package to be developed which would concentrate on identified skills.

Training resources

Written resources are currently available on the following topics-

     1.   Letter writing.
     2.   Marking and commenting

3.   External tutoring.
4.   Home visiting.
5.   An Aide memoire for form teachers.
6.   Using the telephone effectively (this includes an audio
     tape).

"Accross the Board" training

In 1986 courses which were available to teachers in a number of
sections of the School were-

1.   Later reading in-service course LARIC
2.   Computer awareness.
3.   Writing.
4.   Broadcasting.

These courses were especially valuable as they brought together people
who do not normally work side by side and allowed some cross fertil-
isation to take place.   These have in the past been some "one off"
course then in response to need such as Stress Management. Staff
also have the opportunity to join with other teachers at in-service
training courses at local and national level and to interact with
other distance learning institutions.

Future Directions in Training

Daniel and Marquis (7) have drawn our attention to the need to
balance interaction and dependence in the learning process and Clive
George (8) has pointed out that increasing the interactive content
is only achieved at cost.   He suggests that we see the student as
being at some point on a continuum from dependent to independent
learning and that the amount of support necessary may change as a
student progresses through his studies.   As cost effectiveness must
be a consideration then it is important to regularly evaluate training
packages to ensure that the amount of interaction is kept at an
appropriate level. For example use of the telephone effectiveness
resource appears to have made some contribution to the rising telephone
bill.   The training now needs to include setting time limits on calls,
terminating "difficult" calls and judging when a student has less
need of this type of support.

It is my belief that the most effective training is undertaken
voluntarily but unfortunately it would seem that those who would
most benefit do not always take advantage of opportunities.   This
institution is currently setting up a staff development committee to
define needs, suggest programmes,develop and locate resources,organise
the implementation of the programme and suggest evaluation procedures.

I believe that such training will be most effective if it offers staff the opportunity for personal growth and development, acknowledges skills of individual staff members and uses processes based on action method which encourages people to take responsibility for their own learning.

Large institutions tend to be hierarchial in structure and this can effectively limit job satisfaction for individuals. The teaching of communication and other counselling skills can in my opinion lead to a greater degree of openness and acknowledgement of individual strengths which results in a better service to the consumer in this case the distance learner.

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6. Tait A. Report of proceedings - International workshop on Counselling in Distance Education Cambridge 1983.

7. Daniel, J S and Marquis C. (1977) Interaction and independence: getting the mixture right in Teaching at a Distance No 14 Open University Press.

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COUNSELLING OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE PRISONS OF IRELAND

Diane Purcell, Senior Counsellor, British Open University, N. Ireland.

Currently there are 130 Open University undergraduates studying in
the prisons in Ireland (Northern Ireland: 86, the Republic: 44).
With a total prison population of 1970 in Northern Ireland and 1904
in the Republic, this means that approximately 1 in 30 prisoners in
Ireland is studying for an O.U. degree. Courses have been available
in Northern Ireland prisons since 1976, while in the Republic study
with the O.U. was first made possible in 1985.

Unlike the Home Office scheme in Britain, there are no specially
designated prisons for O.U. study – prisoners in all establishments
are eligible to enrol on a University course. In 1987 in Northern
Ireland there are students located in all 5 prisons, and in the
Republic they are spread around 9 different locations[1]. The
transfer of a student to another prison should not affect his O.U.
studies, although in reality it may well do so – study materials can
be lost or delayed, time is needed to settle in the new environment,
the prisoner may now be isolated from former fellow students.

Prisons differ in architecture, organisation and category of inmate.
In one location students may freely associate with each other,
organise their own discussion groups and study time, and negotiate
with the authorities through their chosen education representative;
while in another the student is isolated, and his[2] study
opportunities are rigidly controlled by the institution.

The provision of O.U. courses for students in prison in both the
North and the Republic is organised by the Senior Counsellor of the
O.U. Regional Centre in Belfast with the help of the Northern Ireland
Office and the Department of Justice in Dublin. The prisons are
designated as study centres of the Region and the students are
allocated to Regional tutorial staff for tuition. When possible, a
regular programme of tutorials is provided, and currently in Northern
Ireland 38 tutors from 6 Faculties are visiting their students;
while in the Republic the problems of time and distance mean that
tutorials beyond Foundation level can only be provided exceptionally
when there is seen to be a need. Because of the uncertainty of face-
to-face contact with the tutor, the possibility of removal from one
prison to another and the need for a continuing close liaison with
the Prison Education Service, the role of the Counsellor is a
significant one in the academic progress of the student.

The Counsellors for prison students are members of the O.U. Regional
full-time and part-time staff – this differs from the practice in
England and Wales, where the prison Education Officers are often
given this role. While we work closely with these officers and value
their assistance in the administration of O.U. courses, we feel it is
important that the Counsellor should have an academic view of the
student which is independent of the prison. There is a danger that
student problems would be seen as prison problems, or that the role
of Counsellor should become that of simply an administrator. Addition-
ally we feel that the O.U. and its staff should be seen to be acting
as an independent body, an important political consideration.

The student regards his contact with O.U. staff as something outside the prison system - we are interested in him as a student, not as a prisoner. Study with the O.U. gives him a new identity; he now feels part of that larger group of students outside the prison. It is an area of his life which is still to a great extent within his control: he can make choices and decisions which are denied him to a large part during his time in prison.

Most prison students could fit the description of those for whom the O.U. opportunity was intended: without the usual formal qualifications, unable to attend a traditional, full-time college or university, and initially having no strong commitment to a particular subject area, although many of them choose to study Social Sciences as being seen to be relevant. Their counselling needs are thus not dissimilar to those of other students, but can be intensified by their isolation, not just from their tutors and fellow students, but from access to easy, quick means of communication. In addition the O.U. often becomes the central activity in their prison life - a 'life line' as some have expressed it - and contact with their Counsellor has in consequence a greater importance.

At the Application stage all students meet with the O.U. Counsellor to clarify their academic aims, discuss their preparedness and settle on a choice of Foundation Course. This Admissions Counselling session is the first meeting with an O.U. member of staff for the students, and in many cases is the first academic counselling meeting they have experienced. The Applicant stage may require more than one meeting: an initial explanatory discussion and then a more precise examination of preparedness and academic interests.

The students' reasons for wanting to study with the O.U. can be many, and it is the Counsellor's task to encourage each student to examine these reasons critically. The 'openness' of the Open University can be misleading and offer disappointment and frustration to over-optimistic students. In addition, failure to succeed on a course is not a private matter in prison - the student is exposed to his fellow inmates and can easily be humiliated. Thus it is important that the applicant should examine his motivation, consider carefully his academic skills and select a course which is in an area of interest to him. A further important consideration should be his length of sentence and release date - can he hope to complete a credit while in the relatively stable environment of the prison? [Most students find the happy event of release very disruptive to their studies.]

Once registered on a course all students receive a minimum of 3 counselling visits in the academic year; these are supported by additional visits when need arises, plus communication by correspondence. The first scheduled visit is at the start of the course, to reassure the student that he is formally known to us - (as all paper work to do with registration is handled by the prison Education Officer this reassurance is often needed) - and that arrangements are in hand for tutorials etc. The gap in time and absence of communication from the O.U. in the period from application or examination to the start of a new course can be very unnerving to a student in prison. The first counselling session gives him a chance to voice uncertainties and clear up any problems which the new course seems to be posing. The Counsellor can also check that the student has received all his study

materials: course units and kits from the O.U., set texts from the Prison Education Officer, and that the relevant broadcast tapes are being held in the Prison Library. The lack of access to a telephone, and the dependence of the student on a sometimes very slow prison mail service or the help of an intermediary such as a member of prison staff can cause communication break-downs and early withdrawal from the course.

The second counselling session (or sessions, as more than one may be needed) is at the time of Conditional Registration when students are choosing their courses for the following year. Course Guides and a few course units are sent to them on loan for sampling, and the Counsellor then sees each student individually and discusses his course choice with him. This will follow the same lines as for all O.U. students - academic relevance to degree profile, sequence of courses already studied, level of course, student's interest etc. In addition it may be that some courses cannot be studied in prison, or only studied incompletely because of the impossibility of practical work, or access to public libraries or archives. the Counsellor may have to consult members of the Course Team and O.U. Faculty to find ways round such difficulties. The Counsellors have built up considerable knowledge of which courses 'work' in the prisons and which present difficulties, and some students can also get valuable information about problematic courses from other prisoners who have studied with the O.U.

The third counselling session is at the end of the year before the examinations. this is to enable the students to inform the Counsellor of any difficulty they have encountered which affected their Continuous Assessment results. We have found most prisoners are very reluctant to write anything of a personal nature which will go through the security of the prison mail, so it is vital that each student should be seen by the Counsellor at this stage. They are also reminded of the form which can be submitted if special circumstances affect their performance at the examination. And these often occur - sudden security searches of the block, noisy building works and on one occasion a formal visit to the exam room by the Governor and officials from the N.I.O.!

In addition to counselling at these three crucial points in the year, students know that they can request to see their O.U. Counsellor at any time when they feel they have a particular problem or query to raise. This 'counselling on demand' service does much to reduce the student's feelings of isolation and defuse irritation and frustration when difficulties occur. The students do not take advantage of the openness of this service - indeed they are often apologetic about calling in the counsellor; but it does much to take the pressure off the Education staff of the prison and also frees the tutor on tutorial visits to concentrate on the course instead of using valuable tuition time on what are really counselling problems. Students on Post Foundation courses in the Republic without tutorial visits see their Counsellor more frequently - regular visits are scheduled throughout the year to enable the Counsellor to talk to students, sort out problems and reinforce the student's feeling of belonging to the O.U. and being an object of our concern.

Both the N.I.O. and the Department of Justice in Dublin have appointed Prison Education staff to act as O.U. Liaison Officers as part of their duties. These look after the administration of the student's O.U. studies - posting assignments, distributing set texts, providing access to broadcast etc. They work closely with the O.U. Counsellor in monitoring the student's progress and serve as a quick point of contact and a useful channel for communication through the wire and walls of the prison.

One of the less satisfactory aspects of studying an O.U. course while in prison is the almost total reliance on course units and set texts. While prison library facilities may be good, it could be unlikely they will contain many books of a high academic level on Systems Analysis or Jamaican Literature, and often students do not have personal access to the library, but must rely on a request system. Thus one of the tasks of the Counsellor has been to help provide a broader experience of the course subject matter. Books are gathered from colleagues to provide a small library shelf of wider reading, back copies of journals and magazines are despatched in bundles along with absolete O.U. course units; catalogues, postcards and posters are gathered to help provide visual stimulus for History of Art courses. At times the Counsellor's office looks like a collecting point for a 'War on Want' sale!

The role of Counsellor to prison students in Ireland reaches beyond undergraduate study with the O.U. It may be that a good many of our students are young - average age 26/27 - with no previous clearly defined career or professional qualifications, and so the identity of university student which they have assumed while in prison defines their expectations on release. Also with the prospect of unemployment or a low-paid job as their only immediate future, enrolment at full-time university and a student grant offer security and perhaps a better future. Many of them have discovered new academic interests and abilities, and may be now setting their sights on previously unthought of goals[3].

They may have initially decided to study with the O.U. in order to gain the credits which will give them entry to full-time university on release: they will be seeking guidance in this from their O.U. Counsellor from the first meeting. They need help and advice with choice of university or college, degree programme or even post-graduate diploma. The O.U. credits attained by the student can be used either as entry qualification or for transfer at a higher level, and links established between the Counsellor and the Admissions Officers and Faculty members at local universities greatly facilitate these transfers. Interviews are arranged and the Counsellor may even act as 'escort' to enable a student to attend.

Contact is kept with many of the students during their new full-time academic career - old counselling bonds are hard to break! And the Counsellor is often in a position to help with references and career advice, contacts for post graduate study and where to go for funds and even accommodation. Prison Education staff contact with students is strictly restricted to the time they are in the institution and any continuing relationship after release is not permitted; the O.U. Counsellor can act as a very necessary bridge during a difficult period of transition - from part-time study in prison to full-time study outside.

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Notes:

(1) **1987 - Prison Locations and O.U. Student Numbers**

Northern Ireland		Republic of Ireland	
Maze - Compounds	12	Mountjoy	5
Cells	60	Port Laoise	19
Crumlin Road	4	Shelton Abbey	2
Maghaberry	1	Training Unit	3
Magilligan	9	Arbour Hill	6
		Coolmine	1
TOTAL	86	Loughan House	1
		Cork	6
		Dundrum	1
		TOTAL	44

(2) 'he' has been used throughout when referring to the prison student as the great majority of prisoners are male. Currently there is 1 woman prisoner studying with the O.U., from a total female prison population in Ireland of 52.

(3) **Graduates and Transfers to Full-Time Study**

Since the scheme started 11 students have graduated while studying in prison, 3 of these with honours. One has since completed his M.Phil and the two others are studying for higher degrees with the O.U.

21 students have transferred to full-time university on release from prison, and 3 of these have since completed research for the award of higher degrees.

Diana Purcell
Senior Counsellor
26/5/87

COUNSELLING AND STUDY SKILLS IN THE FACILITATION OF LEARNING

<u>STUDY SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</u>

Sylvia Rhys, Open University in Wales

STUDY SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sylvia M. Rhys

Skills in studying are necessary for effective learning. They are often thought of as a list of activities which have to be mastered in order to cope with a range of tasks, such as note-taking and essay writing, but, it is suggested, this is to view outward expressions as the essence of the studying process. Becoming a more effective learner is a developmental process which involves people as whole persons, as thinking, feeling and doing beings. This paper reflects on some features of the process of studying in higher education and skills required for it, and on some implications not only for students but also for those who seek to help them to become more effective learners.

Each student develops a unique path of learning which is influenced by factors both external to and within that person, and which interact with one another and may change over time. For example, there are some situational factors which are peculiar to those who study at a distance. They have to learn, for instance, to study in environments designed to serve other purposes, and as they are isolated for most, if not all, of the time from fellow students and staff, and from external motivations supplied by daily organisational timetables and direct supervision, they need sufficient internal motivation to persist in studying with only limited feedback from outside. There are also many external factors which may influence study strategies of both distance and internal students. For example, there have been investigations into the influence of course content, workloads, types of assessment, nature of learning tasks, quality of teaching, and so on.

Studies have also been made of cognitive and emotional processes within the individual, and of ways in which these may interact with one another and influence outward expression. For example, there are different educational orientations, a term which refers to the quality of the relationship which a student has with a course in terms of aims, values and purposes (Gibbs et al, 1984). There are different conceptions of what learning is all about which may be associated with, for instance, variations in understanding by different students of the same text. For example, Perry (1970) conceived of learning as a nine stage personal journey of intellectual and ethical development. Cognitive processes have been examined also in terms of deep and surface levels of processing (Marton 1975), holistic and atomistic approaches (Svensson 1976), and so on. It seems likely that students have preferences for certain approaches to study, but the same individual may vary the approach from task to task, some being more versatile than others.

How students _feel_ about studying interacts with cognitive processes and external expression. For example, Nelson-Jones (1982) considers that sense of learning competence, which embraces emotional, motivational and interest variables, may inhibit actual competence. Exploring new ideas, and being creative generally, are processes likely to be associated with pleasurable increased levels of arousal and excitement (Fontana 1985). Learning which goes beyond the shallowest surface approach, however, may carry with it risks and uncertainties. It may be assimilated readily into the personal internal filing system, or it may sometimes affect central values and disturb deeply held beliefs and attitudes, leading to intellectual and emotional interplay and conflict (More 1974).

These brief comments help to indicate why studying can be described as a multi-dimensional process. To become a more effective learner, it may be important to improve expertise at a practical level, such as learning to read at different speeds, but it may be necessary also/alternatively to pay attention to skills at cognitive and emotional levels. This in itself involves a skill, that of self-awareness, that is, the ability to explore inner processes and external factors, and to reflect on, analyse, and understand attitudinal and behavioural responses to them. This information can be used to decide what action, if any, to take, for instance, modifying attitudes, seeking assistance from external sources, personal and impersonal. The results of actions are in turn evaluated, and an "experiential learning cycle" develops (Jaques 1984). Thus the learner who becomes more effective increases his/her range of skills, plus flexibility and confidence in using them, and also becomes more autonomous. Autonomy is not synonymous with studying in isolation, or with knowing all the answers to problems which may arise. It means having the ability to take responsibility for personal development.

What implication do these conceptions of learning have for those who seek to give help with study skills? A multi-dimensional approach is required to help with a multi-dimensional process. There are no universally applicable sets of rules which can be applied to the teaching of study skills any more than there are such rules which can be supplied to those who seek to improve these skills. Educational counsellors are influenced in their task, as are students in theirs, by many external and internal factors which interact and may change over time. External factors include, for example, course content, institutional requirements in terms of curriculum and assessment, workloads, whether contact is on a one-to-one or group basis, the different types of student contact which are available, such as face to face communication (in some cases), telephone, correspondence materials, audio and video tapes, each of which has its advantages and drawbacks, and the resources and needs of students themselves. Internal cognitive and emotional processing affect outward expressions of those who facilitate learning as they do of students. Counsellors have their own orientations toward their task, personal conceptions of learning, particular ways of coping with associated emotions, and so on.

In the light of these parallels, a working partnership between counsellor and students would seem logical. It is not simply a case of counsellors giving and students receiving. As in a conversation, leadership in a flexible partnership passes backwards and forwards between both parties, and there is a sharing of power and control. In such a situation a counsellor can facilitate learning not only by practising a variety of strategies and tactics but also be using as resources the nature of the relationship itself and his/her own personal qualities.

For example, a counsellor can show him/herself to be a willing learner by listening to, exploring and understanding students' thoughts, feelings and actions, and using this knowledge to assist them. This process in turn may help students to learn more about themselves, to accept and respect themselves, as the counsellor has done, and to develop confidence to explore and try out different skills. No counsellor is infallible and it is possible, for example, to mis-interpret a student's contribution, or not to know the answer to a question. Openly admitting this and taking appropriate action to remedy the situation can of itself help students recognise that mistakes can act as stimuli and challenges to further development, and are not something to be ashamed of.

A counsellor who offers a flexible working relationship provides opportunities to students to exercise autonomy, and also demonstrates autonomy, for, as the relationship unfolds, it is necessary to take decisions on appropriate strategies by

weighing up relevant variables, and perhaps modifying initial outline plans. A counsellor who plays for certainty and retains detailed control, for instance, by doing little but passing on written or oral information, is depending on students to accept his/her chosen content and structure, and at the same time denies them opportunities to make decisions for themselves within the helping relationship.

These few remarks may serve to indicate that in a flexible working partnership not only what a counsellor does but also how it is done are both important, and facilitating the learning of others may demand much personal effort in practical, cognitive and emotional terms. Reflection on the relationship and on the part the counsellor is playing in it are a necessary part of this effort, and sharing results of reflective insight with students, comparing and clarifying perceptions, can be another way of faciliating learning. Effective counsellors, like effective learners, gain from experience because they know how to use it to improve skills.

To show oneself a learner, to be willing to admit mistakes, to share leadership, reflections, and so on, are not in an educational counsellor signs of weakness, but signs of strength when used judiciously by the skilled practitioner. They can help too to establish a basic essential, a friendly and relaxed climate, for students come to know they are communicating with another human being, albeit one who has skills and experience to share, but not an almighty guru, psychologically as well as, possibly, geographically distant!

The process of facilitating learning, like that of learning itself, embraces a whole panorama of tasks for which many skills are required, and neither process can ever be perfected. The title of this paper is 'Study Skills and Personal Development'. The two are intimately inter-related, and both are as much the concern of those who facilitate the development of study skills as they are of those who want to learn how to study more effectively.

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PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF COUNSELLORS FOR EXTERNAL STUDENTS: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE FOR AUSTRALIA.

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This paper reports on an Australian study undertaken in 1986 which produced recommendations concerning the decentralised provision of counselling for off-campus students. The study identified a particular need for informed pre-enrolment advice to be available locally for people wishing to enter the post-secondary education system.

The study was commissioned by the Standing Committee on External Studies of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) the principal statutory body responsible for advising on the development and funding of tertiary education. It was carried out by Paul Northcott and Margaret Shapcott of Deakin University, with a consultative committee of ten people drawn from every state and territory of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The brief was to investigate the role of study centres in overall student support, and to propose options for future policy. A critical appraisal of the role of study centres in relation to other means of providing student support was called for, with particular emphasis on the criterion of cost-effectiveness.

Federal government policy in relation to distance education at the time was directed towards rationalising and co-ordinating the diversity which is a feature of current provision. (Smith, 1985). A relevant aspect of overall education policy was concern with issues of access and equity in education, expressed in a commitment to improve access to post-secondary educational opportunities for young people and disadvantaged groups. These concerns with rationalisation, co-ordination, cost-effectiveness and improved access constitute the context in which the CTEC asked for advice on the role of study centres.

As part of its information-gathering process the research team surveyed all post-secondary institutions in Australia which enrol external or off-campus students. This survey revealed that the term "study centre" is applied to a great diversity of organisational arrangements in this country. This diversity reflects differences between the states in approaches to educational provision, and differences between individual institutions in kinds of support systems adopted. Even within the support system of a single institution, study centres develop individually in response to local circumstances. To deal with the complexity of the data generated by the survey, the investigators adopted the term "local centre" as a generic term rather than "study centre" and attempted a classificatory scheme. The terms "regional outreach centre", "study centre", "resource centre" and "access centre" were suggested to describe a hierarchy of provision in descending order.

It was difficult to reconcile some of the differences in institutional approaches to student support in order to propose coherent national policies. In particular, the debate as to whether support services for students should be centralised or localised emerged as an important issue. By centralisation of services I mean the provision of services directly to students from the "home" campus, and the provision of mechanisms which enable distant students to access on-campus facilities. The report which we presented to the CTEC at the conclusion of the project gave qualified support to localisation of some services, but acknowledged that some

distance education providers in Australia have demonstrated that a system of local centres is not essential to an effective support system. (Northcott and Shapcott, 1986, p.53).

However, we did identify one service for which there is urgent demand at the local level. This is the provision of information, advice and guidance for prospective students. Whatever else they may be used for, there is a role for local centres as places through which people can access the post-secondary education system. Various circumstances combine to produce this need, including the increasing complexity of post-secondary educational provision, and increased demand for educational opportunities in response to changing socio-economic conditions.

Recognition of such a role for local centres raises questions about the professional development and information needs of the people who staff them. In addressing the question of cost-effectiveness of local centres, our report endorses the opinion previously expressed by others (Gough, 1980, King, Sewart and Gough, 1980, Kirk, 1979) that the human element is a crucial factor in determining whether a local centre becomes a viable focus for students. The personal and professional qualities of the people who staff local centres cannot be taken for granted.

Some co-ordinators of local centres reported to us that they were unable to respond adequately to the considerable demand for pre-enrolment counselling which they were experiencing. Some of the reasons for this are related to the terms of their employment. For example, they may be employed part-time only, or their job description may not encompass this function. The institutions which employ them may not provide adequate administrative and professional back-up. There can be conflict between their responsibility to represent an institution and pressure from individual students and members of the community to provide impartial advice.

How can these supporters of students be supported? Some answers to this question are provided from the diverse range of organisational arrangements found in existing local centres. Two centres which are especially interesting in this respect are the Northern Territory External Studies Centre in Darwin (with a branch at Alice Springs), and the North West Council for Community Education in Burnie, Tasmania. These centres have been established in regions which are recognised as being under-provided with post-secondary institutions, and are funded directly by government. The task of the directors is to assess the educational needs of their communities and to negotiate with various institutions as to ways and means of providing services. They describe themselves as "educational brokers". Their services include the organisation of orientation programs, bridging courses and tutorial assistance. (Castro, Livingston and Northcott, 1985, pp.48-61, 71-72, Smith, 1984, pp.73-77).

We have described the mode of operation of these centres as client-centred and community-oriented. While they provide helpful models, we did not recommend that they be replicated all over the country. To do this would be costly (with establishment costs at approximately $200.000 per centre), and would discount valuable aspects of the present diversity.

Another model, one favoured by some members of the CTEC, was the use of Colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) as support centres not only for TAFE external students but also for external students of higher education institutions. While a TAFE-based network has some advantages, we experessed reservations as to whether TAFE centres could provide adequate academic counselling for higher education students. A feasible approach to the establishment of a national network of local centres would be to build upon and co-ordinate the existing diverse provision. We pointed to a conjunction of circumstances which would favour such a development. They are:

. the Commonwealth's concern with the role of distance education in providing increased access to educational opportunity;

. the evidence that local centres are increasingly used by the public as sources of information about available courses;

. the growth of co-operative arrangements between the various distance education providers for the shared use of local centres;

. the distance education community's interest in the application of electronic communications media.

The blueprint which we proposed for the evolution of such a network includes:

. the establishment of an information database in print and on videotex to provide staff of local centres with current information on available courses and entry requirements;

. the encourgement of networking by electronic means among local centre personnel, campus-based counsellors and administrative staff;

. the creation of a program of professional development opportunities for local centre staff including workshops conducted by campus-based professional counsellors;

. the establishment of a national co-ordinating and management body whose brief would include the promotion of a national network of counselling personnel.

Among the management tasks envisioned for the co-ordinating body was the establishment of a national register of "distance education outreach personnel" which would include people who staff local centres.

Such a national register would serve to demonstrate the recognition of the critical importance of personnel in the provision of local support services. It would enhance the possiblity of networking, and recognise the professionalism of their roles. (Northcott and Shapcott, 1986, p.87).

Since the completion of our study there have been further interesting developments. The CTEC has published our report and disseminated it to the distance education community as a discussion paper. It has commissioned a

follow-up study which will investigate further the costs and usage of local centres. A workshop on the co-operative use of local centres organised by ASPESA and held in Queensland in October, 1986 was well attended and productive. The report of that workshop includes this statement:

> The wide range of roles which study centre staff could be expected to perform suggests that they need to be very versatile, indeed almost super-human people. There is certainly a need for extensive training. (Bowser et al. 1987, p.6).

Conclusion

Distance education institutions in Australia vary considerably in the extent to which they use localised support services based on "study centres". Some centres are well resourced and staffed, others are little more than a token presence of a far-off institution in an isolated community. To meet the expectations of their communities the people who staff local centres need adequate institutional support. The basis for a supportive network exists already in the co-operative arrangements for shared use of local centres entered into by some institutions. Since the CTEC's advice to government is to encourage such co-operation some enhancement of the present situation can be expected.

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TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF COUNSELLING SERVICES INTO DISTANCE EDUCATION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

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INTRODUCTION

Counselling is now widely recognised as an important, and perhaps an indispensable aspect of any distance teaching system. Evidence of this is that the success of the U.K. Open University has been attributed to the effectiveness of its counselling system (Keegan 1981:23).

It seems that any counselling system is more effective if it is designed and operates as an integral part of the whole distance teaching system. This paper outlines the developments leading to the integration of counselling services into the organizational and administrative structure of the distance teaching system at the University of Zambia.

STUDENTS' COUNSELLING NEEDS

Distance learners at the University of Zambia are largely working adults whose choice of courses is determined mainly by their career ambitions or interests. However, degree programmes are highly structured and are governed by strict regulations regarding the combination and number of courses required for one to obtain a degree. In many cases these do not match with the students' interests. Similarly, some students tend to choose courses for which they have no strong academic background. Students therefore need to know more, at the start, about course regulations and other course requirements.

In addition, new students need guidance on various administrative matters such as procedures for paying fees and how to obtain a government grant, and procedures for borrowing books from the University library.

The University of Zambia distance teaching system operates on the principle of equality of standards. Both groups of students are therefore taught and examined by the same teaching staff and are expected to fulfil the same course and examination requirements. Consequently, distance learners are rigidly paced in terms of enrolment dates, submission of assignments, attendance of residential school and the writing of examinations.

Distance study therefore puts pressure on distance learners who have to fit in their new role of student among other occupational and social responsibilities. They therefore need preparation, encouragement, support and guidance for them to cope with the academic demands.

The teaching system relies heavily on printed materials. In most cases study materials are mere reproductions of articles from books, journals and magazines (Kaunda, 1969:2; Department of Correspondence Studies, 1984:2). Some students may find it difficult to read and learn from these materials because in the first place they are not written in a style suitable for distance learners. Secondly, study materials are

written in English, a second language for nearly all students, a language in which they do not always communicate (Ocran 1972:15).

Distance learners are geographically and intellectually isolated and for them "... their university courses are their main outside intellectual stimulation, a subject of conversation with their colleagues, a major source of new ideas" (Seidman and Seidman 1972:3). Unfortunately, for various reasons study materials are sometimes received late and this creates anxiety among learners who have to meet deadlines for submission of assignments. All the above issues suggest a need to deal with students' individual study problems arising from and being associated with study materials.

Distance learners also need pre-examination counselling. Many of them left the formal school system as casualties of the examination system. The idea of writing examinations tends to frighten them as can be deduced from the number of requests for deferred examinations and those who do not write the examinations because they feel inadequately prepared. Unfortunately, distance learners at the University of Zambia do not have the same opportunity as full-time students to see the past examination papers in their courses. They do not, therefore, become as familiar with the type of questions asked and how the system of university level examinations functions.

An additional problem at present is that some lecturers mark and return assignments late; sometimes not until or after examinations.

This denies students an opportunity to guage their performance in course work and to prepare adequately for examinations. They therefore approach the examinations with doubtful confidence.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF COUNSELLING SERVICES

The above counselling needs were anticipated when the distance teaching system was established in 1967 and appropriate counselling and support services were introduced. At the beginning of each year the Department of Correspondence Studies distributed a students' guide which contained information on all aspects of the distance teaching system.

Week-end schools were introduced. Lecturing staff visited the main centres of student population and conducted seminars and tutorials. These week-end meetings enabled lecturers to gain a deeper insight into students' problems and helped to revive students motivation to study (Department of Correspondence Studies, 1972:10). Week-end schools were supplemented by country wide visits undertaken by the Director of Correspondence Studies and his senior administrative staff. Students' administrative problems were dealt with on the spot and this helped to boost the students' morale.

The Department of Correspondence Studies published and distributed a students' newsletter eight times a year during term time. It brought the students closer to the University as it provided news and information about various university activities.

By the mid 1970's the above services were no longer provided on a regular basis. One of the reasons was that counselling services were not integrated into the administrative structure of the whole distance teaching system. Their provision entirely depended on the commitment of the staff concerned and the availability of funds. Week-end schools were organized by teaching departments. Since they involved extra commitment, departments that were understaffed found it difficult to undertake week-end tours. Very few lecturers therefore took advantage of this provision (Department of Correspondence Studies, 1972:10).

Prior to 1975 the Department of Correspondence Studies had placed one of its Assistant Directors in charge of students' advisory services among his other duties. It can be argued that the effectiveness of counselling services provided by the Department depended on, amongst other things, the personal commitment of the individual officer and how well he combined counselling duties with his other responsibilities. The production of the students' newsletter and students' guide (later replaced by the students' Handbook) became irregular by the end of the 1970s because of the inadequacy of funds.

INTEGRATION OF COUNSELLING SERVICES

Towards the end of the 1970s two posts of Course Advisers (Student Counsellors) were established in place of the Assistant Directors. Unlike their predecessors, Course Advisers have full academic status. This development has had a number of advantages. Firstly, it has made

counselling services a permanent and visible feature of the organizational and administrative structure of the distance teaching system. Secondly, the appointment of academics to counselling posts has elevated the status of counselling.

The third advantage is that it potentially offers psychological satisfaction to students who are aware of the presence of officers in the university to whom they can present all their study related problems at any time. Fourthly, by virtue of their status, Course Advisers are able to sit on the Boards of Studies of schools offering Correspondence Courses. They therefore participate in the discussion of students' problems at school level.

(a) Duties of Course Advisers

Course Advisers work in close consultation with lecturers, Assistant Deans and all other officers in the University who are connected with distance teaching activities for the purpose of offering accurate information and proper guidance to distance learners. They monitor the students' academic progress in order to identify those lagging behind and offer necessary guidance and encouragement. Course Advisers undertake pre-residential school and pre-examination tours, the geographical coverage of which depends on the availability of funds.

In order that Course Advisers establish close working relationships with teaching staff and for the purpose of promoting close interpersonal

relationship with distance learners, each Course Adviser is responsible for students registered in a particular school.

(b) The Role of Residential Tutors

The integration of counselling services into distance education has been accompanied by efforts to decentralize these services. The University of Zambia Resident Tutors in provinces are provided with class lists and geographical roll and other relevant documents for the purpose of contacting and counselling distance learners in their provinces.

The full benefit of involving Resident Tutors in counselling distance learners is yet to be fully realised. Nevertheless, their involvement represents a major step towards the full integration of counselling services into university functions.

CONCLUSION

The provision of information, advice on course choice, examination counselling and assisting students to cope with various problems affecting their studies are the major counselling activities in distance teaching at the University of Zambia.

The appointment of Course Advisers in the Department of Correspondence Studies (which administers all distance learning activities) has given counselling permanence, prominence and the

importance it deserves. However, teaching staff still play an important role; they can provide direct academic guidance during the Residential School and through comments on students' written assignments.

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