

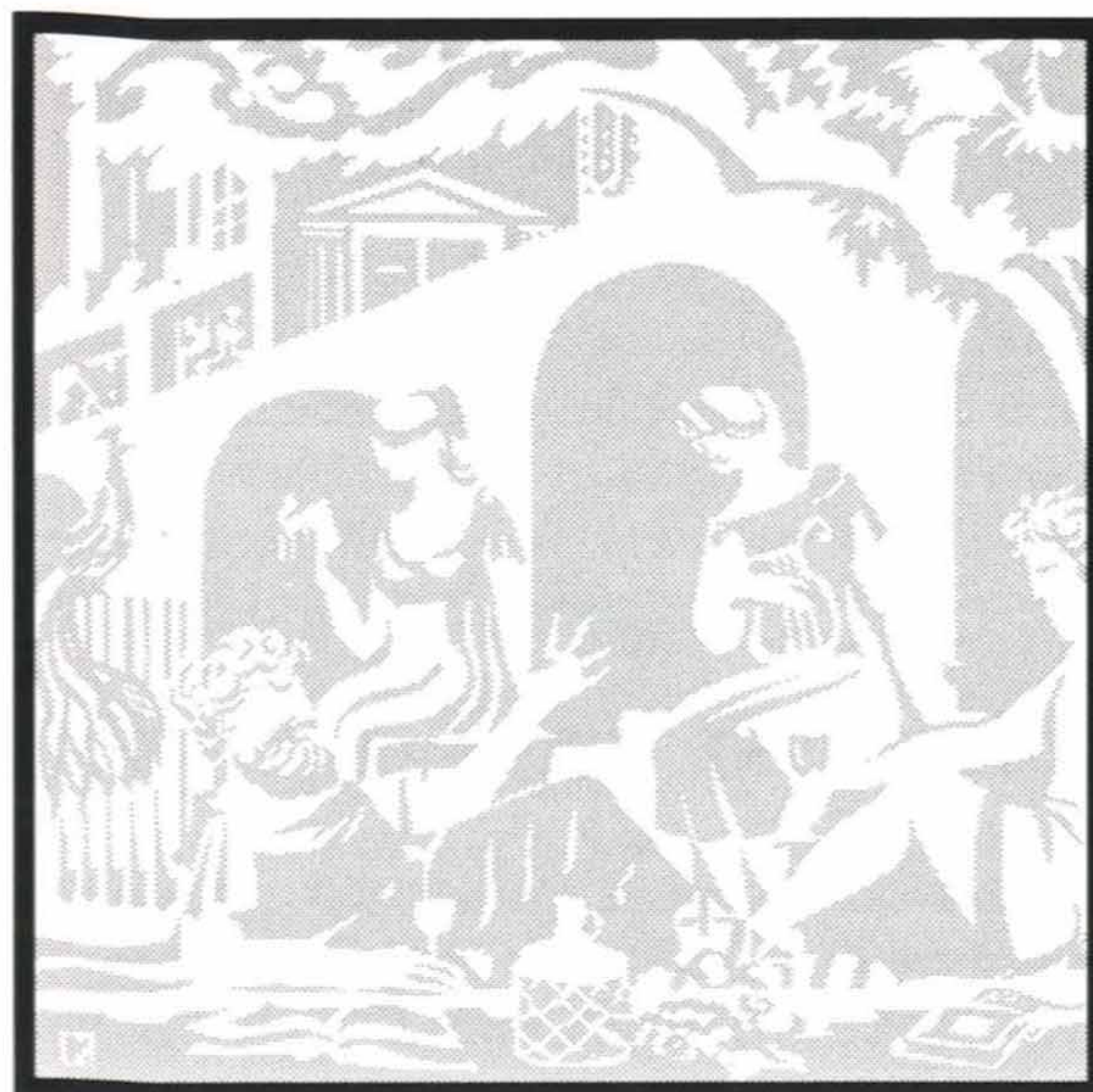
AUR

A U S T R A L I A N
U N I V E R S I T I E S '
• R E V I E W •

Volume 40, Number 2, 1997

The West Review

Visions of the University



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Letters

Debt a barrier to education

I wish to comment on Emory McLendon's article "HECS and the farmer's son" in *AUR*, Volume 40 No. 1 1997.

In his article on page 4, McLendon asks whether the decision to attend university stands or falls on the level of HECS. I am a 17 year old girl. I have just completed year 12 and my decision to attend university has fallen on the level of HECS, because, in answer to another question McLendon uses: "Does a year 12 student seriously consider the deferred cost of a university education a barrier to participation?", I certainly do. As I found myself reaching for Tertiary Education of the University Kind I was shocked to find that by choosing the course I wanted I could have a future debt over my head of \$10,000 or more! For many students around me it has become a significant barrier to them and myself, most of us opting for TAFE or the less expensive up front fees of private institutions offering shorter and cheaper courses.

McLendon is correct when he stated that the key word is deferred and the key factor is being 18 years old. 18 year olds completing year 12 in 1997 live mainly for the future, short or long term, that's why we go to university at all, and the last thing an 18 year old wants is a \$10,000 debt, deferred or not.

The decision by a year 12 student to attend or not attend university does depend on a number of factors other than the level of HECS. When I had done my research into the university courses that did interest me and I entered my course preferences I genuinely wanted to attend those universities, yet if those universities accept my applications it will be on the basis of HECS levels that I will reject every single one. Instead I will be attending a less expensive private institution to gain qualifications.

McLendon says that "at 18 the focus tends to be on immediate or short term problems. Certainly, most teenagers are not focused 10 or 20 years into the future." Trying to be realistic, 18 year olds are happy to live in the moment but I have no doubt that I and the teenagers surrounding me cope with, plan and think about the immediate, short term, long term and other problems. It is important to realise that, unless you are one, no one can know what it is like to be an 18 year old in 1997, just like we don't know what it was like in 1967 or will be like in 2097. So I suggest that Mr. McLendon, not being a farmer or a teenager today, can only speculate.

RACHEL SARA

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Editorial

The one dimensional vision

SIMON MARGINSON
AUR Editorial Board

The West Committee's *Learning for life* with its 16 Appendixes was finally released in November 1997 as this issue of *Australian Universities' Review* (AUR) was being prepared for publication. It is perhaps a little misleading to label this the 'West Report', for its contents bear little trace of Rod West's cultural values, and his call for fundamental debate about the purposes of our universities has been successfully obliterated. Instead we have another in the succession of Industry Commission-shaped reports whose only problem is to remove any and every barrier to market forces, and whose only solution is deregulation, user charges and free trade.

Access will be universal, states the Committee, but 'access' here means access to a global education market in which every idea, every course and every educated person has their price. The fact the industry is universities, and the 'barriers' to free trade are the academic profession and its pedagogical commitments (not to mention the various social and cultural roles of higher education) makes no difference to the argument. As for the purpose of universities and the content of courses, it seems that these are for supply and demand to decide. They are certainly not matters for the Committee.

What the Report does it does well, within its self-imposed limits. The funding options were tightly drafted, and Global Alliance Limited's Appendix 11 is flawed but brilliant in its own normative fashion. The problem is not whether the Report is good at what it does, but whether it is good to have done what it does at all - and whether there are other things which the Report should have done, but has not. **Paul Bennett's** article suggests that the Dearing Report in the UK made a reasonable attempt to pull together the broad range of purposes served by universities. It addressed harder issues such as funding and the academic salary decline, and it treated Lifelong Learning as more than just a slogan. In contrast the West Report is one dimensional, and it lacks solid empirical data about the system.

In planning this issue the AUR Editorial Board sought to take the opportunity to canvass questions of the nature and purposes of the University. All but one of the articles were solicited, and all but one of the contributors

(**Julie Wells**, who opens the issue with an analysis of matters arising from West) completed their articles before the Report was released. Each article provides its own separate and distinctive vision of the University. Remarkably, there is almost *no overlap* with the West Report. The contributors to *AUR* have taken up the matters that were ducked by the West Committee.

Graeme Orr's article suggests that some law students might share the West Committee's brand of utilitarianism, although they would have more concern for graduate outcomes than the Committee displays. **Gustav Nossall** focuses on the University as research institution and the decline in public support for research, a trend the Report fails to remedy or even properly acknowledge. For **Raimond Gaita**, whose imagined University is premised on truth telling as a vocation, the malaise is worse. "The deepest values of universities can more easily survive periods of severe financial pressures than they can survive the debased ways in which many academics and academic administrators know to speak of what they are doing." It is a compelling and remarkable challenge, and it is one the West Committee has clearly failed to meet. **Judith Brett's** vision is about academic work. She finds that the forward march of competition, a trend that is embraced without question by the West Committee, is damaging the psychological and social conditions for that work. Competition blocks collaboration between individuals and between universities, it weakens the capacity to create, it reduces the 'gift' that the teacher gives to the student.

Janet McCalman discusses the forms and the flowering of thirty years of academic work in one set of disciplines, the humanities. She points to the centrality of publicly supported universities to Australian cultural life, and the effects of the threat to that contribution, a threat which the West Committee has done nothing to retard. **Simon Kent** measures higher education institutions, and by implication the West Report, against another set of criteria: their contribution to social equalisation and democratic relations. The visions of the University outlined by Gaita and Kent are heterogene-

ous, and in some conditions they are incompatible. Yet between them they constitute a shared space which has nothing in common with the corporate university imagined by the West Report, a space that many of us would like to widen. Brett's article sits somewhere in that space.

In contrast **Jenny Stewart** finds that university management should be more transparent, more efficient and more accountable, and less destructive of human resources. Stewart's article is one that the West Committee

has to consider. Unfortunately, any article the Committee *has* to consider by definition has nothing much in common with Gaita's vision of intellectual life, or Kent's vision of the equitable society. That is the problem.

With this issue, *AUR* is starting to assume some of the qualities that the change in format and approach in 1996 were designed to achieve. Thank you to all of the contributors who have made the issue a memorable one.

Commentaries

Looking beyond the West Review

JULIE WELLS

NTEU National Research Officer

Much of the debate arising from the release of the West Committee's Discussion Paper on higher education funding and policy, *Learning for life*, is polarised around its support for student-centred funding, or 'vouchers'. The core question is whether Government should tie funding to student preferences, in the form of a 'voucher' redeemable with an education provider, instead of providing public funding directly to tertiary education institutions.

The heat and light this question generates is inevitable, given that voucher-based funding formed part of the Coalition's *Fightback* policy package which was rejected so resoundingly in the 1993 Federal election. Like another component of that package, the GST, it carries a powerful emotional resonance, with its proponents often cast as radical free marketeers and its critics just as frequently characterised as paternalistic dinosaurs clinging to an outdated model of state-planned education. And, like the GST, it is increasingly positioned by many as an idea whose time has come.

'Vouchers', or 'learning entitlements' as West calls them, are key buzz words in international debates about the provision of mass higher education into the next century. The recently released Dearing Report on the future of higher education in the UK recommends that the British system gradually move toward a more student-centred funding model, albeit with regular monitoring of the impact of each funding shift on equity and institutional health, and without opening up public funding to private providers. A UNESCO report on education in the twenty-first century chaired by Jacques

Delors, tentatively recommends further discussion of the idea of a universal learning entitlement, to ensure all citizens have access to postcompulsory education: a proposal also echoed in a paper prepared by former Labor Minister Peter Baldwin to inform policy debate within the ALP.

While the Federal Government has announced that it has no intention of introducing voucher-based funding for tertiary education, the debate about the relative merits of vouchers as a policy option continues. The different approaches taken in the reports mentioned above, and in *Learning for life*, indicates that the concept of vouchers is a movable feast, as yet untried in the 'real world', but presented as a solution to any number of problems. However, the nature of the impact of voucher-based funding on public education institutions would vary according to the detail: for example, the size of public subsidy and of additional student fees, centralised support for institutional infrastructure and equity initiatives, and the extent to which public funding becomes accessible to private providers. The model outlined in *Learning for life* represents the extreme end of the deregulatory spectrum and, while it is described as a medium- to long-term policy objective, nevertheless contains a number of prescriptions for institutional funding and management which are in keeping with the Government's current policies. Therefore, the funding model proposed by West is likely to stay on the Government's agenda, especially if it is returned at the next Federal election. We need to examine the *detail* of that funding model, and its likely implications for Australian

higher education in the short to medium term, before the debate moves too far into the realms of whether or not vouchers *per se* can work.

The West Committee's vision for higher education is most clearly expressed in the Committee's third (and preferred) funding option. Within this scenario, public funding across the full spectrum of post-secondary education would be determined by student choice. Each student would receive a learning 'entitlement', redeemable with any provider offering accredited courses. The size of this 'entitlement' could reflect a monetary value, or access to publicly subsidised provision over a set time frame.

Such an entitlement would represent only part of the total cost of tuition, and the Committee suggests that it is 'equitable' for the balance between private and public contributions to be broadly the same (p.31). The notional private contribution in the future, therefore, is imagined at a higher level than is currently the case, given that HECS charges average out at 45% of course costs (33% if the discount implicit in an interest-free loan is factored in). However, the extent to which individuals would carry the cost of their own education would vary considerably, as the West Committee advocates institutions being free to set their own 'top-up' fees, and to take in full-fee-paying students in excess of the subsidised load. Indeed, the Committee advocates the complete deregulation of fee-paying practices in Australian universities, leaving institutions free to exploit whatever market power they could command. Top-up fees in high-cost and high-demand courses could easily outstrip the value of the student's public entitlement.

How to match this deregulation of the higher education market and increased costs with West's vision of universal access to postcompulsory education for every Australian? In the Committee's view, this could be achieved if students have access to an income-contingent loans scheme (similar to the current Higher Education Contribution Scheme) in order to pay their top-up fees, with the additional costs of loan administration and CPI movements factored into their debt. In this way, the Committee argues, no student will have to meet up-front costs to access their 'share' of the postcompulsory education pie. Once the proposed entitlement is exhausted, however, students are on their own in the market: a significant departure from the current system where there is no limit on the number of publicly-subsidised courses which a student can access, provided, of course, they are willing to shoulder the accumulated HECS debt.

The student-centred funding model proposed by West also carries important implications for research. With undergraduate education defined as the core business of publicly-funded higher education, there will be a sharper distinction between funding for teaching and research

purposes. If public funding for education is to be opened up to private as well as public providers, there is no reason why research funding would not also be opened up to competition from public and private agencies, with Government determining the criteria for contestability. Postgraduate research would be funded via a 'student entitlement' to replace HECS-liable postgraduate research places; again redeemable at public and private institutions. However, unlike the proposed undergraduate entitlement, which is posited as universal, the postgraduate research entitlement would be allocated on the basis of merit. This entitlement would exist alongside the current system of Australian Postgraduate Awards, and the movement of all coursework postgraduate qualifications into the fee-paying arena.

In such an environment, meaningful distinctions between public and private universities would cease to exist. Instead, we move into an era of publicly-subsidised provision of higher education by a range of providers competing for a market of publicly-subsidised and full-fee-paying students. It follows that institutions' mix of public and private funding would vary according to their mission and their capacity to attract subsidised and full fee-paying students and charge high fees.

Such a vision is attractive to those who argue (along with the West Committee) that higher education planning should not be the task of centralised agencies, and that the market should determine the nature and mix of offerings. In such a world, the role of the state appears essentially that of a broker between the customer (student) and the provider. Yet paradoxically, the West vision would offer the state a greater degree of centralised control in some areas: for example, as an agent for 'quality control', through the accreditation of courses at a national, rather than an institutional, level. The premise for this, of course, is consumer protection and accountability for the expenditure of public money, and to these ends the Paper also envisions a role for the state in ensuring the financial viability of institutions in receipt of public money, and the collection of system-wide performance indicators to inform student choice. The paper also proposes nationally standardised criteria for assessing eligibility for tertiary study, thereby reducing the autonomy currently exercised by institutions in offering university places; and in establishing a national ranking of honours students for the purpose of offering student entitlements for postgraduate research. The message is clear: a market-centred approach to higher education funding offers an altered, but not necessarily a reduced, role for the state, and would impose its own kind of central control.

Perhaps the most disturbing feature of this vision is its unquestioned faith that market forces will ensure a good return on both public and private investment in higher education. The Paper states that student-centred funding

will benefit students by increasing choice, and by making institutions more responsive to their customers' needs. However, there is no evidence to support this assertion. Indeed, as Marginson and others have argued, the best way for institutions to maintain their positional value in a highly competitive market would be to hike up their fees and restrict access to subsidised places. Students would find themselves choosing from within a rigidly hierarchical higher education system, characterised by large cost and quality differentials. Choices would be constrained by individual students' financial means, their estimated future earning capacity and their talents as defined by a standardised entry test. It is ironic, then, that the mechanism chosen to implement the grand vision of the West Committee for increasing choice and equality of opportunity in postsecondary education is likely to have precisely the opposite effect.

The Committee acknowledges concerns about the impact of exposing universities to unfettered global competition, about their capacity to plan effectively in the face of the inherent instability of student-centred funding, and about the fate of disciplines which are associated with intrinsic rather than market values. These are dismissed as 'transitional' matters to be dealt with along the road to student-centred funding. It is perhaps this disregard for the fate of institutions in the short to medium-term which is so shocking to many working and studying within our higher education institutions, and so potentially destructive. Both the Delors and Dearing Reports devote considerable attention to discussing the social, cultural and economic functions of universities and how policy settings might be adjusted to advance this role. *Learning for life*, on the other hand, is marked by the absence of any real discussion of what universities do; or analysis of their role in the social, cultural and economic life of the nation. It seems directed to providing postcompulsory education to the largest number of people (from Australia and overseas) for the smallest possible costs; regardless of the educational implications. In embracing the notion of higher education as an 'industry', the Committee has enthusiastically set about the task of providing the institutions which comprise that industry with a model for corporate growth.

This represents its endorsement of the deregulation of higher education which began under Labor and accelerated after the election of the Coalition Government. The 1996 Federal Budget delivered a 5% cut in operating grants to 2000 (cut in 1997 by a further 1% to the year 2001), increased the size and rate of repayment of student charges via HECS, and introduced a number of changes designed to help universities increase their income from non-government sources. The most significant of these changes was to allow Australian universities to charge full fees to a limited number of Australian

undergraduates. According to Michael Gallagher, Head of DEETYA's higher education division, Australian higher education is now the most deregulated in the world. The impact of that deregulation is already being felt, as older, resource-rich universities seek to position themselves within the market as 'elite' institutions - the most recent example being the University of Melbourne offering undergraduates the opportunity to pay in excess of \$10,000 to undertake their final year of study at the University of Melbourne, and so gain the labour market advantages supposedly conferred by a Melbourne degree. Such strategies are ultimately circular, as the capacity to charge high fees has more to do with perceptions of status and prestige rather than the actual quality of the learning environment, and such perceptions are reinforced by high charges.

At the same time, increasing costs appear to be discouraging some people from entering higher education. Application rates have fallen, particularly among mature-age students who are immediately affected by higher HECS charges and reduced thresholds for repayment. DEETYA has confirmed that application rates dropped by 10% among this group in 1997, the first year in which the HECS changes took effect, and conceded that this may well be due to those changes. Preliminary figures from universities and state tertiary admissions bodies report a similar decline in applications for 1998.

The West paper does not address these emerging consequences of funding cuts combined with deregulation. Indeed, by taking current policy as its starting point, it precludes serious consideration of any model favouring increased public investment over student charges. This invites speculation as to whether in fact the Review has simply operated to justify the Government's deregulatory agenda, and raises questions as to its real political significance.

Certainly, the debate is as much about politics as it is about policy. Minister Kemp's repudiation of the Committee's voucher-based funding model amounts to nothing more than an assurance that he will not put into place the end-point of a twenty-year grand plan before the next election. In the meantime, there is much that can quietly be done to prepare Australian higher education for an even closer relationship with market forces. If we are to seriously contest the model for the future proposed in *Learning for life*, we must look more closely at the ways in which universities are being readied for change.

The blueprint is set out in a paper commissioned by the West Committee and published as an appendix to *Learning for life*. Entitled *Australian Higher Education in the Era of Mass Customisation*, it was prepared by Global Alliance Ltd, a Tokyo-based investment bank. This document, which is completely unencumbered by consideration of the role and functions of higher educa-

tion, provides the arguments for deregulation stripped bare of the liberal rhetoric which characterises *Learning for life*. In summary, GAL argues that for Australian universities to survive in a competitive global environment, they must become lean, mean teaching machines, driven by customer needs and identifying and strengthening their respective niches in a global market.

GAL outlines a number of steps needed to reform the 'supply' side of higher education in order to implement a voucher-based funding model, the first being readying the sector for competition by encouraging corporatisation and further deregulation of fee-paying arrangements. This is already happening through, for example, the Government's loosening of previous restrictions on universities charging 'ancillary' fees. Institutions are permitted and indeed encouraged to charge publicly-funded students for 'extras' such as course materials, language support services and use of computing facilities: a step which paves the way to a 'full cost recovery' approach to publicly-subsidised student places. GAL also recommends 'levelling the playing field' for public and private providers and making public funding contestable to all. Again, this is already occurring through the application of competition policy principles to the providers of postcompulsory education, including universities. Finally, GAL recommends a role for Government in supporting the 'winners' in the international market place. One possible mechanism which the Minister has already expressed enthusiasm for is the development of institutional 'performance indicators' which could inform funding mechanisms and provide market information. These processes may continue apace before the Government mentions vouchers again - by which stage, of course, they will appear to be inevitable. Therefore, if we are to contest the West Committee's vision for the future, we must focus on the consequences of what is happening in universities now, and the extent to which the foundations for further deregulation are being laid.

Of course, it is not the policy analysts alone who will shape postsecondary education over the coming decades. Policy is determined by Governments' perceptions of what the electorate will or won't tolerate, as well as by the advice of bureaucrats and other sages. The Government's repudiation of a voucher-based funding model on the eve of the West paper's release reveals its fears of electoral fall-out if it openly supports the further deregulation of higher education.

Such fears were not apparent shortly after the 1996 election. The Coalition's success in that election had rested largely on its appeal to a particular section of the electorate comprising mainly working and middle-class people who felt disempowered as well as disenchanting by the Australia of the 1990s. In announcing cuts to higher education a few months later, the Government

invoked rhetoric designed to appeal to this vital constituency: former Minister Vanstone argued that it was unfair for the taxes of the 'battlers' to subsidise the education of the rich; and 'academics' were frequently positioned (along with trade unionists, feminists and a range of other readily-identified groupings) as part of the poisonous 'elite' of the Labor decade.

However, post-election polling consistently suggests that cuts to higher education funding are not supported by the electorate. The most recent poll, commissioned by the AVCC, showed that nearly 70% of the population favours more public investment in higher education, and that there is strong community resistance to increased user charges. The polls commissioned in March to commemorate the first year of Coalition government told a similar story, with the highest levels of community disapproval recorded on the issue of cuts to university funding. Howard's battlers might not identify with universities and the people who inhabit them, but they want their children to have access to them all the same. It is doubtful that they will accept the forces of globalisation and the need to compete in international markets as good reasons for their children to accumulate greater levels of debt and to be denied access to the 'best' universities. Whether or not their views will be changed by the arguments arising from *Learning for life*, or by the accompanying media images of the Review Chair chatting with clean-limbed young people in private school uniforms, is open to question. So, too, is the question of how far and how openly the Government is prepared to pursue deregulation of postsecondary education. However, by charting the deregulatory road so clearly, the West Committee has at least helped to remove any illusions about where the current policy framework, unchallenged, will lead us.

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Student perceptions of the contract at will doctrine

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I want to reflect on a disturbing phenomena which represents an old schism. It is the apparent naturalness of the contract at will - or hire and fire at will - doctrine in employment, to intelligent, young Australians. They adhere to it despite the doctrine having its roots in simplistic notions of contract law, and having long been superseded in our labour law and traditions, since the advent of unfair dismissal procedures and anti-discrimination legislation.

Amongst other joys, I teach both workplace law as an elective subject, and compulsory, core contract law to first year law students. Each year in the contract subject, the nature of 'freedom of contract' is analysed. Each year I find myself, despite the experience of earlier years, shocked by the gusto with which a majority of the first year class volunteers and defends assumptions that match the hire and fire at will doctrine. "Why shouldn't an employer be able to hire whoever the employer wants? The employer owns the workplace." "Why shouldn't employers be able to sack whoever they want, when they want? The employer pays the wages."

At this point in the class, swallowing some of my incredulity, I usually switch to auto-pilot, and proceed to discuss with the students a number of justifications for providing legislative provisions to protect employees against the harshest effects of unmitigated common law thinking: anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws to redress the imbalance against vulnerable or under-represented groups at the hiring stage; and unfair and unlawful dismissal laws and award provisions to provide some rationality and balance in the reasons for and mechanisms of firing.

These justifications range over a number of themes, tailored to appeal to extra-contractual values that the students purport to hold. There is the democratic argument, that there are more workers than employers, and that this legislation was historically fought for by the labour movement and became mainstream policy such that most conservative or free market politicians would not risk the electoral backlash from workers if it were removed. There is the utilitarian argument, that especially in times of economic downturn, the misery caused by unjustified dismissals needs to be kept in check. There is the liberal equality argument, that formal equality

requires the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or politics to allow merit principles to truly apply. There is the historical argument that contract laws are neither logically primary, nor were they handed down on a tablet from Mount Sinai, but evolved together with market ideas and forms (Atiyah 1979). There is the economic argument that employers only maintain the ability to make profits and provide employment by co-operating with, and controlling and profiting from the labour of their employees, so that employers cannot claim that the profits are solely the product of their own work and investment. Finally, there is the fairness argument, that access to employment and job security are more important to the individual worker than any interference with managerial control is to the average employer, especially a corporate employer.

When confronted with the realisation that extreme commitment to the hire and fire at will doctrine means condoning direct discrimination on the grounds of race or gender, the students usually agree that they must accept some limits in the name of formal equality. They also tend to accept that in the Australian context, the history of discrimination against Indigenous people is so great that special measures are acceptable to favour and to train qualified Indigenous job applicants. However, this is usually as far as they will follow my justifications. In particular, they retain an almost reflexive aversion to broader forms of equal opportunity law (eg to assist women in industries in which they are under-represented) and to unfair dismissal laws (as opposed to unlawful dismissal on the grounds of direct discrimination).

I offer the following speculations on the reasons for this phenomena, which represents a virtual generation gap in assumptions and cornerstone values: although to call it a generation gap is metaphorical - at 31 I am not old enough to have fathered these children, but my generation at University, reared in the 1970s and early 1980s, did not generally espouse such radically liberal views. I offer these reflections because I believe this predilection for the contract at will evidences a profound and fundamental shift in the way that our society is constructing workplace relations and expectations, and augurs poorly for traditional union values.

It must be remembered that these students, as reflected by the fact of their acceptance into law school, are amongst the brightest school-leavers. They are not predominantly from wealthy or private school backgrounds, at least where I teach: they are overwhelmingly from typical middle class or lower class families, and are chiefly products of state schools. They certainly look to the United States for cultural references and values, but by and large to follow fashion and sporting trends, rather than explicitly political or intellectual influences. Certainly none of the students has heard of the phrases 'contract at will' or 'hire and fire at will doctrine', worked in the United States where those were once embedded in legal thinking, or read apologists for the doctrine such as Epstein (1991, 1992). Nor is it fair to say that they are inherently conservative: they are law students, to be sure, and very few are radical, but on a variety of other issues, especially social issues such as drug use, sexuality, public funding of education, foreign aid, and the environment, they are more left than right of centre. Whilst on some of these issues their stances are libertarian, and hence not inimical to a belief in hire and fire at will, on others their positions are clearly rooted in a belief in social justice and state intervention.

The students, however, are mostly young. The typical first year law student is only 17 or 18. Their mature age counterparts are less likely to adhere to the contractualist model. At first glance this is proof of the existence of a real and significant generation gap. That would be too simple an explanation however: older students who have had experience in the full time workforce as independent adults tend to dismiss the contractualism of the school leavers as merely the innocence or naivety of young people who are yet to endure any great struggle or responsibility in life. The older students' assumption is that the naive contractualism of the school leaver will evaporate with maturity. Certainly, by fourth and fifth year, workplace law students appear much less wedded to contractual assumptions. But that phenomena is not necessarily a product of maturity aided by critical teaching methods, as students in electives such as workplace law are self-selected, and do not represent a cross-section of law students. Instead, they tend to be motivated to take workplace law by the image of the vocation of labour lawyer as one concerned with redressing power imbalances in the workplace (as mapped by Collins 1989).

I fear that the reaction of the mature age students is both too dismissive and too optimistic. The school leavers I describe are not strangers to the workforce. Most of them have held several jobs, during school and whilst they undertake tertiary study. Usually these are low paid, casual and impermanent jobs in service industries. Additionally they come from families who have been heavily involved in the labour market. It is not their

lack of experience in the workforce, but their *very* experiences in the workforce that shape their contractualist assumptions.

In their completely casualised experiences in the workforce, they have not come to expect or even understand what it might mean to have workplace rights. Their first experiences in the workforce are in non-unionised sectors. They are glad when they can find work to suit the hours of their study, but expect such work to be transitory. They are used to seeing parents and family members working on full time but short term contracts, experiencing redundancy, or struggling in small businesses. Job security is not something they can conceive of, in law or practice, as a 'right'. Job insecurity may be something they fear, but it is something they have internalised, and which they expect others to live with. To them, blessed with good grades at school, and usually not from minority backgrounds, their response to economic and job insecurity is to turn the fear into motivation.

They choose to do law not primarily out of any dedication to legal service, burning ambition, or attraction to the subject matter, but out of a desire to guarantee themselves a well paid career, fully expecting it to involve periods of unemployment, and many changes in employer. They have inculcated some of the American myth and ethic, for they believe that if they work hard and compete, they will do well and somehow the market will look after them. They do not look to the law for protection for themselves, or for others who are less well off. Rather they perceive as natural a labour market in which such protections are paradoxically unfair to the 'provider' of work, the free enterprise employer.

These students hold strong assumptions about the workplace. It is not a place where employee rights have much meaning, but a place where individual employees compete for spoils. It is not a place for affirmative action or equal opportunity: a student quote, given as a response to what were seen as politically correct and collectivist concerns with gender inequity in parts of the workforce, is illustrative. The student announced: "I'm happy to live in a world where I can 'drill' some people; and other people can try and 'drill' me back." The verb 'to drill' lies somewhere beyond 'to compete robustly with', and implies 'to take advantage of'.

To the degree that a highly competitive education system (of which we are all a part, and which in many ways pre-dates the DEET reforms of the 1980s) reinforces these hyper-individualist values, I feel complicit in this shift to a society where 'the fair go' has no meaning beyond the spoils of an unrestricted market. The shift raises dilemmas for our role as teachers, especially at first year level. In the classical liberal-values model of education, it is not our role to (re)indoctrinate students. In the more contemporary model of teaching, we should be

recognising the importance of students ordering their learning within a framework of their personal opinions and experiences. And with young students - particularly shy students and many female students - any clumsy attempt by the teacher to seek justification for opinions, in face to face discussion, is often interpreted as a personal attack. Challenging opinions and assertions is of course easier in written exercises and assessment, but in those forms, there is precious little real dialogue between teacher and class.

To the degree that these values are, at their root, the product of a shift in legal and political norms, and the cultural instantiation of sustained periods of high unemployment and neo-rationalist economic re-structuring that Australia has undergone in the last 15 years, then these values are entrenched. They will be entrenched not just in the next generation of lawyers, but through-

out society, in a way that will profoundly challenge the consensus that otherwise has maintained the traditional protective model of labour law. They also offer a very real challenge and threat, to union values, especially as these values enter and leave university, not just intact, but buried in a guise of liberal naturalness.

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The future of our universities: economic rationalism or irrationality?

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Introduction

Humanity discovered something rather special seven centuries ago when the idea of the university was born. Despite the increasing specialisation which dominates professional careers, there is an ethos within a university that transcends the differences between its members. This includes love of scholarship, reverence for truth and objectivity, freedom of the spirit and of expression, a curiosity about the world, past, present and future, and a fierce independence from externally imposed authority. Constituted with this pervading ethos, the university has been a shaping force of enormous influence in civilisation. This influence is manifest at many levels, from the lustrous figures of eminence who win Nobel Prizes or become icons for the society to the youngest student whose enthusiasm challenges the imagination and whose robust protest can powerfully reshape society. The preservation and indeed the enhancement of the university ethos must surely be among a society's most urgent goals.

The three functions of a university

Universities have essentially three functions. The first is to act as living repositories of accumulated knowledge. Universities must have within them experts who husband and safeguard the knowledge of the past, who interpret it in the present context and who make the fruits of this scholarship available to the society. This scholarly aspect of university life is distinct from the teaching function and is hugely important. Consider for a moment what the committees and reviews that governments so frequently request would look like without university participation! Secondly, universities must pass on humanity's accumulated knowledge to the younger generation. This educational mission is obviously what society mainly sees when considering a university and I would be the last to decry its importance but must stress it is not all that universities do. Thirdly, universities add to the sum total of human knowledge through research. This function is required right across the breadth of university endeavour. Humanity's unending quest for understanding of the world around us and within us stands side by side with a desire for greater control of

events and for more elaborate goods and services which are the more practical fruits of research. It is sad that the phrase "curiosity-motivated research" has somehow taken on pejorative connotations. Surely that restless yearning for knowledge, for a seamless understanding of the universe and the events within it, clearly insatiable though it may be, is core to being human.

Why this somewhat ponderous analysis of the three related functions? Simply because it has become essential to point out that only the second of the three functions confers a private good on the individual student. The first and third functions confer a public good, belonging to society as a whole, and for that reason the cost burden should be shared among all taxpayers. It is true that in many fields the lines between pure and applied research are becoming blurred, and that therefore commercial interests can appropriately pay for some portion of university research, but it would be a great tragedy if this consideration loomed so large in the thinking of universities as to crowd out the superb expression of the human spirit which fundamental research represents.

How far should "user pays" principles go? If 40 per cent of Australia's youth now aspires to tertiary education, as appears to be the case, the total cost of sustaining the higher education enterprise probably cannot be borne by the taxpayer and a student contribution is reasonable. Furthermore, the Higher Education Contribution Scheme is the fairest user pays system yet developed, a point recently realised in the United Kingdom. But if my analysis of the three functions is correct, it is far too simple to take the cost of the university system and to divide by the number of students thus arriving at an annual figure. I would be comfortable with a HECS that moved towards, say, 40 per cent of the cost of educating the student.

University research as an investment

It is tragic to see the degree to which university research has come to be regarded as a cost, somehow draining the society, rather than as an investment. We are told every day that our destiny will be more closely intertwined with Asia. In my experience, one thing that the newly industrialised and rapidly developing nations of Asia want from us more than anything else is access to our science and technology, partnerships and technical assistance in getting their own science and technology to a higher level. Yet this realisation does not seem to have penetrated to many of those in power. I had the good fortune of interacting with the Korean Minister for Science and Technology here a few weeks ago, and by chance visited Korea a few days later. The Minister revealed that the Government had recently passed a law where research and development expenditure would rise from its present level of 3 per cent of the Govern-

ment's Budget to 5 per cent, this to be maintained for at least five years. Visiting Korea made it clear how real the commitment to university research was and the results are impressive, though admittedly coming from a fairly low base. The industrially mighty nation of Japan has recently announced a new scheme whereby 2,000 scientists per year would be sent overseas on postdoctoral fellowships so that, over the next five years, 10,000 talented young Japanese will be placed in higher centres of learning in a wide diversity of fields; so that they can then come back and bring the fruits of that experience to bear on the problems of the nation. And what are we doing? Our university funding has been cut, the direct appropriation for research has been relatively protected, but the infrastructure is deteriorating and the competition for funding among our younger workers is more intense than it has ever been. To that can be added the wonderful encouragement of the Government's failure to meet a long postponed salary increase! Is this economic rationalism or irrationality?

The issue that concerns me most is the plight of the younger Australian university academic. My impression is that morale is low in the 25-35 year age-group, with few job opportunities, great difficulty in gaining independent funding and a general sense of being embattled. The spectrum of duties and accountabilities is so great, the staff:student ratios falling so markedly, that only true dedication and huge effort can get significant research done. It is a tribute to our younger superstars that standards are still so high, but this cannot go on forever.

The way forward

I simply refuse to accept that higher education funding must be plateaued for ever at one per cent of Gross Domestic Product, or else must be gradually cut still further. Well-rounded minds and a well-trained workforce are among our greatest national assets. I have no problem with a reasonable degree of student contribution, nor do I disparage universities becoming more entrepreneurial and diversifying their funding base. However, the core must continue to come from Government and must be regarded as a long-term investment. I am unashamed and unrepentant in declaring that R&D expenditure in Australia should continue to rise, certainly within the industry sector but also within academic institutions. Whereas the Government's investment in R&D is at a reasonable level by international norms, the support for the two principal university research funding bodies, the ARC and the NH&MRC, is by no means extraordinary. I am aware of the fact that they are growing at a time when nothing else is, but we must remember the extraordinary growth in student numbers, including particularly graduate students; and the enormous demands that this places on staff. Both of these

bodies have a proud record in discharging their duties, with a great deal of voluntary work being done in the peer review process, and the budgets of these two bodies should rise significantly. Moreover, a certain proportion of their funds should be reserved for younger workers.

Linkage to industry is important, provided it is kept in balance. There should be continued strong support for the Cooperative Research Centres which are creating a new climate within the academic community as the gulf between it and industry is gradually bridged. Partnerships of true value are being forged here, and moreover the great pool of talent within CSIRO is being brought more frontally into higher education, particularly at the postgraduate level. To follow the Mortimer recommendations for a scaling down of the CRC movement to a \$20 million per year exercise would be a sheer folly when such a good start has been made.

The way forward also must include diversity. In no sense am I proposing that all research should be confined to a small number of universities. Placing a bigger proportion of the total cake in the hands of the peer group reviewing bodies means that excellence will be encouraged wherever it is to be found. It may well be that a smaller, newer university will develop excellence in a particular field and will be rewarded by sizeable research grants in that field. Demanding that every university should do research in every field can only have one consequence, namely a gradual sinking into mediocrity. The university granting bodies should have an adequate budget, and the research quantum should be raised to a realistic level so that the infrastructure for research of excellence can be provided. There should

also be the possibility of individual scientists within smaller or newer universities to have access to national facilities or other expensive items of equipment through collaborative agreements between universities. As the technological base of many sciences increases, there will be a natural tendency for agglomerations of research workers into larger units or groups, and mechanisms should be put in place where these groups can be rather porous as indeed is the case in many CRCs.

Conclusions

We must all be ambassadors for the universities. It is not good enough to sit back and predict doom and gloom. We have a basically sound university system, it has been groaning under increasing student numbers, decreasing funding per capita and excessive demands for more paperwork. If the stated intentions for more autonomy can be realised, each university should be able to develop its own priorities and its own persona. Student pressure arising from their paying more of the bill will be no bad thing and, if they vote with their feet, Darwinian processes will create the diversity which the unified system really requires.

The West Green Paper is awaited with the greatest interest, giving us all one last chance to comment on how this great national endeavour can be reshaped for the new millennium. Australia has every right to be proud of its universities and of the many scientists and scholars who carry the flag of the nation as they present their work overseas. There is no lack of talent in the younger generation but there is a waning of confidence. Whatever else may be the Government's response to the West Review, this trend must be reversed.

Feature- The West Review: Visions of the University

Truth and the idea of a university

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I

In the early days of Margaret Thatcher's assault on the universities, the philosophers in the UK gathered at the University of Leeds to form an organisation to try to protect their discipline. One philosophy department had already been closed. The meeting was opened by the Vice-Chancellor who spoke movingly about why he believed that in, accommodating government pressure, he and other academic administrators had sometimes compromised the integrity of their institutions. He then said, "But surely, philosophy will not offer an extrinsic justification of itself". The philosophers argued that no institution could rightly call itself a university if it lacked a philosophy department. They directed their argument to a junior Minister of Education who was present. A cultured man, he listened carefully, but eventually said impatiently, "In that case we will call it something else!".

It appears that many people agree with the minister. They believe that reflection on the concept of a university will yield only elitist nostalgia. Ministers of Education and academic administrators are inclined to ask, what do we want from the institutions of higher education and how can we get it? Those are questions they believe they can answer without ever mentioning the word 'university'. If we insist on retaining it, (their thought continues) we can offer a definition that suits our purposes. They could seek support from the philosopher Sir Karl Popper who argued that questions like, "What is the essence of a university?" are a sign of muddle that invites obscurantism in reply. He said that we should ask instead "What do want from an institution and how can we get it?".

That appears hard-headed, but really it is not. We disagree about what we want and some of those disagreements are a function of the fact that our different wants are conditioned by different values to which they are answerable. Some of those values are *sui generis*, that is to say, they cannot be fully explained without reference to facts which are not themselves values of the same kind. Acknowledgment of that will drive us back to the question, what *should* we want of the varying kinds of

institutions of higher education? Those who have found it important to think about the 'idea of the university' will say that for some of those institutions, the answer will come from reflective understanding of the essence of the university. By a short route we come back to where we started.

And rightly so. When university academics reflect about their obligations to their disciplines, to students, to the university and to the broader community, then if they are educated beyond the confines of their disciplines, they will think with and against an historical background of reflection that goes back at least to Socrates. That historical depth guaranteed the concept of a university its fertility for thought about one historical form of the life of mind - the academic form. Historical depth rather than metaphysical essence secured the concept's distance from the contingent circumstances of time and place, making it possible for thinkers to judge, rightly or wrongly, that their desires and even the spirit of their times are faithful or false to "the idea of a university". That kind of judgment can be achieved only by concepts in whose light we can judge and transform our desires. Another way of putting the point (Platonically, but without the metaphysics) would be to say that the ideals which some people express when they speak of the essence of the university are not the expression of our desire or the objects of our pursuits: they are the judge of our desires and pursuits. The authority and stringency of those ideals do not depend on whether they have been or will be realised in actual institutions. One need not believe in the essence of a university or hanker for a golden age in order to take seriously the distinction between universities and other institutions of higher education.

Is there comfort for those who lament the passing of an authoritative concept of the university? Yes and No. One reason for saying yes is that we can retrieve an understanding of the values expressed in reflection on the idea of a university by reflecting directly on those values, rather than on them as mediated through the concept of a university. Thus instead of asking, what is the essence or nature of a university, we can ask instead

what are the finest values that have emerged from our traditions of university education? Are there treasures we are obliged to bequeath to future generations? If there are, can we find words that will name them and reveal their value? Which practices will nourish them? Which will undermine them? In all probability what we most value will have arisen quite contingently in the course of our history. That does not diminish it. What matters is not the essence of the university. What matters are its treasures.

Inevitably any effort to determine what we should most deeply value will excite controversy. But I doubt that anyone will dispute the claim that, if we extinguish the conditions under which university staff and students may pursue learning for its own sake, then we will have lost something precious. That brings me to some reasons for saying no. Two things undermine those conditions. First, pressures and temptations to pursue the life of the mind for its many external benefits. It is hard to exaggerate the degree to which modern universities are subject to them. But the second is more dangerous. It is the continual erosion of the means to articulate a serious conception of the value of learning for its own sake. The conceptual loss we have suffered through the degradation of serious conceptions of the university is partly a consequence of a conceptual loss in characterising its treasures. The managerial Newspeak that now pervades universities is both a cause and an expression of the fact that the language that might reveal that value has gone dead on us. The deepest values of universities can more easily survive periods of severe financial pressures than they can survive the debased ways in which many academics and academic administrators know to speak of what they are doing.

We need to know the vintage of our problems if we are to explain why the universities surrendered virtually without a struggle to both Dawkins and the economic rationalism that followed. Managerial Newspeak is only the most recent example of trouble that transcends political divides and began long ago - at least as long ago as when John Stuart Mill resorted to the notion of a higher pleasure to explain why the life of Socrates dissatisfied was preferable to the life of a pig satisfied. For a long time, we have been unable to speak persuasively of the intrinsic value of learning as something deeper than a higher pleasure or passion. I have a passion for philosophy and also for mountaineering. Both yield higher pleasures but, quite rightly, the taxpayer pays only for one. If the intrinsic value of university studies is nothing more serious than the pleasures that accompany the disciplined exercise of the mind, then it is right that people should look to their extrinsic benefits, be they political or economic, serving the right or the left. That is why philosophy, history and physics are

mendicants for a respected place in some universities which honour the study of hospitality and gaming.

The reason we find it difficult to argue persuasively for a more serious conception of the intrinsic value of study is not because our audience is dominated by philistines. Nor is it because of the effects of high unemployment on students or the effects of market driven policies on staff and courses. Such economic and political factors are important but their impact on the universities is as much effect as it is cause of our inarticulacy. In the sixties the universities were vulnerable to the call that they serve the requirements of political idealism. They are now vulnerable to the pressures to serve the economic imperatives of the nation. In both cases their vulnerability has been partly a function of the fact that those who defended them, sometimes passionately, could rarely articulate a vision of the life of the mind that would move people to see something serious and deep where they had not seen it before. It went together with the loss of the concept of a university as something more than a high flying institution, three stages past kindergarten, which excels at research. For a long time we did not notice what we had lost. That is why the Vice-Chancellor's plea at Leeds was ineffectual and why the Minister's rhetorical response to the philosophers was so unnervingly successful.

This is a cultural phenomenon, a quite general conceptual loss, and has little to do with individual failings of character or intelligence. The concepts we need are beyond our reach in the way that we capture when we say that a form of speaking has gone dead on us. Thus, for example, the spread of managerial Newspeak was facilitated by the replacement of the idea of academic life as a vocation with the idea of it as a profession. At a certain point the concept of a vocation became as anachronistic as the concept of virtue. When that happened our sense of the value of truth and its place in the characterisation of academic life changed. What you make of talk of the love of truth, of truth as a need of the soul, of the need to be concerned with truth over vanity, wealth, status and so on, will be different according to whether your conception of academic life and its responsibilities is structured by the concept of a vocation or by that of a profession. In his notebooks, the philosopher Wittgenstein agonises over whether his work is infected by a dishonesty born of vanity. Seen in the light of the concept of an academic vocation, that is no more than should be expected of one who is lucidly mindful of its requirements. In the light of the concept of a career or a profession it is likely to appear neurotic or precious.



Truth is now a suspect concept in many academic quarters. Debunking the rhetoric that has sometimes surrounded it has some point and justice. But I think that

we will have no serious conception of the life of the mind unless we link it to our need of truth. Without that linkage, the ideal of a liberal education degenerates at best to an Arnaudian celebration of cultural adornment.

The concept of truth is important in the characterisation of two aspects of university life. Firstly, in the characterisation of an academic's commitment to his or her disciplines. That commitment can be characterised in many ways, but it is hard to see how one can do it adequately unless at some point one appeals to an academic's desire to understand things as they are rather than how they appear to be. I would not wish to say that a consideration as basic and simple as this could undercut serious scepticism of truth. However, the distinction between reality and appearance - our sense of what it comes to in any discipline - is interdependent with a set of critical concepts whose serious application would make scepticism about truth technical and unthreatening. We can argue philosophically about what the connections are between the application of the critical concepts which determine what makes for good and bad thinking in any disciplines and this or that conception of truth, but in my judgment, if we understand the grammar of those critical concepts, then residual scepticism about truth will not lead to a corrosive scepticism about objectivity. One cannot both mount an argument and at the same time debunk those concepts which make argument (of any kind) possible. Those concepts are the ones which distinguish legitimate from illegitimate persuasion and they do so because of their connection to one or other of the many ways we distinguish between seeing things as they are from how they appear.

Be that as it may, my concern is not with the concept of truth as it relates directly to the practice of academic disciplines. It is with how the concept applies to the second aspect of university life that I want to comment on, namely the obligation on members of the university to reflect on what they do - to reflect not only on the nature and presuppositions of their disciplines, and on the relations of the disciplines to one another, but also on the place that commitment to an academic discipline can have in a human life. There may be no such thing as the essence of the university, but there are some conceptual truths about the university. One of them is that nothing can rightly call itself a university if it does not impose on at least most of its members an obligation to reflect on the value of the life of the mind.

That truism underpinned the remarks of the philosophers I mentioned at the beginning, for when it is flourishing, philosophy is pre-eminently the discipline that guides such reflection. Insofar as that obligation to reflection falls on thinkers and scholars in their role as members of a university, I think its existence assumes that they are able to engage with "the best that is known and thought" in the history of such reflection. That

presupposes standards of the kind we now associate with those institutions capable of producing first rate scholarship. I believe that a sense of that obligation has been part of most serious conceptions of the university, and is one of the treasures that we must salvage. Of course, the two - the practice of the disciplines and reflection on what it humanly means to be committed to them - will come together in a good university. They will come together in a never ending challenge to academics to make authoritatively living in their practice an adequate response to Callicles when he challenged Socrates to show that a lifelong devotion to the life of the mind could be worthy of any human being with more than mediocre aspirations.

I shall quote some of the marvellous speech that Plato gives to Callicles in the dialogue *Gorgias*.

It is a good thing to engage in philosophy just so far as it is an aid to education, and no disgrace for a youth to study it, but when a man who is now growing older studies philosophy, it becomes ridiculous Socrates . . . When I see a youth engaged in it, I admire it and it seems to me to be natural and I consider such a man ingenious and the man who does not pursue it I regard as illiberal and one who will never aspire to any fine or noble deed. But when I see an older man studying philosophy and not deserting it, that man, Socrates, is actually asking for a whipping...Such a man, even if exceptionally gifted, is doomed to prove less than a man, shunning the city centre and market place, in which the poet said men win distinction. He will spend the rest of his life sunk in a corner and whispering with three or four boys and incapable of any utterance or deed that is free and lofty and brilliant. (Gorgias 485a - e)

In my experience, students invariably fail to take Callicles seriously. Confident that they are superior to him in their understanding of the worth of the Socratic life, they smile condescendingly when they hear his speech. They think that Callicles is a philistine. In their hearts, however, ninety nine per cent of them agree with him as do many of their teachers. If one leaves aside for a moment his claim that the continued study of philosophy is demeaning to an older man, then what Callicles says in appreciation of the worth of philosophical study is a good statement of the ideals of "liberal education". He does not offer an "extrinsic" justification for the importance of philosophical study by the young. He praises it for cultivating certain qualities of mind - an imaginative appreciation of and concern for what is "fine and noble" - which is presumably conditional upon an absorption in the subject for its own sake. He believes that the study of philosophy for its own sake is necessary to a certain kind of personal cultivation. "The pursuit of sweetness and light" is not an expression one would expect to hear from Callicles (although he would ap-

plaud "the pursuit of excellence"), but he thinks in much the same way as does Matthew Arnold in judging that the chief good of study for its own sake is the cultivation of that mixture of moral and epistemic achievement which, in its contemporary form, we admire as an accomplished urbanity.

Callicles would also agree that the study of philosophy tended to make its students more thoughtful citizens. However he would not grant, because he would not find intelligible, that a life devoted to philosophical study, or to put it more generally, a life lived in a love of truth, could be a life worthy of a noble spirit. He is perfectly aware, if only because of Socrates' example, that philosophy could inspire an absorption which lasted a life time. He denies only that it could be a worthy absorption. Callicles is quite serious in his praise as far as it goes. If we find it hard to believe that he is serious it is because we find it hard to reconcile such praise with his contempt for those who believe that reflection and study could worthily inspire a lifelong devotion. But therein lies the seriousness of his challenge. Socrates took it seriously. He replies to Callicles that "of all inquiries . . . he noblest is that which concerns the matter with which you have reproached me, namely, what a man should be and what he should practise and to what extent, both when old and when young" (*Gorgias* 488a).

Socrates, the character in Plato's dialogues, developed an argument to respond to Callicles. Plato gives us the character to show what a life committed to philosophy can mean. His point, I believe is that the two - the example of the life and the reflective characterisation of it - are inseparable, and this point has echoed in our tradition of thought about the university. It is through the example of scholars and teachers who spend a life time "sunk in a corner", and through critical reflection on their example, that a university distinguishes itself from other institutions of higher learning. Not through the mere fact that there are such examples and such reflection, for these occur elsewhere, but through the acknowledged obligation to reveal by example and reflection what might be said in reply to Callicles. That is why, as I said earlier, it is a conceptual truism that universities impose on most of their members the obligation to a general reflection of the place of the life of the mind in a human life. The value of truth - what it may be to value truth 'for its own sake' - is only revealed in the reflective appreciation of the way it deepens the lives of people who care for it. We do not have a sense of it independently of that.

It will be evident to many people that I have appealed to a strand in our tradition that has been under vigorous attack by another strand, now represented by post modernists, taking their cue partly from Nietzsche's attack on Socrates and from his debunking of certain conceptions of truth and objectivity. Insofar as I understand the post modernists, I believe they are mistaken for

reasons that are too technical for me to discuss here. But mistaken though they are, it strikes me as natural to a university that there should be an attack on the rhetoric that has often accompanied talk of objective truth, of our need for it and the forms of our commitment to it. If in Julien Benda's day it was *trahison des clercs* to attack the notion of objective truth, it may now be *trahison des clercs* not to take seriously the reasons for scepticism concerning it. But that is not my theme in this paper. My aim is neither to praise nor to condemn post modernism, but to show why it is a lesser threat to any serious conception of truth and truthfulness than the mendacity that is now widespread in university life.

III

Intellectual eros is an aspect of the inner life - the life of the soul, if we think of the soul as we do when we speak of soul destroying work or of suffering that lacerates the soul, rather than as a metaphysical entity whose existence is a matter for speculation. The inner life consists of our reflective emotions - love, grief, joy, and, of course, intellectual passion - emotions whose very existence is partly constituted by reflection. Their nature is conditioned by the fact that we distinguish their reality from their false semblances: real intellectual passion, real love, real grief, real remorse and so on from their many egocentric counterfeits.

It is hard to imagine anyone who is totally indifferent to whether they felt real love or one of its counterfeits, real grief or sentimental self indulgence, real intellectual passion or vain posturing, although many people prefer not to think too much about these things, and some think it positively dangerous to the integrity of those states. Superficiality is the undeniable cost of not trying to be clear sighted about our inner lives. The requirement to distinguish between the real and the false forms of the inner life seems to arise from its very nature. If we remember how basic the fact that we have inner lives is to our sense of humanity, then the observation that they are composed of states whose nature requires lucidity of us goes some way to supporting the Socratic claim that an unreflective life is unworthy of a human being. And if we remember the natural connection between the concept of the inner life and the concept of the soul when it is not used speculatively, then we can see why it has so often been said that truth is a need of the soul.

We can say much the same about the concept of truth as it applies to our efforts to understand our inner lives as we say of it elsewhere - it is interdependent with the concepts that mark what it is to think well or badly. At a general level those concepts appear to be the same whether we are thinking physics or about poetry. In all inquiries we try to see things as they are rather than how they appear to us, strive for reality rather than illusion, try

to think clearly and relevantly rather than in ways that are muddled and distracted, and so on.

It is a fact of great importance that these general truisms about truth and objectivity obtain across all forms of intellectual life. But it is equally important to note that such generalities may disguise differences of the first importance, not just differences *in addition to* what there is in common, but differences *in the form of* what is in common, even when those forms go by the same name or descriptions. In physics and in reflection about poetry we try to 'see things as they are' rather than how we would like them to be, or how they appear from distorting perspective; we try to resist distorting forms of subjectivity, but what it is to do any of these things will differ from one to the other. The effort to resist sentimentality, jadedness, bathos and cliché is intrinsic to the very nature of reflection on poetry. Those critical concepts play little part in most of the natural sciences, and when they do, they function as terms which mark external obstacles to thought, rather like tiredness of drunkenness, rather than as ailments to which thought is intrinsically vulnerable.

Someone who strives to avoid sentimentality when they are thinking about the life of the mind and their commitment to it is someone who aims to think what is true and who necessarily aims to think truthfully - necessarily because as well as being a form of falsehood, sentimentality is a form of untruthfulness. Truth and truthfulness are inseparable in the cognitive grammar of sentimentality, as they are in the grammar of most of the critical concepts with which we assess our thought about the states of the inner life. That is why the notions of authenticity and integrity are so often invoked here, not as the names of virtues of character which help us to think well, but as concepts which characterise the forms of thinking well. Clearly, this is not so for all forms of thinking. It seems not to be in physics. Truthfulness is important there, of course, but as a means to securing and protecting truth. It is not intrinsic to the conception of truth that is sought and protected.

Thus truthfulness comes into our thoughts about the university in at least two ways. First, as truth's servant, mindful of its needs and loyal in its protection of it. This is the kind of truthfulness that concerns us when we worry that the temptations of wealth or fame may distort research. Secondly, as a value intrinsic to truth as it applies to inquiries which depend on reflection on the nature of the inner life - history, parts of philosophy, literary studies, part of psychology, and of course, to reflection about the different forms of intellectual eros.

I come now to a very important feature of thought about the inner life, one which is critical to the way in which truthfulness is vulnerable to contemporary pressures on universities. Rising to the requirement to be lucid about one's inner life is an effort to be objective. Its

success depends upon the realisation of the distinctive individuality we refer to when we say that each human being is a unique perspective on the world. The paradox in that formulation is only too apparent. All effort to see our inner lives "as they are" rather than as we would wish them to be, or as they appear from perspectives that are, literally and metaphorically, too local, requires thought to be obedient to the critical grammar of concepts that individualise the thinker in the sense implied when we say that someone has "something to say", that they have "found their voice", that they speak from an authority that is inseparable from the fact that they have lived their own life and no one else's. Or, to put it the other way about: if we ask what it means to be someone who has something to say, who speaks with an authority that depends on authenticity, then we give the right answer only if we show that the thought of such a person is disciplined by concepts which show, for this kind of thinking, what it is to strive to see things as they are rather than as one would wish them to be, or how they appear from this or that perspective.

Earlier, I said that we fully appreciate the kind of value we ascribe to the pursuit of truth for its own sake, only when we see it in lives deepened by it. Those lives speak to us because we acknowledge the truthfulness internal to their capacity to move us and thereby to claim our trust. We must trust if we are to be open to the example of others which may enable us to see value where we had not seen it before, or to discover value of a kind we had not known existed, or to hold onto values when our sense of their reality waxes and wanes. Not even Socrates' singular example could overcome the worldly cynicism of many of his interlocutors, to reveal to them the value of the philosophical life.

There is no way, however, to the understanding of that value other than one that is mediated by example, for there is no purely discursive route, available to any reasonably intelligent person of good will, to the appreciation of the value of anything important, let alone the value of a life-time devoted to the pursuit of understanding. There is no proof waiting to be discovered and written into text books, encyclopaedias or private notebook, that will tell us which things are really valuable and that we can consult whenever we are in doubt. There is nothing that will assure us, once and for all, "what a man should be and what he should practice and to what extent, both when old and when young". Inescapably, we learn by being moved, and that would be so even in heaven. But we must be open to being moved, and then we must, in disciplined sobriety, sometimes trust the authority of what moves us, and ourselves in doing so. What gives us the right to do the latter? Once again, the answer is that we must turn to the critical vocabulary that tells us what it is to think well or

badly: it will tell us what it is to be rightly moved and what are its many false semblances.

The community of scholars, as it used to be called, exists when its members acknowledge their obligation to reflect on the nature and value of the life of the mind, as that is shown in the great examples of the past, and in their own experience. When it is most true to itself, the academic community is constituted by the ways its members respond to the ideal of a critically realised individuality through truthful, historically aware reflection on what it humanly means to live an academic life. Then the relevant language of value is most alive, because of examples that have nourished it, fertile in historical resonance, often allusive but always rigorous.

Sadly most, perhaps all, universities are now some distance from that ideal, and many of their members appear to be blind both to the fact and why it matters. In common with other institutions which succumbed to great external pressures, universities have been tempted to describe their submission to those pressures as relatively costless to their integrity. However, the universities are now marked by a pervasive mendacity in their descriptions of what they have done to save subjects and jobs. Hazel Rowley did not exaggerate when she said "never before has there been so much talk of 'excellence

and quality assurance' and never before [has there been] so little concern for either" (*The Australian*, 18/12/96). We academics tend to deny the extent of the untruthfulness, but everybody knows that it now widespread in university life and that knowledge generates a debilitating cynicism about the higher ideals of the university. That cynicism erodes the epistemic space in which examples of lives deepened by values *sui generis* may teach us their lessons, and then the language which could reveal such value begins to go dead on us. Managerial Newspeak flourishes.

If I have been right, then the West Committee faces an almost impossible task if it is to try seriously to answer the question, what is a university? It must breathe life into a language that can move people to see something serious in talk of the intrinsic value of knowledge and understanding where they had not seen it before. And it must ensure that its recommendations are free of the suspicion that it has been complicit in the mendacity that now pervades much of university life. If it fails in the second, it has no chance of succeeding in the first.

Notes

1. Parts of this article first appeared in various editions of *Quadrant*.

Competition and collegiality

JUDITH BRETT

La Trobe University

Government policy toward higher education over the past decade or so has been influenced by the belief that exposing the institutions within the sector to increased competitive pressure will enhance the efficiency and productivity of the sector in various ways. The argument that competition enhances human productivity assumes a particular form of human subjectivity—the rational, opportunity-maximising, self-interested individual of market liberalism. Much academic work, however, depends on quite different forms of human subjectivity. The current enhancement of the mechanisms of competition threatens the psychological and social conditions necessary for certain aspects of academic work. In particular it threatens our ability to work co-operatively, to think creatively and to teach generously.

In this paper I will look at the threat institutionalised competitiveness poses to the forms of human subjectivity embodied in three aspect of academic work:

1. our professional collegial relations;
2. the psychological conditions necessary for creative work;
3. the gift relationship embodied particularly in pupil teacher relations.

Professional collegial relations

There is a professional, co-operative aspect to discipline-based academic work—refereeing papers, marking theses, serving on professional bodies, editing journals, organising and attending conferences. The professional, collegial relations on which such activities depend are being strained by increased competition between institutions for students, research money and prestige.

Our identity as academics begins as a professional one. We begin our training in particular disciplines and generally develop academically within some more or less loosely defined disciplinary boundaries. This professional disciplinary life is embodied both in formal professional associations and in the informal networks of colleagues which we each build through our working lives. These networks develop on the basis of the shared traditions of disciplinary enquiry and of the personal intellectual affinities we discover amongst our professional colleagues. They have very little to do with our particular employing institutions, except that in some we may find more conducive colleagues than in others.

One very obvious effect of the increased competition between universities for students, funds and prestige has been to tighten the grip of the employing institutions on the academics who work in them. One form this takes is an increased emphasis on an academic's institutional identity. The achievements of individual academics are co-opted by the institution as evidence of the institution's worth, as are the achievements of its alumni.

For example, the University of Melbourne under its new Vice-Chancellor Professor Alan Gilbert has been aggressively pushing its claims to positional status in an attempt to lift itself and the other pre-war universities well above the ruck. Its alumni magazine, *Gazette*, gives only the Melbourne degrees of the various achievements it claims of people who were once its students. In the issue for Autumn 1997 it included in its list of the achievements of prominent graduates Dr Tom Griffiths' prize winning book *Hunters and Collectors*. The author's qualifications are given as BA Hons 79, MA 91, omitting his PhD from Monash, on which the prize winning book is based. Presumably the editor of the *Gazette* did not want to give free advertising to the competition.

I am continually congratulated at La Trobe where I work for having such a high public profile—as are other of my colleagues like Robert Manne and Denis Altman. Given the embattled position of La Trobe in the competition for positional status in the city of Melbourne, this is understandable, but it points, I think, to a larger problem. The enhanced emphasis on competition, and in particular the ruthless exploitation of positional advantage by the pre-World War Two universities such as the University of Melbourne, are straining collegial relations across the campuses. I now would not want the University of Melbourne to claim me as an alumni, not because I am not very grateful for the good teaching I received there in the 1960s and 1970s, but because I do not want to be co-opted into its marketing strategies, particularly when these are directed against the place at which I now work and my colleagues there.

Every time I read, yet again, the Vice Chancellor of Melbourne making one of his claims to the universal excellence of his institution I feel a surge of resentment, and a desire to hit back and to point out some of the many ways in which the University of Melbourne is not excellent. I realise of course, that this is pointless and that in the short term positional status is immune to evidence about quality. (Marginson 1997) As well as exposing me

to inevitable accusations of sour grapes, to give into such temptations would draw me into participating in the very destruction of relations of co-operation and trust on which our collective professional life depends.

The psychological conditions necessary for creative intellectual work

In the end, the quality of our research as academics depends on the quality of our thought. We begin with thinking—the flash of insight in some accounts, the struggle to bring the half formed thought into focus in others. Various disciplines develop different skills and methods to control and enhance this thinking, and individuals develop these to different levels. These are important in contributing to new work, but they remain means. One of my enduring interests is in the institutional and cultural conditions which enable creative intellectual work, which enable people actually to have the flash of insight or to bring the half-formed thought into focus, and then to shape these private experiences into public and convincing forms. Does the increased emphasis on competition enhance or inhibit creative intellectual work?

Advocates of competition will not hesitate to say enhance. They will argue that competition will spur intellectual endeavour, make people work harder, longer, smarter. This is an article of faith for those who advocate competition, many of whom, it must be noted are administrators rather than thinking, writing academics. I am prepared to accept that competition does have a place in the motivation of academic work. It has, however, a secondary, after the fact place. It can indeed be a valuable spur to finishing a paper or a manuscript, to getting your work taken seriously, to arguing hard to defend your position. But it is not always of help in the development of that position itself. Working hard to come up with a good idea will not guarantee you will have one. Earnest endeavour generally produces earnest work, rarely anything that sparkles or surprises. I am prepared to concede that it may even be that competition does enable some people to be creative; but there are many it will not help at all at the moment of thought.

For this you need a quite different emotional and psychological context from anything competition has to offer, quite different conditions of subjectivity. Competition is engaged in by well-formed, bounded selves with clear identities and clear positions. It is these well-formed identities and positions which provide the basis of the competition. By contrast, many theorists of creativity have described the way in which the boundaries of the self blur during creative endeavour. The intense focus of attention on the object of thought leads the rest of the world to fade away, as in the stock figure of the absent minded professor, or as in the lines of Wallace Steven's poem, 'The room was quiet and the world was calm/ The reader became the book'.

The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1971) has described the space of cultural activity as a transitional space, a space in which objects are experienced both as part of and separate from the self. This space is bounded and safe, yet charged with possibility. And it has nothing to do with competition. Its features are those of the ideal relationship between mother and child. It is contained and special, a circle of meaning and significance a little separate from the everyday; and inside the circle one finds trust, safety, acceptance, the expectation of being attended to, the expectation of being understood.

When you look at the lives of many creative individuals you find often a special friend, a special group or circle who created the space which made that person's early work psychologically possible. People do not create alone; they are members of groups or circles, they write for particular magazines, they paint for particular patrons or galleries, they share their boldest thoughts with one chosen other. Even when they may seem to be alone and solitary they will be working within particular traditions which involve dialogues with historical figures or long dead mentors and teachers. Here the expectation of being understood, or at least listened to attentively and sympathetically, is crucial. Many people only discover what they think when they are trying to explain themselves to a sympathetic other. We all know this. Yet to privilege competition as the spur to intellectual work is to assume that the main point of communication is to win the argument.

Heinz Kohut, an American psychoanalyst, has a very interesting essay on Freud's relationship with Wilhelm Fliess in which he explores the vulnerability of the self engaged in deeply creative work. (Kohut 1978) Fliess was Freud's confidante during the most creative period of his life, when he was 'discovering' the basic insights of psychoanalysis and writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Kohut argues that Freud used Fliess to help him maintain his psychological integrity while he took great intellectual and emotional risks, following the intuitions and trains of thought which led to the creation of psychoanalysis.

It has always been rather hit and miss whether universities provided their working academics with the transitional spaces conducive to creative intellectual work. These spaces must to some extent be created by the people who need them, but the possibility of creating them will be enhanced by institutional settings which encourage the development of relations of trust between people, of the friendships and informal networks within which like-minded people can find each other and work together.

The best we can hope for is that the enhancement of competitive market mechanisms in the academic work place will simply miss the target, having nothing at all to offer to the conditions which enable creative work,

although perhaps providing some sort of incentive for people to get their work and ideas about, once developed. The pessimistic scenario is that the new competitive mechanisms will gradually erode the possibility of the relationships of trust and mutual significance which enable creative work.

The gift relationship

My last argument I owe to Freya Mathews (Mathews 1990). It is about the role of the gift relationship in universities and in the cultural production and transmission of knowledge. Mathews draws on the work of anthropologist Marcel Mauss on gift exchange (Mauss 1970) in which the obligation to both give and receive binds societies and people together in complex systems of social reciprocity which have both a spatial and temporal dimension. She uses the gift relationship to draw attention to three aspects of the traditional organisation of academic work.

The first is the extent to which it has been embedded in social relations based on trust rather than on contract. The imperatives of bureaucratic rationality have been tidying this up for quite a while now, in relation to such things as academics' leave entitlements or workers' compensation, and have been eyeing off our working hours and our intellectual property. Such tidying up, she argues, is likely to be corrosive. As academics are increasingly forced to think of the allocation of their energies in terms of such measures of efficiency as money or contribution to the research quantum, much of what they now do for free will come into question. Why would anyone mark a PhD for example, read a draft for a student one is not supervising and so who is not part of your EFTSU load, read papers submitted to journals, talk to the ABC, serve on a government committee, write references, or even organise a conference, if it is not going to generate any money, or a measurable research publication, or a grant application. The answer is two fold. We do some of it, like marking PhDs and writing references, because other people did that for us. It is a gift we received and we now feel an obligation to pass it on; and we do it because we believe in the common enterprise of advancing understanding or knowledge as an end in itself. We do it because we still feel ourselves to be part of a common collegial enterprise, as discussed in my first point.

The second aspect of academic work Mathews discusses is the commitment to knowledge as an intrinsic end embodied in much though not all academic teaching and research. Systems of gift exchange differ from systems of market exchange in that the item of exchange, the gift, is understood by both giver and receiver to be of intrinsic value. By contrast, the market is a system of exchange in which the value of the goods derives, to varying degrees, from the system of exchange rather than inhering in the

goods themselves. Value is, if you like, created through the exchange. There is thus a close relationship between market mechanisms and instrumental behaviour: one takes a particular activity or course of action, not because it is good in itself but because it will earn money or research points, or advance some other end which has a contingent relationship to the activity being pursued. The use of competitive mechanisms to achieve desired outcomes depends on this sort of relationship.

The third is the way gifts are seen to carry something in them of the spirit and identity of the original owner. In the exchange of gifts, societies and individuals thus recognise the extent to which they owe their identity and very existence to others, and they contribute to the conditions of possibility for the continuation of their form of life. This aspect of the gift exchange is most fully realised in academic work in our teaching. It is here that we give to our students ideas and knowledge which we hold to be of intrinsic worth, and give them in ways which indelibly carry the marks of ourselves—of the teaching we received, and of what we have made of it. We try to teach well because we were taught well, and were drawn into the shared enterprise of the construction of knowledge by people who in teaching us gave us something of themselves. Again, this is a relationship to which enhanced competitiveness has nothing to contribute. The best we can hope for is that it misses the mark, but the more likely outcome is that it will be destructive of the very gift relations on which the collective enterprise of the creation and transmission of knowledge depends. Once teaching becomes instrumentalised, once students start to feel they are simply dollars, or EFTSUs, on legs, and not part of a generational chain of giving and receiving, once academics see themselves as earning money rather than teaching students, then universities as we have known them are over.

Conclusion

The traditional idea of the university saw the university as a place in which the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake had a central if not exclusive place. It was to some extent a place apart, protected by various privileges and traditions from the forces of the market. Freya Mathews argues that the ethos of the traditional university, with its stress on collegiality and on autonomy, 'reflected the requirements of epistemology as much as those of politics'. (Mathews 1990, p. 20) That is, the institutional forms of the traditional university were in good part a response to characteristics inherent in its two core functions: the pursuit of knowledge and the teaching of students. They recognised the essentially collective nature of the production and transmission of knowledge; and they recognised that it is only when knowledge,

truth and understanding are pursued as intrinsic ends that they are likely to be achieved.

Universities are no longer protected from competitive market forces, and traditional arguments are proving weak in the face of zealous reformers convinced that increased competition will lead to enhanced performance. In this paper I have focused on certain aspects of the nature of academic work, to show how they in fact depend on relations of co-operation. This is most obvious in academics' collegial and disciplinary life, but it is also the case in relation to academics' research and writing where many people's creativity is enhanced by relations of trust with a small group of others. And it is central to the reciprocity of the student teacher relationship.

I have emphasised the words 'in fact'. My arguments are not arguments about value or definition, but about the nature of academic work and they depend on certain empirical claims about the conditions which enable people to produce the sort of knowledge which universities have traditionally produced, and which they are still expected to produce, at least to some extent. No one, it should be noted, has yet argued that universities should produce only applied knowledge, that there is no place for curiosity driven or pure research, that it should provide only vocational training. Insofar as universities are still expected to produce people able to value, create

and teach knowledge for its own sake, these goals are threatened by the present mania for competitive mechanisms to regulate the activities of academics.

This argument could lead one to profound pessimism, to the conclusion that much of the academy's ability to contribute to the production of knowledge will be destroyed by current 'reforms'. It also contains, however, a ray of hope. This is that the conditions of cooperation, trust and reciprocity which, I have argued, are necessary for productive academic and intellectual work are indeed necessary and will stubbornly persist, and that this stubbornly persisting empirical reality will defeat the reformers.

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The world we are losing

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Forty years ago the Humanities Research Council published the first review of the humanities in Australia (Price 1959); and the Academy of the Humanities has just concluded the second - its strategic review of humanities research for the Australian Research Council. The current strategic review under the leadership of Emeritus Professor Anthony Low decided that it was time to take stock, to see how far we have come in the four decades since that first review and since the Murray Report of 1957.

It's an historical perspective we sorely needed, for it brought home not that there has been a *renaissance* in Australian scholarship and high culture, but that there has been a *naissance*. Australia had produced distinguished scholars by the 1950s, but their distinction was largely acquired overseas, characteristically in England, and few of them had established 'schools' in Australian universities which had become intellectual powerhouses. The 1955 review discussed research in just seven fields, listed ('characteristically for its day' notes Anthony Low) in the order of Classical Studies and Archaeology, English, Modern European Languages, Philosophy, History, History of Art, Oriental and Pacific Studies. As Anthony Low has commented, there was no mention of anything Australian under Archaeology, 'Oriental Studies' was nothing like modern Asian Studies, 'Pacific Studies' was the lone area studies, Visual and Performing Arts comprised only Music and the history of art, and of course there were no Women's Studies, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, Media and Communications Studies or Post-colonial Studies. (Low)

What is equally important is that all those seven disciplines of the 1950s scarcely contained anything Australian: no Australian literature, rudimentary Australian history, no Australian Art, little philosophy directly drawn from the moral issues engaging the Australian people, no Oriental or Pacific Studies which assumed Australia to be an oriental continent sitting between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. And if you scanned a bookshop or a local library you would find no Australian scholar, apart perhaps from Walter Murdoch and W. K. Hancock, who were being read by ordinary readers. In the schools there were few Australian texts for senior students; in the universities, scarcely any educational texts in any subject were by Australian authors and published in this country.

Even from the time that I was an undergraduate student in the late 1960s, there has been a growth in

serious Australian writing, both fiction and non-fiction, and in Australian scholarship that one could scarcely imagine possible thirty years ago. This of course has extended far outside the universities: to writing, film and all branches of the performing and visual arts. So much of Australia's high culture has been the product of just the last three decades. And taking a leading part in the great national conversation about what we have been, what we are now and where we may be going, have been humanities scholars. Our national cultural life has been transformed and the universities have played an essential part in that transformation.

They have done so not only as producers of scholars but also in the creation of a critical audience for high cultural production. The explosion of Australian writing, both scholarly and creative, has found a ready audience, for Australians are among the keenest book readers in the world. More Australians read for pleasure than play or go to watch competitive sport. The post-war expansion of secondary and tertiary education has equally expanded the cultural consumer market. On trams, on beaches - everywhere there are people reading books, many of them demanding books, and many of them Australian books.

And if you look at the candidates for ARC fellowships, as I have had to do for the past three years as a member of the Research Training and Careers Committee, you see there also an extraordinary intellectual achievement: we are producing outstanding scholars in a spectacular range of disciplines. Not only are there the literary scholars, historians and brilliant young philosophers that you would expect, but we are still producing stunning classical scholars, historians of all sorts who can read Thai, classical Chinese and Japanese, old Javanese and Burmese; anthropologists who can work in languages which few outside those cultures know; cultural studies scholars who can hold their own at Berkeley and in Chicago; music scholars; art scholars; world-class linguistics scholars across the full range of world language groups as well as in Aboriginal, Indo-Pacific and Austronesian languages in our own region. And there are still outstanding Medievalists and early modernists, young people with a suite of classical and ancient European languages. The archaeologists work from Latin America, throughout our region, to outstanding work in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Australian archaeologists in New Guinea and the Fertile

Crescent are leading players in the theorising of the evolution of agricultural civilisations. I list these because not only have these early career academics mastered their primary discipline, but they have mastered new and difficult languages, technical skills and extra-academic expertise of high quality. They are so very good, and yet many of them have no future in university life.

What's also significant is the geographical range of their work. A striking theme in the 1955 review was the tyranny of distance, the sense of isolation from the places 'over there' in the UK, Europe and the USA, where real intellectual life went on. Not so now. Australia provides for most of its intellectuals a rich and stimulating base, and cheaper air-travel and email have brought the international university world to our doorstep. The cultural time-lag has shortened markedly. Now we can relish the advantages of being a small country of small importance, for our intellectual life is not swallowed up by parochial self-absorption; our own culture does not consume most of our energies; we are in fact able to be more international and cosmopolitan than the Americans or the British or the French. And we can now draw on our own multi-cultural resources. All this makes Australia a great place to live and work.

The result is that Australian humanities scholars are among the leading earners of international academic repute for this country. As the international citations fall for our scientists, Australian humanities scholars in philosophy, linguistics, archaeology, medieval and classical studies, early modern studies, British historical and literary studies, American and Latin American history, cultural studies, gender studies, anthropology and especially Asian Studies, are in the front rank internationally. Even some who work on Australian Studies attract international repute, but this substantial international reputation has largely been built at a distance from the sources of the subject. Moreover, increasingly the post-graduate training has been obtained in Australian institutions. Fewer and fewer outstanding students now make the Oxbridge pilgrimage.

So what have been the conditions which have enabled Australian letters and Australian scholarly life to come of age? It has not just come out of the air like some sort of cultural El Nino effect. When you look closely at who has done what, and where and when, it is clear that the *naissance* happened because money was spent on certain strategic institutions. And it is in looking at these that we can assess the nature of our present plight. First the Australian National University: it's fashionable to criticise the ANU, especially the Institute of Advanced Studies, and while state universities pursue the perfectly legitimate goal of becoming world-class research universities, we do need to remember that this country already has one, except that it is being strangled financially. But it is worthwhile asking the question where Australian

scholarship would have been without the ANU. Without it we would not have done what we have in economic history, in federal law, in archaeology, in Asian Studies, in development economics or in demography. The disciplinary boundaries have moved onwards, but the forced association of traditional humanities and social sciences in the two research schools speeded up the lateral thinking of interdisciplinary work decades before the older universities would have got round to it. The stream of international visitors during the 1960s and 1970s through the Coombs Building could not be matched by any Australian campus. It became a great university because for a time it had the money to be: its postgraduates were the most fortunate in the land, studying under world-class conditions. Field-work was generously supported; there was money for projects and collections. There was money for people to be given the chance to innovate and create: you could go to the Vice-Chancellor with a big idea, and if good enough, it would be supported. In 1964 the ANU produced fully 50 per cent of the nation's PhDs in humanities and social sciences. And it was ANU-trained academics who built Asian Studies and Archaeology and Anthropology in universities all over Australia in the 1970s and 1980s (Foster and Varghese 1996).

The new universities of the 1960s and 1970s have been another institutional cause of this explosion of activity and talent. These were the fruits of what Hugh Stretton called "the noble revolution", the result of the Menzies Government's moral courage in implementing everything the Murray Report recommended. The young and the brave, and often very bright, formed the new faculties. Much of what they did, they did in reaction to the sandstone universities which had trained them. Many became outstanding at undergraduate teaching, often because they had to work harder with their students, often because they were not of the older establishment themselves and were scholarship people who had been school teaching before entering academic life. In research they went into new areas, were more daring, and often overtook the older departments. The La Trobe History department has had more prize winning and internationally renowned scholars on its staff than any other in Australia, and than many in England or the USA. Some of those 1960s and 1970s universities, however, have lost their edge because the young staff stayed until they were venerable, and the money for new recruits dried up.

But there was a third generation of universities — the Dawkins universities, and here again the institutions formed from old inner city technical colleges or in culturally deprived outer urban or regional areas where no university had ever been before, in a couple of instances, became intellectual powerhouses: the University of Technology, Sydney, the University of Western

Sydney, James Cook University, to name the obvious ones. From the ARC vantage point you see wonderful scholars all over the country, and you realise that the centre of gravity is not in Sydney or Melbourne, no matter how vibrant and active they now are. A tiny English department like that at the Australian Defence Force Academy is outstanding in scholarly editing and Australian literary studies. Macquarie University is the national leader in dictionaries and reference works, not Melbourne or Sydney Universities, despite their traditions and library collections. Macquarie is also a national leader in classical and ancient textual studies, recently appointing an internationally renowned scholar of Manicheism in Samuel Liew.

All of these things — things which earn this country substantial international standing and which do feed into the wider culture — have depended on people having real, safe jobs, and the time and support to be daring, to take risks. They have needed time from teaching, money to travel overseas, research assistance, equipment and above all the infrastructure of library collections. The safety and security are not to be underrated. There is a relationship between the waning of the Cold War, at least in Australia after 1972, and the expansion of intellectual life. Many academics on the left were cautious during the 1950s and early 1960s; the Menzies Government might have valued universities and put money into them for the first time in Australian history, but there was a climate of fear for those on the left. If academics contributed to the women's movement, gay liberation and the growing pluralism of Australian life, they also were direct beneficiaries of them. Security of tenure gave scholars both freedom from fear of persecution for their ideas and the time to reflect and be creative.

New creative work also depends on the entry into academic life of new creative people—young people coming from all sectors of the Australian community and from overseas. It depends on creative people being able to move in and out of university employment at odd periods of their lives: entering in their fifties; leaving in their thirties to come back later; going elsewhere for a couple of years; changing institution or discipline or department. But above all, there was time. Study leave could be for up to a year. Teaching loads were lighter. There were more tutors, fewer research students to supervise. Most of all there were fewer meetings and fewer conferences, fewer demands, fewer deadlines, fewer expectations. It was safe to have a fallow time: to dry up for five years, provided you went on with your teaching. It was possible to sit down and rewrite a manuscript which had turned out not as you wanted, or which had been made out of date by a new manuscript find. It was possible to justify your scholarly existence with one very good, big book for your career. It was

possible to be simply a good teacher. Of course there were people who did not justify their salaries, but that happens everywhere, even in governments and private enterprise.

I scarcely need to describe the corporatisation of the university which has undercut all those basic securities and decencies which gave creative people the space, both physical and mental, to do good work. Yet the sheer pressure of competitive intellectual production in this era of benchmarking, peer review, student satisfaction surveys, research quantum, and constant insecurity has seen an apparent increase in productivity. At the same time there has been an increase in personnel: a net increase in the number of fine minds fighting for the same, tiny, shrinking, fickle space in the sun. We need to start asking about the quality of the work that rushes from conference to conference, from grant application to grant application, that is driven by fear and ambition rather than intellectual curiosity and passion.

I am coming to the end of three years as the Humanities/Social Sciences sub-panel chair of the Research Training and Careers Committee of the ARC. Not only does this entail reading fellowship applications for all humanities disciplines and some social science, but it also has meant being a reader in Australian and British History for the large grants panel, and second reading in English, Cultural Studies, and all areas of history other than Asian History. That amounts to about two hundred applications to read closely a year. It is fascinating, inspiring, immensely stimulating and depressing. Depressing because of all the talent that is starting to go to waste as our university system goes into contraction and inevitable decline. To set a gifted young scholar on the research fellowship career path is to play a cruel joke on them, because the path narrows and peters out for all but a handful, and will take most into a wilderness of middle-life unemployment, having once raised their expectations so high. We all know of gifted young people living on scraps of money that departments can scrounge for them, and since we can offer them no future, what future does research have in this country?

But these are matters that can be changed. What is far graver in the long term is the decline of the national research infrastructure in our libraries. That was the other institutional driving force behind our national cultural *naissance*. Until the 1950s, we had lived off the vision and generosity of the nineteenth century creators of libraries, above all Victoria's extraordinary State Library. Only Sydney University developed a great library; Melbourne came very late to investing in a respectable facility and to commencing its collection building. Again government money, especially visionary money which built the National Library of Australia and funded it so that it could purchase key collections, changed everything. And the funding of specialist libraries at the ANU

built collections that had not existed anywhere else in Australia before. But as we approach the end of the century, only a handful of university libraries are buying widely, and not one State Library is building its collection adequately. The decision of the National Library to no longer be a universal library but to concentrate only on Australia and its region means that not one library in the country is building a comprehensive collection, or taking every significant serial. If the ARC were strict and adhered to the rules about research environment, only a minority of Australian universities would have the library resources to support postgraduate students, fellowships and large grant projects and therefore be eligible for ARC funding. The costs of library collections and information technology are rising exponentially and not one institution is placed to fund and provide for the long-term future a library able to support world-class research. The cuts which have already come mean that great gaps are now appearing in our collections, gaps that can never be repaired, gaps which will only get wider. The electronic library is not going to solve these problems: it is only creating new ones. Just as our electronic needs are growing, more books are being published in the English language than ever before in human history. We will need to be inventive and bold to make a Distributed National Collection work and we will need to be very smart with our electronic facilities. And we will still need to find the cash and the will to defend and build great collections and archives. At the moment, historians are fighting to save the incomparable Noel Butlin Archives at the ANU.

Great learning has never come out of thin air, but out of talented people being given the intellectual space and institutional support to work to their full capacity.

Everything that our high culture has achieved since World War II came about because a handful of people had a vision and the will and courage to make their vision happen. The founders of the Australian National University had a vision of a great national university which would transform the research life of the nation and which would explore the recent developments in science and the formal knowledge of human relationships to help solve the world's problems. The Murray Report had a vision which convinced a conservative and suspicious government to invest generously in Australia's intellectual and cultural future. The founders of the National Library had a vision that this country had a unique responsibility to build a world-class research collection, not just for itself, but for its region. The Australia Council and the Whitlam Government had a vision that the creative arts could not flourish in this small, geographically dispersed country without direct subsidy both to creative work and publishing. The framers of the Australian Research Council had a vision that world-class research came only through world-class funding and international peer review. And in every case, that vision in time produced outstanding scholarship, writing, and creative work which has enriched both ourselves and the outside world.

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The Dearing Report: paving the way for a learning society

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Introduction

While the higher education systems in Australia and the United Kingdom have both been the subject of continuous change in recent years, the West and Dearing Reviews guarantee further radical shifts in the way the two systems are geared up for the twenty-first century. As the West Review enters its concluding stages, it may be useful to look at the Dearing Report and its reception in the UK.

The Dearing Report on higher education in the United Kingdom, "Higher Education in the Learning Society", published in July 1997, is as ambitious in scope as the title suggests. The Report's vital statistics, 1700 pages, weighing in at 6 kilos and with 93 recommendations, add to this sense of comprehensiveness and authority. Although the Chairman of the Review Committee, Sir Ron Dearing, favours regular reviews of this kind, this is the first major review of higher education since Robbins (1963), and it is hard to envisage another such thoroughgoing review process for at least another twenty years.

Dearing was very conscious of the international context in which it was working, and referred to the need to keep up with international competitors' higher education participation levels, specifically the USA and Japan. Committee members visited Australia, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the USA to collect comparative evidence.

British and Australian governments' higher education policies have continued to develop in a number of respects in parallel, although arguably Australian policy is open to a wider range of external influences (from the USA and the Pacific region, for example) than the UK. There is an ironic twist to these parallel policy developments, in that the national governments in the two countries have usually been of opposite political persuasions - which, in the late twentieth century political climate, has proved no obstacle to learning from one another. The Australian Labor Government's student loans policy informed the British Conservatives' thinking in this field. With a 'New Labour' government now in the UK, and a conservative minister in Canberra awaiting delivery of the West Review, it may be that the education unions in Australia can use aspects of the Dearing Report to protect and develop higher education and promote

lifelong learning in an inimical political climate. In this context, it is worth noting that the Dearing Review was set up by the Major Government with the support of the other two main parties, and the Report has received a wide degree of support in principle, if not always on key details, from across the political spectrum.

Dearing in context

Dearing was set up to help bring order to a higher education system which has achieved phenomenal and accelerating growth over a thirty year period, largely in response to 'market forces' and, in spite of two major pieces of legislation in the last ten years, without a clear perception of what this growth meant for the system. However, it was clear that growth without fundamental change was unsustainable in terms of finance, capacity, quality, the character of the offer made to potential students, and relations with other sectors of education. Dearing has addressed all these questions more or less successfully.

In Dearing, as in the West Review, questions are posed about the relationship between higher education and vocational or further education (and, explicitly in Dearing, lifelong learning). The dynamic between further and higher education will be of still greater significance in future - but also, the dynamics within higher education, between 'elite' or 'research' universities and primarily teaching institutions, are potentially explosive, and Dearing's attempt to meet everyone's wishes may prove over-optimistic.

Sir Ron Dearing was the former Conservative Governments' educational problem solver, but he was squarely in the middle of the political spectrum; he and his team have produced a report which has attracted wide political support. However, there are internal contradictions and inconsistencies between the planned greater equity and access and the Committee's (and the Government's) financial proposals. A few weeks before the publication of Dearing, another significant report, produced by a Committee chaired by Helena Kennedy QC, forcefully argued for greater equity in the further education system, including access to educational opportunity beyond compulsory schooling for those who currently do not gain access to it, backed by the necessary funding. It is

rumoured that only behind-the-scenes diplomacy between the two Committees headed 'Kennedy' off from recommending explicitly that its proposals should be funded at the expense of higher education.

NATFHE, representing teachers across the further and higher education spectrum, rejects this "either-or" approach: the continuous and lifelong character of education in a modern industrialised state is becoming quite clear. The distinctions between 'further' and 'higher' education are eroding, and many who succeed in further education will aspire to higher education in the future. We argue strongly for a holistic approach which builds a coherent, compatible and mutually supportive further and higher education system aiming at lifelong learning for all our citizens, in forms appropriate to their needs. We believe that the Governments' response to Dearing and to Kennedy must be broad based and visionary, and not driven by the need for quick fixes to the immediate funding crisis, urgent though that is.

The Report's key recommendations

Much of the UK debate, before and after the publication of Dearing, focused on the issues of student support and student contributions to the funding of higher education. That issue has overshadowed a number of other aspects of the Report, including those with far-reaching implications for higher education personnel. I would like to explore some of these aspects before coming back to the student finance question.

Two of the most significant elements of Dearing for higher education teachers are the proposals for accreditation of teachers, and for an independent pay review committee. Dearing has recognised the significance of the shift of higher education work more specifically to teaching in the context of wider changes in education which are re-asserting the professional responsibility of teachers - and the need for continuing professional development. The Committee proposes a new Institute for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and recommends that, for all new entrants to higher education teaching, successful completion of probation should require achievement of a basic (associate) level of membership of the Institute. This would create a climate in which professional development would become the norm, but not be compulsory. If implemented, this would be a radical departure, but it would go a long way, with the other proposals, towards redressing the current imbalance between the status of teaching and of research in higher education. On the other hand, the Report is cautiously supportive of the increased use of short-term and part-time staff, not apparently recognising the difficulty of involving them in formal professional development.

After summarising the different views submitted in evidence on collective bargaining structures, the Committee recognised that this was an issue which it could

not adequately address. Therefore it recommended an independent review committee to be set up by employers, including 'staff representatives' and a Chairman nominated by the Government, to report on the framework for determining pay and conditions of service by April 1998. Dearing also recommends that instead of the present different pension schemes resulting from the mergers of the new and old university sectors there should be progressive inclusion of all academic staff in a single scheme. It is noteworthy that although the report focuses overwhelmingly on academic staff in its discussion of the workforce in higher education, it does say "in the future the contribution that all staff make to the quality of the student experience will need to be recognised and rewarded, and effective, sensitive, management strategies adopted to achieve the changes we anticipate". (14.59)

The Report's proposals would further strengthen the role of teaching compared to research, and reflect the reality that many university departments bid for research funding which they are unlikely to get: it is recommended that some departments might be encouraged to opt out of the Research Assessment Exercise, which forms the basis for a major part of research funding, and could then receive a per capita grant to fund scholarship in support of the teaching function. While this could support many academic staff in their teaching functions, it could push the system towards an unwelcome degree of selectivity in research funding, and could promote a divide between "research and teaching" and "teaching only" staff. In addition, it is recommended that new funding and low interest loans for research projects and equipment are made available, together with a new arts and humanities research council with enhanced funding. The Report expresses strong concern about the research infrastructure and funding levels. While noting the diversity of funding agencies for research, from charities through to the European Union, it places the responsibility on the Government to resolve these problems. The Report also emphatically rejects the idea of 'teaching only' institutions, reflecting the opinions the Committee gathered that "such an institution would simply not be a 'university' in any legitimate use of that term" (11.60). One weakness of the Report is that, in the field of research as elsewhere, it recognises the importance of the industrial sector's contribution and proposes bridges which might be built from the institutions to industry, but it is insufficiently explicit about the actual responsibilities of businesses.

The Committee made some useful recommendations on the governance of institutions building on the work of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (set up by the Major Government to defuse the numerous cases of corruption in public life in the early 1990s). Dearing's recommendations include the strengthening of staff and student representation on institutional Gov-

erning bodies, and protection for so-called “whistle-blowers”.

The Report’s emphasis on the need to sustain the link between scholarship and teaching in higher education is welcome, and can play an important part in promoting quality in an increasingly diverse system. Dearing proposes a number of other approaches to quality protection, including a new UK wide framework of higher education qualifications at eight levels from sub-degree to doctoral level, linked to credit points and with clearer use of qualifications titles. The Report also recommends a number of tasks for the newly consolidated Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Two of these tasks are of particular significance. The Committee was impressed by the progress made in Australia over the last ten years to establish an academic standards programme leading to a national approach to standards (10.61, 10.62) and recommends the QAA be given a similar role. Secondly, a more pro-active role in respect of franchised courses is envisaged for the QAA, to ensure that higher education courses franchised to higher education are of an acceptable standard. ‘Serial Franchising’ would be outlawed, so that franchisees have only one higher education partner. (The Report does not address the widespread concern that franchising higher education institutions sometimes ‘top slice’ the funding of franchised courses to an extent which may jeopardise the capacity of the franchisee institutions to deliver a quality product).

Interestingly, the Report refers to the past work of the Higher Education Quality Council (to be subsumed by the QAA) on the auditing of collaborative provision in the UK and overseas. The Report says:

...as far as we are aware, the UK is the only country that conducts audits of its international collaborative provision. More must be made of this as a positive point for UK higher education internationally. (10.78).

The Report envisages significant increases in all forms of international collaboration, particularly through communications technology.

Obviously franchising is a key element in the extended regional and local role of higher education institutions envisaged in the Report. Inter-institutional collaboration between higher education institutions themselves will also be a key point of the Dearing model, whether for research and scholarship, the sharing of expensive equipment or the development of joint teaching programmes. Dearing also places great importance on the role of higher education institutions in local economies and labour markets, including attracting inward investment.

The Report’s references to lifelong learning, access and community development are particularly welcome to NATFHE, which represents the new universities and higher education colleges which have traditionally promoted those threads within higher education provision.

It is a pity that, this chapter of the Report lacks concrete proposals. Its weak position on part-time students is particularly disappointing; for example, while “attracted” to the idea of equitable treatment between full-time and part-time student fees (17.53), the Committee apparently felt unable to make this a formal recommendation, although some of its proposals relating to the social security system would help part-time students. This is inadequate, given that future growth in higher education, particularly lifelong learning, will largely be through a great increase in part-time study.

Finance

Unlike the Robbins Report in 1963, which was largely driven by the post-war demographic boom, Dearing’s key preoccupation is finance. The Report quotes the forecast by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that, by 1999/2000, seventy eight institutions in England (55% of the total) would be in financial deficit. Severe redundancies to meet the financial cuts of 6.5% required over the next 2 years are already in progress. (17.3). Against this background, the Dearing proposals on the student contribution to higher education, and on student financial support, were the subject of considerable prior speculation. In the event, the Government pre-empted Dearing by producing firm proposals of its own a week before publication of the Report : while accepting the broad principle of a student contribution to higher education funding, Education Secretary David Blunkett sought to mitigate the effects of its application by replacing the flat £1000 fee proposed by Dearing with a means tested fee, and replacing Dearing’s recommended mix of grants and loans with a loan system (with income - contingent repayments), and with some improved safeguards for the poorest students.

Public reaction to these proposals has been more mild than it would have been a few years ago. There is widespread acceptance that there must now be more fundamental change, including a new look at how students are funded and the new assumption that they will contribute to the costs of their higher education. Dearing reflects the Government’s own view, and the often reluctant acceptance by many higher education bodies, that students have to contribute more. This is the policy of both Labour and Conservative parties and, in the debate on the Kennedy Report, the relatively ‘privileged’ treatment of higher education students compared to further and continuing education students has been highlighted. However, given that the proposals will heavily hit middle class voters, and further disadvantage working class students, Prime Minister Blair can hardly see the measures as a voter-winner, and may be hoping that, by hurrying them forward, the dust will have settled before the next General Election. Many fear that in future years the £1000 ceiling on students’ contribution to fees will ratchet upwards once the principle has been con-

ceded. Also there are doubts, exacerbated by leaks of Government plans, about whether the fees paid through the tax system once graduates' earnings are sufficient will find their way back into higher education. In a further controversial move, the Government is seeking to sell off student debt incurred under the present arrangements, to give a £3 billion boost to the system.

At least Dearing and the Government have rejected for the present the proposals for top-up fees to be levied by certain elite universities, which those institutions had put forward. As far as the Government's proposals are concerned, there is considerable anxiety in the system about both the principle and the impact of the new arrangements which will come into effect in 1998: they have already resulted in a rush by students to get onto courses before the fees policy is introduced. This will possibly lead to 50,000 would-be entrants without places in October, and the Government making some limited concession to stem the outcry and real sense of unfairness about such a quick introduction of the new system.

These decisions by the Government are likely to prove the most difficult and indigestible of the (in this case indirect) outcomes from Dearing. However, Dearing itself recognised the chronic under-funding of higher education, and the need for long term solutions firmly based in the public sector. Again, it is disappointing that the Committee did not extend its recognition of the concrete benefits of higher education to employers to requiring them to meet more of the bill, and to support students' financial costs.

The Government intends to set out its proposals in detail in a White Paper on Lifelong Learning in November. The current indications from the expert advisory group preparing the ground for the White Paper are that it will seek to further redress the balance between further and higher education in favour of increased access and intermediate level studies.

The Union response

The unions in higher education have generally reacted positively to Dearing, although with reservations about the proposals for student contributions to funding and for student support. Unions in this sector, and the trade union movement as a whole, have learnt quickly not to expect many favours from the Blair Government. However, the blatant and aggressive hostility of the Thatcher/Major years has gone, and if the unions have a contribution to make, ministers are willing to listen.

Dearing provides the basis for joint action with the Government and employers in a number of key areas. It would be nonsensical for Government to try to proceed on either accreditation of higher education teachers or the review of salaries without close teacher union involvement. A strong case can and is being made for

participation in the work on governance and management, quality, and other areas where the teachers have a key role. In the UK, and in Europe as a whole, unions are formally "Social Partners": the other key Social Partners, the employers, have been given disappointingly few responsibilities by Dearing, particularly given the financial gap which needs to be plugged. One of the biggest and least tangible aspects which the teachers' unions must engage is the shift in the culture of post-school education. "The Learning Society" was already in danger of becoming a vacuous cliché when Dearing borrowed it - it is to be hoped that the Report now gives the UK system the impetus to create a genuine Learning Society. Teachers and their representative organisations must grasp the opportunity to shape the new system, and to ensure that our members are able to make the most of it. For many teachers, this will mean a significant change of role, with the trend over recent years away from conventional teaching to a diverse range of activities within the teaching/learning process. For many teachers, this will be a difficult challenge: for their unions, it will also mean a new range of industrial relations and professional tasks.

The Dearing Report has vindicated many of the arguments which the staff unions in higher education have made during the long Thatcher/Major years. In particular, it had important things to say on funding levels, access and lifelong learning, accountability and academic freedom. However, the new funding regime which the Government has put in place on the back of Dearing is highly controversial in the UK context, and will be judged by its effects on would-be students' choices, and its effects on access and equal opportunity. On some key areas, like the responsibilities of business and employers, and a better deal for part-time students, the Report says the right thing, but then pulls its punches. The proposal for a one-off review of pay reflects a sub-text of the whole Report, which recognises the importance of staff, and the fact that their salaries have fallen behind those of staff in comparable industries. Teachers' unions may be forgiven for believing this is of great importance for the acceptance of the Dearing proposals as a whole. It is now for the unions, in the universities and colleges, to carry forward the debate on all the issues raised by Dearing and shift that debate from rhetoric to reality.

Selective reading list

Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (The Dearing Report). July 1997 HMSO, Norwich UK.

Report of the Widening Participation Committee of the Further Education Funding Council, *Learning Works*. (The Kennedy Report) July 1997 FEFC, Coventry UK.

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Equitable education for an equitable society

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In the wake of 1996 and the most regressive higher education package ever implemented in Australia, the process of the West Review has forced those fighting for public education to return to first principles underpinning the arguments against current orthodoxy in public policy. In doing so, we have been reminded that such a position rests primarily upon social objectives. The basis of championing public education is liberty and equality—social, political and economic— and not primarily economic growth or international competitiveness.

Aims of education

Democracy by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every citizen can govern and that society places him [sic], even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this. Political democracy tends towards a coincidence of the rulers and the ruled (in the sense of government with the consent of the governed), ensuring for each non-ruler a free training in the skills and general technical preparation necessary to that end.

Antonio Gramsci

As recognised by Gramsci, democracy itself is underpinned by accessible, quality education which places the populace in a position in which they can win and enjoy their liberty. This is an onerous responsibility to place upon an institution such as the education system which has long played a central role in replicating and reinforcing privilege. However, it is a role which the education system must play if democracy is to achieve the meaning which Gramsci rightly attributes to it.

There can be no doubt that power and wealth are unequally distributed within society. Given that educational access and quality currently play a fundamental role in reinforcing and replicating this inequality, it follows that rectification of the imbalance in access to education is fundamental to efforts at creating social equity. Social equity in this context includes both of Gramsci's prerequisites for democracy, in the form of material opportunity and political liberation.

In describing this more sophisticated meaning of democracy and assigning a central role for education in its attainment, Gramsci offers a qualitatively different

vision of the aims of the higher education sector to those which have achieved orthodoxy in recent years. He articulates a vision which contradicts the role which education plays in ranking the population for the labour market through the conferring of ever higher level credentials which are ever more specific.

Education has acted as an extremely effective means of creating and maintaining social hierarchies, behind the veil of the apparently neutral values of merit. By rationing access to a system which offers such important positional advantages in the labour market and social standing, it has been possible to not only prevent the use of education for the liberation of the large majority, but to actively use it to ensure their continued subjugation. To make the shift from a system of social selection and ranking to one of empowerment, education would need to relinquish its role as a powerful force of social conservatism and become an agent of change. This involves fundamental changes to both access policies and curricula.

Even the Martin Committee (1964) recognised the fundamental social value of higher education in the construction of an equitable polity when it reported that education is '... the very stuff of a free and democratic society'. (p. 4) The Committee undoubtedly conceived very differently of democracy and freedom to Gramsci, particularly the extent to which its opportunities should be made universally available to the population. However, in their own conservative manner, they endorsed the principle of education as a great liberator of the individual, if not of society.

If education is to attempt to fulfil its democratic potential it must incorporate the extension of individual and collective liberty by providing participants with a deeper understanding of their society and the ability to influence it for the better. It must incorporate a knowledge of self and an understanding of the community. It must equip all of its participants with analytical skills and, at its very best, it should attempt to instil a lust for knowledge and for the constant questioning of accepted norms.

Education, in all its forms, must aim to serve all members of the community, both those who directly participate in the process and those who do not. Even in

a system in which higher education is universally available, participation will not be universal. To this end, access to the education system is equally as important as its accountability to the community at large.

The advancement of social equity and the intellectual liberation of all people are the most fundamental and important benefits which education can offer any society. A society in which all members are able to meaningfully contribute in a wide variety of ways is a fundamental aim of any democratic community. This is not to discount the economic benefits which education offers, however these will flow from a system which champions democratic liberation, whilst a system which aims solely at the creation of economic growth is unlikely to liberate the wider population. Simply, if the creation of a more equitable society is not the explicit and primary aim, the education system will inevitably serve to replicate social and economic advantage and, therefore, disadvantage.

The educational process

Within this paradigm true education is fundamentally about learning to learn. It is the process by which we are able to challenge any set of accepted principles—be they in chemistry, politics or any other discipline—and to independently inquire and extend our individual, and therefore collective, understanding of the world and society. It has the potential to equip the population with the ability to both increase the material comforts which are available to its members and to ensure more equitable distribution of these resources, whilst simultaneously providing individuals with the knowledge and confidence to culturally and politically enrich their own lives and those of their community. Education is about self-determination and liberation—allowing people control over their own lives.

The analytical and liberating nature of quality education is central to its value to society and underpins the rationale for accessibility. It is impossible to divorce the availability of education from its content. In this vein an education system which does not fulfil the criteria of being both accessible and liberating cannot be condoned. To provide one without the other produces a result which is unacceptable and all too common—the replication of existing power structures. The natural result of critical evaluation should be a vision of an improved society—the creation of new ways and directions for society, not just technical breakthrough for the economic advantage for the minority. Curricula must encourage the development of people able and willing to challenge the *status quo* and to develop a critical and questioning community—this is the essence of the democratic liberation of individuals and societies. The role of curricula was succinctly expressed by Shaull (Friere, 1971) when he wrote that:

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process.

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 14)

In order for curricula to facilitate the practice of freedom, it must incorporate all of the critical and analytical aspects discussed above, in addition to becoming increasingly culturally inclusive and relevant. So long as curricula are reflective of the dominant cultures and exclude the experiences of those groups of people who have been under-represented in tertiary education, the system cannot help but serve as a means of inculcation into the accepted norms of the ruling class. By incorporating cultural diversity within the curriculum, a large step will be taken in systemically addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups, in contrast to the current approach of treating non-conformity as deviance which needs to be normalised. This aspect of the quest to transform the education system has been most sadly lacking from progressive education campaigns in recent times.

In the last decade debates surrounding education policy have focused almost exclusively on access to education—thus focusing on the means rather than the end, and even then only part of the means. Whilst this is entirely understandable in the political climate of decreased public funding, it has been to the detriment of public discussion by ignoring the rationale for support for high levels of participation in education—the desire to create a more socially and economically equitable society. By focusing on the vehicle of creating equity without fully explaining the aim of the system, only half the argument has been presented, leaving it disjointed and, at times, contradictory. Calls for an accessible education system flow from a desire to create equity within society, rather than for its own sake. Equitable access should be promoted in the quest for equitable outcomes, in doing so the arguments become stronger and more coherent.

Communal and individual benefits of education

Having highlighted the manner in which accessible education underpins the basic principles of democracy, there can be no doubt that benefits associated with participation in education—both material and intellectual—do accrue to the individual. It is for precisely this reason that it is imperative that all people are able to participate equally and thereby access these benefits. If no benefits were gained by the individual the need for equitable access would be greatly reduced as lack of

participation would have no negative outcomes for any given individual, only for the society as a whole.

Despite this acknowledgment, even the Martin Committee (1964) believed that "... the material benefits of education, which accrue to the individual concerned, are only a fraction of the total benefits accruing to society". (p. 5) This point is even more relevant now, in light of the increase in participation in higher education which has taken place in the intervening years. In the context of much higher employer expectations of the educational attainments of their workers and far greater numbers of graduates in the labour market, the relative positional advantage derived through participation in postsecondary education is far smaller than it was in the time of the Martin Committee. Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to expect that the personal financial benefits derived from participation in higher education are even less significant than they were in 1964.

The benefits enjoyed by the individual are currently exaggerated by policy makers in order to justify ever increasing private contributions by participants in higher education. Notions of individual benefit are currently constructed within the narrow conceptual framework of human capital theory as posited by extreme neo-classical economists, notably Milton Friedman. Marginson (1986) cites attempts by Friedman to gain currency for his neo-classical views on education when he wrote that it should be possible:

...to 'buy' a share in an individual's earning prospects; to advance him [sic] the funds needed to finance his [sic] training on condition that he [sic] agrees to pay the lender a specified fraction of his future earnings...There seems no legal obstacle to private contracts of this kind, even though they are economically equivalent to the purchase of a share in an individual's earning capacity and thus to partial slavery.

This frank and extreme position is the ideology which underpins many of the market mechanisms which exist within the higher education sector thirty years after it was written by Friedman. Indeed, the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) clearly constitutes such an agreement, albeit between the government and the student rather than a private individual and the student.

This view is consistent with the current subordination of social considerations to a determination to ensure that economic growth is boundless. The education system is an excellent example of the degree to which economic interests (in particular a never ending quest for expansion) have come to dominate all facets of society (Marginson 1993, p. 65).

There can be no doubt that such policies do not work in the interests of the education system or the society which it should be serving. Such free market individualism works against the interests of the community and is

entirely contradictory to the role which education should play. As Marginson (1986) clearly stated:

The implementation of the free market policies suggested by Friedman and others would radically weaken general/non-vocational education (necessary for both economic and social reasons), lower participation rates, reduce the quality of courses and increase social inequality. The free market in education ultimately conflicts with political democracy, social rights and real individual freedom. (p. iii)

This statement has proved to be sadly prophetic, with the situation continually worsening.

Integral to the education system playing a socially useful role is the recognition of the value which it can offer the community. Accordingly, it is not possible to realise the potential which education has to enhance equity without first rejecting the role of the market in the provision and structure of the education system. Simply, market systems do not value equity. The purpose for their implementation is not to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. As Roderick West stated, markets have no social conscience. They have no place in the vision of education articulated here.

The structure of the system

In order to achieve equitable outcomes through education, the structure of the system must be non-hierarchical. Fundamental to the role of education described above is the need for all institutions to offer a uniformly high quality education to all students. It is not enough to ensure that access is equitable, as access to sub-standard education is little better than no access at all. It is therefore of equal importance that no institutions are consigned to the role of under-resourced providers unable to offer education which fosters analytical and creative thinking. This is clearly a difficult task, given the relative status and resources available to the range of institutions already within the sector.

It is essential that no institutions gain a competitive advantage over others as a result of their age or perceived standing in the community. Such competition is anathema to true educational values. There can be no justification for the fostering of competition between and within institutions of higher learning. The extension, transmission and preservation of knowledge must become the guiding principle of each institution. This must become the clear and compelling motivation for all those who work within or have contact with the sector.

It is clear that a 'level playing field' does not currently exist between institutions¹ and, as such, that if an equitable system is a desirable outcome, active use of public policy is the only means of achieving it. It is equally clear that the current trend of deregulation is working in the opposite direction and is assisting older, more prestigious institutions to entrench and accentuate

their positions. There can be little doubt about the intention of institutions such as those in the Group of Eight² when the University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Gilbert, makes statements such as: “we do need the gaps between institutions to be able to get wider, and quite quickly”. (Armitage 1997, p. 24) The explicit aim of such institutions is to increase the levels of resources available to themselves, particularly in research funding, to the obvious detriment of all other institutions in the system. This is a clear example of the manner in which competition leads to self interest, which is rational and works to the betterment of the individual institution, but which detracts from the collective good.

The most immediate and pressing example of such institutional self interest as a result of government deregulation is the introduction of up front fee paying places within public universities. It is not co-incidental that five of the eight institutions to have approved up front fees for 1998 are members of the Group of Eight and that only one is entirely regional in location. This is an excellent example of the manner in which competition and deregulation will serve the interests of the elite institutions and challenge the viability of some institutions, particularly newer and regional universities.

Whilst many criticisms remain of the Dawkins reforms which took place in the late 1980s, the principles underpinning the Unified National System (UNS) are undoubtedly sound and equitable. The attempt to foster a system which encourages a flattening of hierarchies between institutions is both worthy and desirable. Whilst the Dawkins reforms and the creation of the UNS has not fully achieved this aim, it has played a vital role in ensuring a level of consistency across the sector at a time when there was fast growth in the number of universities. Despite the fact that clear status hierarchies exist between institutions, these are currently relatively small given the vast differences in the age and level of resources available across the sector.

The class divide—universities and vocational education and training

Educational hierarchies are not only present within the university sector, but also between universities and Vocational Education and Training (VET). In light of the increasingly important role which higher education plays in the lifelong learning process, the interrelation between universities and VET is of growing importance. As such, it is vital that the hierarchical barriers between the sectors be minimised rather than exacerbated. Increasingly, there is a need to move freely between differing modes of education many times throughout the lifelong education process.

This principle is both equitable and educationally sound. Education and training are inextricably linked

and accordingly the traditional delineation is extremely arbitrary. Educationally no distinction needs to exist between education and training. Well resourced, high quality “training” should incorporate elements which challenge accepted theories and principles, nurturing a desire to continue to learn (both formally and informally). Likewise, virtually all forms of “education” incorporate instruction in specific skills. This is most true for many of the most traditionally high prestige areas of teaching in universities such as the medical, legal, architectural and engineering professions. This suggests that the identification of disciplines as “education” or “training” is determined not on educational grounds but on social and economic grounds. These decisions are strongly influenced by the relative prestige attached to various skills and related professions and the level of resources which are made available to teach various courses. Whilst vocationalism must not overwhelm the educational experience, neither must it be excluded. Importantly, however, this is equally true for all educational sectors and is not confined to universities or VET.

Given that the divide between what has been deemed education and training is not educational, another rationale must be established. The traditional role of education has been one of maintaining relative social position. This must be recognised in order to fully appreciate the anti-educational delineation between education and training and therefore between educational sectors. In essence the divide between sectors has been based on social class. This phenomenon is not new. Gramsci recognised it sixty five years ago when he wrote: “The fundamental division into classical and vocational (professional) schools was a rational formula: the vocational school for the instrumentalist classes, the classical school for the dominant classes and the intellectuals.” (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1972, p. 26) This has served two purposes, in both maintaining the social, economic and political advantage of the ‘dominant classes’ whilst simultaneously minimising the expenditure required to provide basic labour market skills to the workforce.

To this end the abolition of the binary divide between universities and Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) was an extremely positive step in the development of a coherent higher education system. It may be best viewed as the first stage in a longer term plan to fully integrate postschool education into a seamless system which marries analytical thinking with the acquisition of specific skills and which is accessible to all. This would constitute an extremely influential step towards creating a system which is capable of delivering the aims outlined above, and delivering them to a much larger proportion of the population.

Accordingly, we need a system of higher education which is not only accessible to the greatest possible

number of people, but which is also of a consistently high standard in order to achieve the overall aims articulated above. In order for this to be achieved it is essential to minimise hierarchies both within existing structures and between educational sectors.

A long way from equity

In contrast to these aims the higher education sector is increasingly focused too narrowly on the needs of commerce and industry at the expense of the community and social cohesion. This situation is exemplified by the disproportionate funding cuts which have been experienced by many of the less vocationally oriented teaching departments at a number of institutions around the country.

Education must be so much more than highly skilled sites of research and development for corporate interests. The corporate aspect of activity within the education sector has grown to the point whereby it dominates the priorities of many sections of universities. This is counter to community interests and does nothing to promote democracy.

It is clear that the education system which we currently have is not even a distant cousin of that articulated here. This is hardly surprising, given that the aims of the current system do not bear any resemblance to those which would be championed in the quest for social equity. Rather, the current system's very *raison d'être* is the efficient social ranking and transmission of the necessary technical skills to maintain existing power structures. Until such time as these are no longer the aims of tertiary education, we do not have any real chance of creating a system which has any hope of contributing to the creation of a truly equitable society.

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Footnotes

1. For example, 'The Go8 have an advantage in attracting private funds for research over public money. If translated to a situation where all higher education research was funded from private sources, the Go8 in 1994 would have taken \$28.08 million from the non-Go8 universities - equivalent to the combined income from all sources for research of the bottom 14 earners' Jim Wellsmore, 'Investment in Higher Education: The Public-Private Mix' in *Research and Education Staff of Student Organisations 1996 National Conference: Papers and Minutes*, University of Queensland Union, May 1997, p. 13.
2. The self proclaimed Group of Eight includes Adelaide University, Australian National University, Monash University, University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, University of Sydney and University of Western Australia.

Rethinking university management

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Australian universities in the late 1990s are in a schizophrenic condition. On the one hand, they are eager entrepreneurs pursuing the international student dollar literally to the ends of the earth. On the other, they remain very traditional institutions which the waves of public sector reform of the 1980s and 1990s have barely touched. It is an unstable and potentially risky combination.

It would be a pity if, in its preoccupation with the big policy issues contained in its terms of reference, the West review overlooks the importance of reform and modernisation of university management. Without it, universities will struggle to meet the expectations held of them by government, the public and students. For those working in universities, the issue is even more immediate - career prospects, working conditions, resources and even jobs depend critically upon good decision-making.

The Hoare Committee, which reported on higher education management in December 1995, found plenty to be concerned about. While some institutions rated well, many were hampered by poor governance, a lack of strategic planning and people management practices which left much to be desired (Hoare 1995). I may have missed something, but there seems to have been little sense of collective urgency in implementing the committee's recommendations in the 18 months since the report was released.

It is important to distinguish what needs to happen from 'managerialism'. It is easy to be disheartened by meaningless mission statements, strategic plans which are not worth the paper they are written upon, and endless requirements for data collection and reporting. But the fact that many institutions are mesmerised by the form rather than the substance of management does not mean that the whole project should be abandoned.

Program management and budgeting have much to offer universities, yet have not been widely implemented. Contracting out (which might go some way to improving the generally woeful level of internal services in universities) is rarely employed. While EEO exists in principle, the reality is that academia is light years behind the rest of the public sector (and even behind parts of the private sector) in giving a fair go to women.

University decision-making structures encourage lots of fights about the little things, while the important

decisions - such as shutting down departments or opening a campus in Bangla Desh - are made by senior managers who may or may not know what they are doing. Given that there is no return to the halcyon days, when there was time and money for just about everything, working academics are faced with a brutal choice. Either we support moves to make university management more professional and more accountable, or we lose any effective say in the governance of the institutions upon which our livelihoods depend.

In my view, there are four key areas for reform:

- financial management
- training and professional development
- debureaucratisation; and
- accountability.

Financial management

In the past, it probably did not matter that university financial management was a closed book to most academics. Teaching loads were less heavy, government funding, while never particularly generous, was munificent compared to what it has become, and the modus operandi of the institution was reasonably settled and clear.

Resources were, by and large, sufficient to do the job you were supposed to do. University bureaucracies could be maddeningly slow and inefficient, but there were fewer students and less complex courses as compared with now. Your own, and your colleagues' jobs were not dependent upon attracting a certain number each year of international students.

Today, an ill-advised offshore investment, a centre that runs up debts, a contract whose costs blow out, has implications for everyone. Universities are taking on a welter of new things, often without being able to make good estimates of the costs of the operations upon which they are embarking. Nor are they well-equipped to measure costs even after the operation has commenced, making it almost impossible to establish whether or not profits are being made. Universities are acting like businesses, but without business-style planning, management accounting, performance indicators or monitoring.

Where deficits must be dealt with, similar problems emerge. There are no guarantees that downsizing will be undertaken fairly or even efficiently. While internal politics undoubtedly play a role, in many cases decisions are made on very crude criteria because there is insufficient information available to do better. Few universities have management information systems which enable different activities to be compared on a cost-benefit basis. Nor are decision-making processes well-suited to determining priorities in a clear and transparent way.

Given the enormous changes that have occurred in public sector financial management in the past decade, it seems surprising that universities have not been in the vanguard of reform. After all, in important respects, universities are inherently more like businesses than are many government departments and agencies. Universities produce a recognisable 'output' (accredited students), for which they are paid, either directly or indirectly. DEETYA has long been, in effect, a purchaser of university services. And universities themselves are able literally to sell their product, both internationally and domestically, with relatively few restrictions.

There are important questions to be answered about the extent to which the university sector should be further deregulated. But whatever their role or roles, there is no logic in argument that universities should not move as rapidly as possible towards more sophisticated forms of financial planning and management. Those who see some link between a concern for non-market values in education and poor or inchoate financial management are deluding themselves.

There was never a collegiate nirvana, in which wise collective decisions were made about financial matters. While government funding formulae were applied across the sector, where resources actually ended up, in terms of teaching numbers and capital allocations, was another matter entirely. At its worst, resource allocation became a political process in which the strongest and the most adroit, not necessarily the most worthy, won the day.

The inefficiencies, not to mention the inequities, in this kind of system are obvious. Without adequate cost data, work allocations are often hit or miss. For example, it seems that the additional costs of teaching the vastly increased enrolments which characterised the late 1980s and early 1990s in Australia (and elsewhere) were absorbed by teaching staff, and in particular by those (usually the least senior) who were saddled with the biggest units. This would have been particularly the case in those universities which use contact time (rather than student numbers) as a way of apportioning work. In not giving more resources to bigger units, university managers were in effect saying that the marginal cost of each additional student was zero.

Teaching economies of scale are largely an illusion in universities. In theory, it is true that a lecture to two

people takes as long to prepare as one to two hundred. In practice, the two situations are completely different. Lecturing to large groups requires more preparation, and uses up far more energy. It is also only part of the workload in running a unit.

Even if tutorials have been abandoned, the lecturer-in-charge must still somehow administer work and assessments. The more students you have got to teach and administer, the harder you work. The composition of the students is also important. The more undergraduate students you have, the harder you work. The more international students you have, the harder you work. The less competent and more uninterested your students are, the harder you work, unless you give up on them completely. Yet these additional costs are borne by the academics (usually younger and female) who are saddled with these classes.

While some universities have budgetary systems which are participatory and transparent, others are notably opaque. This opacity may serve particular interests in some cases. In others, it is more a matter of allocations being driven incrementally or by decision-making formulae, which the smart money quickly cottons on to. For example, where inter-faculty funding is determined by arbitrary relativities, resources can be doubled by moving from a faculty at the low end of the scale to one that is more favoured. If HECS places are being moved to undergraduate level, a good way of getting them back is to recruit more research students - and so on.

As Bourn has pointed out, a considerable process of development is required to arrive at and to apply financial, rather than administrative, criteria to resource allocation. Like their Australian counterparts, UK universities did not, traditionally, make extensive use of financial budgets in allocating and controlling resources (Bourn 1994, 13). Staffing allocations were made by a central committee on the basis of staff-student ratios considered desirable for particular departments. Since the mid-1970s, however, more and more universities have moved to faculty-based, one-line cost centres. Initially, the allocation of funds between faculties was determined with reference to past expenditure patterns. The more advanced universities have moved well beyond this approach, calculating both revenues and costs on a 'real' faculty basis, and establishing appropriate transfer prices for service teaching across faculty boundaries, and for the provision of central services such as administration, information technology and library facilities (Tomkins and Mawditt 1994).

Universities are complicated places in which to establish and assign fixed costs. Apportioning revenues when student choices cross faculty boundaries is also difficult. But important benefits flow from making the effort. It becomes possible to see who is subsidising whom, and to make better-informed judgements about priorities.

Closer attention to financial considerations might, for example, help to lessen the current sector-wide fixation with research, which is forcing many academics who would prefer to concentrate on teaching to 'take up' research. If the opportunity cost of staff time currently expended on research were compared with the financial returns to the institution, the net benefits could well be negative. Teaching is a far more remunerative activity. (Of course, the incentives to individuals, in terms of promotion are often the reverse - promotions are related to publications and to professional kudos.) Research enriches teaching and the wider community, so financial considerations should not be paramount, but they are important. At the very least, pushing staff into doing research who would prefer solely to teach makes little sense.

While the Hoare Review did not closely survey the financial management practices of Australian universities, it would appear that recognisable forms of management accounting are few and far between. Cost centres (without the revenue side of the equation) are about as far as it goes. The Hoare Report found disturbing instances of universities with poor financial planning; funds allocation using inappropriate or out-of-date methods; little or no attention paid to risk management and inadequate management information systems (Hoare 1995, 90).

'One-line' operating grants from government should in theory give universities considerable flexibility in how money is spent. In practice, with administratively, rather than financially driven resource allocation, there is little opportunity for true devolution of decision-making. While Deans become adroit at shifting money around, for example when the staffing profile changes, there is not much flexibility for making trade-offs. Heads of Departments are even more constrained. One eminent Professor who had served as Head of Department in a number of universities once told me that the only fund he had any control over was the 'tea money'. With a multitude of responsibilities and few, if any, powers, it is little wonder that the Head of Department position is rarely sought after.

As budgetary constraints have begun to bite harder, universities are having to make very tough decisions, often without adequate information upon which to base them. Some are slicing off whole departments because of falling enrolments. Others are hoping the generation of additional income will get them off the hook.

In an atmosphere of crisis, central administrations can hardly be blamed for taking whatever measures are available to them to staunch deficits. But these kinds of adjustments are unlikely to serve the broader public interest, which requires decision-making of an inter-organisational kind. More centralisation is emphatically not the way to achieve such a perspective, and I doubt

whether DEETYA itself would want to assume this kind of responsibility.

The point I am making is that, with better financial data, it becomes possible for universities collaboratively to achieve better academic outcomes than they could on their own. For example, it would be feasible to make decisions on a field of study basis, transcending institutional and even regional boundaries. How many (to take one example) full-blown political science programs (ie from undergraduate to doctoral level) does Australia need? Would it be possible to create, by mutual agreement, one or two fully-resourced graduate schools to which academics from other institutions could be seconded?

Some of these things are starting to happen, and other kinds of co-operation will be pushed along by customers wanting higher-calibre teaching and more resources than individual institutions are able to provide. The point I am making is that it is in the interests of academics and general staff that budgetary, accounting and financial management practices of universities be modernised and made more transparent. It is only when this is done that realistic discussion of priorities can take place. Without information, there can be no real participation by university staff in decision-making. Nor can there be any real accountability of management to staff and other stakeholders.

As with any kind of change, resources are required to figure out what to do, and then to do it. For many institutions, accounting software and even computer systems will need to be upgraded in order to generate useful management information. The Hoare Committee recommended, very sensibly, that some resources be made available to universities willing to improve their management practices. But the urgency has to be there in the first place.

Training and professional development

While urging the value of education upon everyone else, universities overlook its importance for themselves. This blind spot is, perhaps, an understandable manifestation of the well-known paradox: unions are the worst employers; dentists' children have the worst teeth; archivists are hopeless at documenting their own activities; and universities are poor at training and developing their staff. The costs mount up over time. Those who stay feel short-changed; those who leave take their skills and their enthusiasm with them.

A letter was published recently in the *ANU Reporter* from two former postdoctoral students, both dedicated teachers and researchers, who had finally grown tired of the gypsy-like existence to which a succession of short-term contracts in a variety of institutions had reduced them. Both had joined the Australian Public Service where they found, to their surprise, that they were

treated with respect as individuals, their developmental needs were taken seriously, and they were treated as professional persons of value to the organisation. They were also paid a great deal more.

If Australian universities wish to continue to be credible players on the world scene, much more attention will have to be paid to meeting the needs of their employees, and to keeping their best people. After an initial peripatetic period, most academics spend most of their working lives in the one institution, which makes it all the more imperative that their developmental needs are met.

Unfortunately, a somewhat brutalist attitude to staff and students alike seems to be part of the culture of Australian universities. (Not being valued as a student underlies at least some of Amanda Vanstone's well-known antipathy to our sector). Now that it is not done to be nasty to students, the offhandedness is concentrated on the academic side. It is a little like school bullying. Those who suffered from it are determined that the next in line will not escape, and so the cycle perpetuates itself. In some cases, exceptional academic leaders try to ensure that every member of staff is given an equal chance to meet his or her goals. But such figures are all too rare.

Academics are expected to see to their own professional development by organising study or research programs when they are 'let out' of their institutions for six months every three years or so. Many do not take up this opportunity because they cannot afford to. The days when a lecturer's salary would support a family in another country are long gone, and most universities contribute little or no help. Shorter stints are favoured by some, but invariably by the time you have sorted out the host institution's computer system, it is time to come home again.

It is difficult to work out what to do or where to go, especially when you are just starting. Unless you have acquired a friendly mentor who will share their contacts with you, you must go 'cold calling'. Some sort of professional structure for staff development would be an improvement. Again, as with financial management, it is difficult to see how the traditional way of doing things serves the interests of the majority of academics. For general staff, with neither a professional community to belong to, nor (in most cases) any kind of structured training, the position may be even worse.

Universities must be the only modern institutions (the churches may be another example) where most senior academic managers (heads of department, deans, deputy vice-chancellors and vice-chancellors) are awarded their positions on the basis of academic attainment, rather than management expertise.

Senior management and employer associations bemoan what they see as a lack of flexibility in managing

people in universities. To a significant extent, however, employee resistance to freeing up the system derives from a well-founded fear of being left high and dry.

Whatever the reason for their misfortune, academics have little chance of finding alternative work if they are offloaded by their employer. In the public service, you can be redeployed. In the private sector, there will generally be other firms offering jobs in your line of work. As an academic, unless you have specialised in an area of high demand, there is little chance you will find a job in your field in another institution. You must either retrain (not an appealing prospect when you spent over twenty years qualifying for your previous job) or accept redundancy.

Universities are victims of the fact that academics and general staff spend many years, and often their entire working lives, stuck in the one institution with little prospect even for obtaining work experience elsewhere. Secondments, even to other universities, are rare and opportunities to spend a year or two working in industry or government virtually non-existent.

There are no easy solutions to these kinds of questions. Many academics strenuously resist the application of people management processes in universities, seeing such things as unnecessary limitations upon professional freedom. I suspect, though, that provided the context was a positive one of facilitating development rather than simply monitoring performance, there would be considerable support for change.

Debureaucratisation

Academics are resigned to bureaucracy. It seems part of the air we breathe in universities. To an outsider, even one from another part of the public sector, it can seem quite extraordinary - the layers of approval; the decisions which are referred up the line to the vice-chancellor; the committees which agonise over the smallest things, while the real decisions are made - who knows where?

Universities are necessarily highly bureaucratic institutions. They must keep detailed records on students who undertake a large number of different units in the course of doing a degree. There are postgraduate applications to consider and decide upon. Pressure from students for more accountability has led to involved procedures for reviewing final results. Complaints to the Ombudsman strike fear into the hearts of administrators. There are more directives to staff, and tighter controls.

It is a paradoxical situation. From the centre, the university appears to be an anarchy, impossible to direct, let alone to control. From the coalface, there is a stifling sense of not being trusted to make the smallest decisions. Relations between academic and general staff in these situations can often become strained. Academics feel, not unnaturally, that general staff are there to help them do their jobs, and not to insist upon procedure and

formalities. For their part, general staff become intensely irritated at the vagueness and procrastination of many academics.

These difficulties are compounded by academic insistence upon doing what, in any other organisation, would be routine administrative jobs. Academics cannot have it both ways. We cannot complain about impossible administrative burdens on the one hand, while on the other, refusing to give up work which could easily be done by a trained administrative officer. Many matters which are said to require 'academic judgement' require that quality only once - when a policy is set. Very often, it is a reluctance to specify clear criteria which could then be applied by someone else, rather than genuine complexity, which leads to a good deal of decision-making being done in time-consuming committees, or by over-worked course conveners.

There are many antidotes to excessive bureaucracy. Simplifying procedures as much as possible is one, fairly obvious, remedy. Assessing the performance and even *raison d'être* of committees is another. If committees are using up the time of the university's most senior people without being used to make key decisions, their role in the decision-making process should be re-examined. So-called 'advisory' committees are a particularly noxious breed. They should be management committees, or be done away with.

So-called managerialism need not be the enemy of participatory decision-making. Faculty Boards, which are moribund in many Universities, could be given a new lease of life if they were actually used to discuss and to ratify decisions of consequence. But if Faculty Boards are to perform this role, they require professional secretariats to perform analysis and research and to keep business moving between meetings. They also require executive officers who are trained to prepare and present budgets and to implement decisions.

University bureaucracies were designed for a slower, less demanding era. They are not well-suited to important tasks such as improving the quality of service to students and to staff, because jobs are often too rigidly defined to permit the kinds of coordination that are needed. Controls which are time-consuming or onerous can be counter-productive, leading decision-makers to 'jump first and worry about the implementation later', rather than carefully assessing new proposals and ventures.

As public institutions, universities must pay greater attention to due process than is the case in the private sector. But greater flexibility can be achieved in essentially hierarchical organisations, provided managers know what they are doing, and have the trust of their staff. At its best, so-called managerialism can lead to a useful clarification of roles and expectations, and the revitalisa-

tion of staff overwhelmed by routine and underwhelmed by their job prospects.

Accountability

To whom are university managers accountable? Vice-chancellors would no doubt argue that they are caught in a veritable web of accountabilities - to their governing bodies, to the courts and administrative tribunals, and ultimately to state or federal parliaments.

But the vice-chancellorship is a peculiar position - powerful in some hands and not in others. The vice-chancellor's responsibilities in managerial terms are akin to those of the CEO of a statutory authority, but the collegiate heritage of universities means that the lines of accountability are far from clear.

Nor are universities readily subsumed into the normal Westminster framework of accountability. They are statutory bodies, but of a special kind. They are legislatively creatures of state government, but if anyone were to suggest that a state minister for education should take responsibility for what is happening in the higher education sector in his state, they would be considered most peculiar. The universities, as we know only too well, are funded by the Commonwealth and by what they can earn by their own exertions. They have never been corporatised (although they are able to incorporate aspects of their activities). Insofar as they remain budget-funded, they are equally at the mercy of federal priorities as are departments of state, although in a less direct way.

The Hoare Report considered that university management should be accountable to the university's council or governing body. But judging from the report's language, Hoare was not optimistic about the ability of councils, in practical terms, to hold managers to account. Many councillors (as is the case with many members of boards of public companies) are not well-versed in the art and science of governance. Those that are may have little real incentive to use their knowledge on behalf of the university's members and clients.

It remains unclear as to what the stakes are in university governance. Will the federal government bail out any institution which makes a disastrous mistake or which fails to get its house in order? The deregulation which has already occurred increases the risk that either or both of these situations could arise. Tenure or no, if any university should fail to survive, its employees will have no more redress than if they worked in the private sector.

Further down the line, it is true that deans and heads of department are supposed to enjoy the confidence of their peers. There are certainly ways of moving out those who do not fill the bill. But it is difficult for peers to judge managerial competence. Universities are yet to adopt the language, let alone the practice, of other parts of the public sector. Performance agreements are rarely used.

Often, no one is quite sure what the occupant of the position is responsible for.

Universities slip through the net of many of the institutions of formal, political accountability. They produce annual reports, and the financial statements within them are signed off by the relevant auditor-general. But universities are rarely put through performance reviews by the auditor. This seems a pity, as reviews directed towards management improvement could be of significant benefit to many institutions. Since responsibility for funding universities was assumed by the Commonwealth, state governments have taken little interest in them, except when Commonwealth decisions look like having regional political repercussions. South Australia is one of the few states which has tried to integrate its universities into a development strategy.

While the Commonwealth holds the purse strings, and wields policy power, it is clear that no Commonwealth minister will formally wear political responsibility for the

problems of any individual institution. So where does the buck stop?

It seems clear that it will stop nowhere unless responsibilities and accountabilities are made clearer. Academics may deride and resist the power of 'management'. But the way forward lies in defining that power and in holding individuals accountable for the exercise of it. Neither Councils at the top, or Faculty Boards and departments at the bottom can perform this role unless much of what is now secret, or at least implicit, is made clear to all.

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Net Notes

Working the Internet: multiple engine searches

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At present, searching the Internet is a time-consuming and often unproductive task. Unless you have found a specific site helpful to your aims and objectives, the search may yield very little that is useful and research energy may better be spent elsewhere unless time and resources are relatively unlimited. The urgency of making any search more efficient and obtaining the most productive outcomes in utilising the net is intensified as some tertiary institutions now place limits on server access time by academic staff. Furthermore, the costs of access time may increase because of proposed changes to fee structures for connection to your server from outside the university (at present the cost of a local call).

A multiple engine search is a more expedient way of gathering data than connecting to a single search site such as Lycos, waiting impatiently for a response before moving on to Alta Vista, and finding the same sites are listed. To find anything from academic papers published in an obscure Japanese journal to the email number of an errant colleague in Hawaii, a multiple engine search saves time, irritation and trust in the electronic media to aid research. Simply put, a multiple engine search is located in a web site or is facilitated by a web programme that rides on the back of established search engines. When you input your parameters or key words, a multiple search contacts any number of established search engines at the same time, processes responses to you input data, eliminates doubling up, and lists sites for you by degree of parity with your query. The efficacy of a multiple engines search largely depends on your input data. The fewer parameters you suggest, the more sources and sites are offered by the search engine. Conversely, the more specific your query, the fewer the returns but the less time will be wasted on opening irrelevant web pages.

Free to use multiple engine search sites on the web include the following:

C/net search.com (<http://www.search.com/>)

This site is powered by Alta Vista but allows you to search basic web engines by placing a number of key words into the search box. Your wording is important and the search produces documents that contain your search words in order of input.

Webtaxi.com (<http://www.webtaxi.com/>)

This site allows you to chose from a wide range of search engines across the globe (including Infoseek, Lycos, WebCrawler, Alta Vista, Excite, Magellan and Yahoo). Handy if you are attempting to find someone's email number (use Email search engine) of it you are interested in searching documents in search engines based outside the English-speaking world (engines in Japan, Italy and so forth).

Infoseek ultrasmart (<http://members.aol.com/bonmacman/fastsearch/mega.html>)

This site allows you to choose from a wide range of search engines on the web or you may choose newsgroups, newswire services, email addresses or company profiles (generally in the US).

Inference Find (<http://www.inference.com/ifind/>)

When you enter a query, this engine searches all the major sites around the world. Again, the order of words is important and results are compact.

2ask Gateway (<http://www.2ask.com/>)

Similar to Inference Find, though focuses on Lycos, Alta Vista and Yahoo sites. You might also try these sites and find further information concerning most search engines on:

[http://www.nla.gov.au/lis/inet/guides.html#search:](http://www.nla.gov.au/lis/inet/guides.html#search)

<http://metacrawler.cs.washington.edu:8080/>

<http://guaraldi.cs.colostate.edu:2000/>

<http://www.theriver.com/TheRiver/Explore/ezfind.html>

<http://www.infomkt.ibm.com/>

<http://www.search.com/>

<http://web.gazeta.pl/~miki/search/2ask-anim.html>

<http://www.albany.net/allinone/>

<http://www.intbc.com/sleuth>

<http://lib-www.ucr.edu/enbinfo.html>

<http://www.opentext.com>

<http://www.ultraseek.com:5000/>

<http://www2.hawaii.edu/%7Esharkey/links/search/searche.htm>

<http://www.nerdworld.com/users/dstein/nw54.html>

<http://www.luckman.com/>

<http://www.infohiway.com/>

[http://www.bam.com.au/kapow/ \(Australia focus\)](http://www.bam.com.au/kapow/)

[http://www.webwombat.com.au/wombat/ \(Australia focus\)](http://www.webwombat.com.au/wombat/)

Some free to use multiple engine search sites, based in the USA but useful for specific comparative academic research, include the following:

Government Information

<http://lib-www.ucr.edu/govinfo.html>

Journals

<http://lib-www.ucr.edu/pubs/ejournal.html>

Media

<http://webhound.www.media.mit.edu/projects/webhound/>

Newsgroups

<http://www.tile.net/tile/listserv/viewlist.html>

<http://www.dejanews.com/>

<http://harvest.cs.colorado.edu/Harvest/brokers/Usenet/>

<http://sunsite.unc.edu/usenet-i/>

Social Science Data

http://delegate.tokai-ic.or.jp:30080/_-http://www.stat.ucla.edu/data/

Software

<http://lib-www.ucr.edu/pubs/software.html>

<http://www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW/irn/irn.html>

A good example of a multiple engine search programme on the market that combs web sites according to parameters set by the user is Internet Fastfind, produced by Symantec Corporation. Internet searches Hotbot, Infoseek, Lycos, WebCrawler, Alta Vista, Excite, Magellan and Yahoo at the same time. You may set the number of retrievals from each engine (from 1-250) as well as the maximum time you allot to each search. Retrievals may vary according to whether you request a page that has all the input words but in any order, at least one of the input words, or a page that contains the exact input phrase. This programme retails in Brisbane computer stores from between \$A45 to \$A80. You may, however, connect to <http://www.symantec.com/cgi-bin/menu.cgi> and download a free 30-day trial version (you are required first to provide name, address, telephone and email number).

Reviews

The deluded holding tight to the mythical

***The International Academic Profession: Portraits of Fourteen Countries.* Edited by P.G. Altbach. The Boston College Center for International Higher Education: Massachusetts. Preliminary Edition. Final Edition to be published by Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996. 745 pp.**

Worldwide, do we agree that respect for academics is declining? Yes, 50% or more of us across 11 of the 14 countries surveyed in this international study do agree (and in only 3 countries do more than 20% disagree). Do our interests lie primarily in teaching or in research? In only 5 of the 14 countries do most academics indicate a primary interest in teaching - for the remaining 9, research is primary for most respondents. But how much time do we spend in our activities? For those with a teaching preference we spend 44% of our hours on our preferred activity when classes are in session, 21% when they are not. For those of us with a research orientation, we are able to spend 38% of our time on research when classes are in session, 57% when they are not. Yet, despite spending the bulk of our time not doing what we would prefer to do, despite finding our jobs a source of some personal strain (for over 40% of us in 6 countries), despite rating our salaries as poor or only fair (well over 50% in 12 of the 14 countries), if we had to do it all over again how many of us would NOT become academics? A small 20% in one country represents the greatest level of disenchantment, in 6 countries less than 15% indicated that they would not do it again.

Does this mean that we are the deluded, holding tight to mythical views of what academia and higher education should be? Perhaps not, but it would be questions of this nature that the data presented in this book could help us to answer.

The International Academic Profession: A Portrait of Fourteen Countries is the book promised in an earlier publication of Boyer, Altbach and Whitelaw: *The Academic Profession. An International Perspective*. It commences with an overview chapter which summarises that previous work, outlining the main findings and comparisons between the 14 countries on questions from an internationally administered questionnaire, on areas of:

- Demographic profile of the profession

- Working Conditions
- Professional activities: teaching, research and service
- Governance
- International Dimensions of academic life, and
- Attitudes regarding Higher Education and Society.

Overall findings include that internationally, academics are male and middle aged; that they are engaged primarily in teaching, although a majority indicate a preference for research; and that they generally feel themselves to be poorly paid, badly equipped but intellectually stimulated. In the main university leadership is seen as incompetent, with centralisation resulting in academics' having little influence in governance. Academics are supportive of the expansion of higher education and its application to society in preparing students for work and in their own scholarship, and that strong internationalisation is occurring and valued in all countries with the possible exception of USA.

However, the majority of the book (613 of 664 pages) constitutes 14 analyses, country by country of the 14 participant nations in the survey (Australia, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, North America, England, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Russia and Israel). The 14 articles or portraits appear to have been separately written with little attempt to develop a consistency in the result areas covered, or a theoretical framework for the findings other than that which is implied by the questionnaire design and wording. This means that the 14 articles are of variable quality, with some attempting to establish a theoretical underpinning to their discussions, some using multivariate and factor analytical approaches to their analyses (but most simply presenting tables of percentages) and none covering all the same areas as each other. This leads to some frustration for the reader, who, inspired by an analysis or report of findings in one 'portrait' can find no comparable one from any other country.

Most portraits, however, commence with a description of the higher education sector in the country, drawing on data beyond the survey to describe the nation's history and state of higher education when the survey was conducted. This provides interesting background information for each of the countries and combines to produce a description of the 'international academic profession' which seems more diverse than similar in a host of ways.

Each country's "portrait" has remarkable aspects of great interest, such as the sense of managerial interven-

tion and increasingly regulated move from the elite to the mass system in Australia; the focus on government control but increasing faculty activism in Korea; the detailed reporting of results on professional activities and the focus on prestige of the occupation in the case from Japan; the concern with the impact of transfer to Chinese control in the description from Hong Kong; the regional differences between universities, along with the focus on the role of academics in addressing global issues in Brazil; the impacts of the military regime, past and recently, in Chile; the sense of the newness of the higher educational sector, and its consequent need for an identity in Mexico; the focus on faculty satisfaction and activity in the USA; the differences within the sector (polytechnics and universities) and an overriding sense of depression from England; the sense of stability and organisation within the profession from (West) Germany; the contrast in work patterns between the different hierarchical levels (full professor compared with others) in Holland; the sense of calm, control over and enjoyment of research that emerges in the case from Sweden; the optimism, but concern with control and rewards from Russia; and the focus on professional commitment and professional orientation in the study from Israel.

Each 'portrait' is well worth reading, and provides a fascinating insight into the nature of the profession and some of the results of the survey in each country, although in some instances a fuller understanding would come with a reading of some additional literature related to that country. The book, however, lacks any overarching comment in relation to the regions (eg, Asia, Europe), or a framework for consistency between the studies. This lack of any attempt at summary or coherence is the greatest deficiency of the work. It creates a sense of fragmentation and information overload with no idea clearly emerging from the portraits about the 'international academic profession' as might be expected from the title.

The study also has some methodological problems as the international study reported in this book is an ambitious one. Overall, the response rates to the questionnaire tended to be low (although in Mexico and Brazil they are over 85%), with most countries recording a response rate between 35% and 50%, but with 4 recording less than 30%. Low response rates often reflect either a very long questionnaire (which this was) or a lack of relevance in the questionnaire items (which again may have been the case for some items for some countries). While articles on some countries are very explicit about the sampling used to collect information others do not provide that information. The articles are constrained by the quantitative scale-based nature of the findings and hence lack richness of interpretation that may have come with a less structured instrument.

Despite these criticisms, despite the variability in quality across the articles, despite the lack of a sense of comparison or coherence in the findings, there is much rich resource material in this book about academia in the 14 countries. It provides a valuable benchmark and valuable statistical and historical resource.

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Herding cats - Managing higher education

Measuring the Grip of the State. The Relationship between Governments and Universities in Selected Commonwealth Countries. A Discussion Paper by Geoffrey Richardson and John Fielden. Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service: London, 1997. 86pp.

V. Lynn Meek and Fiona Q Wood. Higher Education Governance and Management. An Australian Study. EIP, DEETYA. AGPS: Canberra, 1997. 174pp.

With universities developing from religious roots in the 11th century, the question of state control did not arise. Truth was of God -control and management were processes that were subjugated to Truth, not part of its determination (Caul, 1993).

Following World War II, with universities seen by governments as vehicles for strategic research and vocational training (Aitkin, 1991) the issue of the management and governance of universities, especially in their accountability for public funds, became an emerging issue. The globalisation of the economy, and public sector reform in a range of countries (Marginson, 1993) has driven governments' management agendas in the direction of competition within the sector and a 'market model' of higher education.

However, universities are institutions which rely on autonomy to provide the environment for critical enquiry which is necessary to lead to fortuitous but momentous outcomes. In what way can such institutions best be managed and controlled? The Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service (CHEMS) has reported on a survey conducted by Richardson and Fielden of universities in seven Commonwealth regions (United Kingdom, Mediterranean, Australasia, Asia, Africa, North America (Canada) and the Caribbean). The

study aims to determine the intensity of 'state control' in each region and the mechanisms used to do that. A comparative record of the level of state control, academic freedom and autonomy in each area is determined by an examination of the literature relating to each region, legal documents applying to universities in each region, and the quantitative and qualitative results of a survey received from 53 universities across the seven regions.

The report provides diagrammatic representations of the rankings of the regions on the basis of the survey results. These results record the percentage of those 55 areas of possible state control (some of which affect institutional autonomy, others of which impact academic freedom) which Vice Chancellors from universities in the different regions indicated were state controlled for their institution. For the Commonwealth as a whole, an average of 21% of the statements have been checked as occurring. The Australasian universities average 17% of the statements demonstrating state control. The quantitative results are compared with the literature and legal documentation. In the case of Australasia, the literature had led to an expectation that government controls had increased over the last five years. In relation to the legal documentation, the authors note that it: 'shows considerable involvement of governments throughout the region in appointing members of Council, approving statutes and mission statements to a degree that might surprise Vice Chancellors from other regions.' (p. 9).

This report is clearly presented, well written and easy to follow. The study is thorough and informative. Two issues that arise are that, first, as the results have been presented only as averages, it is possible for different countries to obtain the same scores through a different pattern of responses. Because of this, the book does not give us direct access to information about how governments exert their control. As detailed response information is obtained in Appendices this would be an interesting further analysis that could be conducted, although the exact basis on which the 55 statements have been determined is not defined, and some key areas of governmental control may be found to be missing once such a mechanism focused analysis were performed. The other issue is that once the survey results have been broken up by region, the numbers of institutions are quite small. The report nevertheless contains some fascinating information and findings from the range of Commonwealth regions and is well worth reading.

Meek and Wood have conducted a literature review and survey of the management and governance of the Australian higher education system only. The survey seems to have suffered from unfortunate timing in being sent out at the same time as the Government's "Management Review of Higher Education" (chaired by David Hoare) was being conducted. This survey may have been confused with the government enquiry (as noted

by the authors on page 125) and may account for the low response rate (35.6% of the population canvassed).

Meek and Wood's principle argument seems to be that changes to the governance and management of higher education in Australia are necessary because of the size of the institutions. The book presents two chapters that look at issues and changes in the sector. This includes state control of the sector, public sector reform, performance and accountability and quality assurance. Changes in policies and funding, including the development of the Unified National System, recommendations of the Hoare Report and changes in industrial relations are also reviewed. All these issues are noted to impact the current state of higher education management in Australia. The Meek and Cook analysis does not manage to provide an integrated critique, nor can these points be systematically tied to an explanation based on the size of the sector or the institutions.

The range of issues provided the basis for the questionnaire sent to all 'Executives' (Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors), all Deans and all Heads of Departments (HoDs) of all universities in Australia. The survey collected information on matters such as: (a) where decision making is carried out in universities (b) where decision making should be carried out in universities (c) views on a range of staffing issues (eg leadership, tenure, communication, women in management (d) external factors (including state control) affecting research, teaching, staffing (e) views of changes in the sector and the influence of government policy on institutional management and autonomy.

In this latter area the Meek and Wood study compares directly with the Richardson and Fielden book, and seems to find a much greater perception among respondents of state control than that recorded by the latter study. The finding is consistent with the literature saying that control has increased in Australia over the past five years, thus results reflect, perhaps, relative rather than absolute control.

Some of the data presented by Meek and Cook could be very interesting. However, there are two major problems (aside from their very low response rate). The first is that where ever they present results split into the three respondent groups of Executives, Dean and HoDs, there are clear differences that seem to reflect the finding that each group has little idea about the job demands and expectations of the others. Meek and Cook do not discuss this finding, but it seems to point to a staggering lack of knowledge about how the different levels of any institution function.

Second, the number of 'not sure' responses is very large on many of the questions, with over 20% (1 in 5 of the respondents) 'not sure' about many questions. What, for example, do we make of the finding that 23.2% were "not sure" about whether they agreed or disagreed that

'this institution has implemented effective policies for assessing the quality of teaching', or that 22.8% were "not sure" whether they agreed or disagreed that "communication between administration and faculties is good"?

The authors make great play of their supposed finding that "the overwhelming majority of respondents indicate that regular appraisal of staff performance should be introduced to all staff categories, including those at senior executive level" (p. 129). The question asked, however, is: "to what degree should the performance of the following groups of staff be assessed: executive officers; senior administration; middle level administration; administrative support staff; academic staff". Should we be more surprised that no staff category recorded a response of less than 90.5% saying they should be 'completely' or 'mostly' assessed, than finding that a great percentage of respondents would agree that 'parenthood is a good thing'?

This book contains an interesting review of the current situation in Australian higher education and some potentially useful findings. However the book reads a little long and does not present an integrated or coherent picture. It would, however, make a very useful resource.

How are universities best managed or governed? Neither of these books can provide us an answer. Perhaps this is because seeking answers from the very autonomous, serendipitous, "academically free" individuals that the government seeks to control demonstrates that not only is managing the individuals and the sector able to be likened to "herding cats" but that surveying them is also.

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Archaeological dig of affirmative action

Carol Lee Bacchi, *The Politics of Affirmative Action: 'Women', Equality and Category Politics*, Sage London 1996, 190pp. ISBN 0 8039 8793 5 (pbk).

The Politics of Affirmative Action by Carol Bacchi assesses aspects of the current international debates on affirmative action. Her primary focus is on the political construction of the issue: the implication of the use of various terms employed in debates, the political man-

agement of debate through certain power strategies, and the nuances involved in the crafting of public opinion.

This is a significant advance in the literature on affirmative action and other equity categories, much of which tends to be merely descriptive with analysis narrowly tied to particular court cases and legislative developments. The advantage of Bacchi's approach is that the tools with which she undertakes her archaeological dig of affirmative action can be more widely utilised in a range of theoretical endeavours.

For this reason, perhaps, this is a book for theorists and educators rather than the lay person attempting to understand the application of the affirmative action legislation in Australia and elsewhere. For while Bacchi does discuss legal and policy issues, her engagement is more at the level of the theoretical as she attempts to accord political and social theories and strategies their correct importance in shaping the affirmative action debate. As such, this work plays a major role in the emergent political literature in which categories and language are now recognised as topics of investigation rather than dismissed as mere supporting actors.

Bacchi's particular focus is on category politics which is the process by which individuals are placed into categories by virtue of their adoption of, or relegation to, a particular identity. I appreciated Bacchi's head-on engagement with the essentialist taunt frequently levelled during discussions about identity categories. Bacchi argues that categories of outgroups such as "Aborigine" or "women" seem essentialist only because groups campaigning on their own behalf have felt compelled to give themselves an often homogenous definition. As Bacchi points out, it is rarely noted that ingroups such as "men" are seldom called upon to specify just who men are, allowing the heterogeneity of the category to remain in place. Existing power relations, then, are responsible for the appearance of essentialism in the descriptions in the outgroups.

This analysis is a highly valuable contribution to the often static debate over the validity of overarching identity categories in light of the poststructural mandate away from homogenisation, definition and labelling. It is a refreshing break from the freefall of poststructuralist identity politics. However, I believe that this section would benefit from a more detailed discussion of process of identity formation. Although this issue was obviously deemed of lesser consequence to that of the political deployment of identity categories, a brief commentary on the literature on the relationship of the individual to the social category would have completed analysis in an area that is central to the primary thesis of the book.

The book includes analysis on the countries acknowledged to be leaders in the area of affirmative action: the United States, Canada, Australia, Sweden the Nether-

lands and Norway. Bacchi's discussion well illustrates the way in which the definitions, legal context, policy frameworks, journalistic debates and academic commentary on the issue of affirmative action are highly specific to each country. This international material enables interesting comparisons to be drawn between countries, particularly between Europe and Australia. Too often, Australian debate on such issues is mired within the strictures of the English speaking contexts and is vastly skewed towards the American context. Underlying these country-specific discussions is Bacchi's insistence that there is the need to pay more attention to the way in which the terms are marshalled in the political arena. These accounts also illustrate the way in which the adoption and promotion of affirmative action has often been intimately connected to the agendas of economic stability and the pragmatics of political survival.

In the *Politics of Affirmative Action* Bacchi does not hide behind the safety of incomprehensible jargon or the smokescreen of poststructuralism in which almost everything evaporates under examination. She is actually not afraid to answer questions she raises. For example, Bacchi uncovers that what is common to each country is that despite the inclusion of commitments to women in affirmative action policies, women are given little meaningful political attention. The category "women", while

deployed at certain times for political purposes, is surprisingly marginal to the debates on affirmative action in many countries. She concludes that at the times when "women" appear to gain recognition the effect is often to limit rather than extend opportunities for women. Bacchi's suggestion for activists is thus harshly pragmatic: women need to be sensitive to context when selecting interventionist action and must be willing to change course when a given strategy backfires or ceases to work.

Having dwelt primarily on the theoretical, I will conclude by noting that this book, like *Same Difference* by Bacchi (1990), is well situated in the often precarious divide between practice and theory: her analytical discussions are well balanced by practical commentary. In fact, I would go so far as to advise *AUR* readers to take in at least chapters one and two before taking on the next opponent of affirmative action in one of those hideous pub debates on such issues. Such exchanges frequently take place as a result of the over consumption of alcohol and the goading of friends who (quite rightly) love to take an academic down a peg or two. All too often the feeling is that one cannot quite get that vital persuasive point across...but a course of Bacchi beforehand is all the preparation one needs.

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