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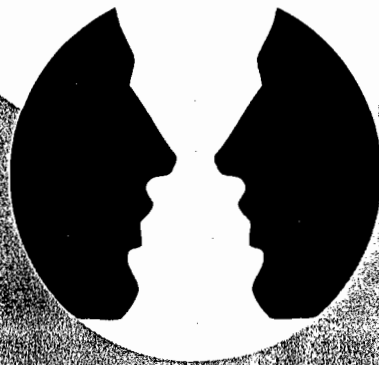
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THE JOURNAL OF

*The Association of
Managers of
Student Services in
Higher Education*

5

No 1 SUMMER 1994



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EDITORIAL

The idea for this journal emerged in a discussion during a break in a conference on the management of Student Services in higher education. Several years have elapsed for the idea to become a reality, but the need for this kind of publication has grown rather than diminished during that time. So many changes in higher education have taken place - notably in the funding of institutions and the funding of students, the huge growth in student numbers and the breaking down of the binary divide - that Student Services have had to be fleet of foot to respond and adapt, to client and institutional needs alike.

Sharing good practice has always been a hallmark of how Student Services have operated, within each professional area and, through AMOSSHE, at the level of heads of service. The advent of the Student Charter and the threat to change the role and funding of Student Unions have thrown into sharp relief the role and responsibilities of the range of services working together - and often brought together - under the banner of Student Services. With the emphasis increasingly on 'the learning experience', on guidance and learner support, and on the student's rights and responsibilities, universities are searching for new ways of getting the relationship between student and institution right. Student Services have much to offer - and learn from - this process.

What we hope for this publication is that it makes connections for you, whether you are managing a service, running an institution, offering a specialist professional service, or planning the next major change in higher education. Too often policies and practice have been developed in isolation from other parts of the system - student funding is a recent example, the review of the academic year a current one - and we hope that this journal will take a small step towards encouraging a more holistic approach.

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A MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT SERVICES

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This article is based on a paper presented to a meeting of the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education. In it, the writer develops a simple theoretical model for highlighting developmental priorities. The model is based on a thematic division of the main elements which influence service evolution. Each of the five themes is outlined and key components described.

Decisions about the nature of services on offer will have an impact on the relative costs of delivery. These are identified and a tabular method of ranking priorities illustrated.

What are the main elements which have an impact on the development of student services?

Five principal elements have and will have an influence on both the range and nature of the student services offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These are historical factors, various needs, the demands placed on services, available resources and the philosophy or prevailing ethos of the organisation.

1: History

Historical factors are highly significant in the evolution of student services:

a) Disaggregation/aggregation

Differences between models in the old and new Universities illustrate various stages in development. In most institutions individual services have been established piecemeal, perhaps in several departments, reporting to different managers.

The next stage, certainly in most of the new Universities, has been the establishment of a department with unitary management of student services. Development from that would be towards an embedded model aiming to reduce direct provision by the department and concentrate on delivery through the curriculum, good academic tutor support, self-help initiatives and so on.

For institutions at an early stage in this process moving from disaggregated to more integrated structures may well be a high priority.

b) Incrementalism

Undoubtedly individual services will have been established at different times and accorded varying levels of

resource priority within Universities.

For example, at a University such as St Andrews, in which its 15th Century founding charter requires it to provide housing and "victuals and beer" for its students, the development of residential accommodation has been a key aspect of its mission over the centuries. This is not the case for a 1970s HEI in a high cost inner city area such as Central London.

Different institutions will have different gaps to fill and managers will have inherited anomalies between services, for example in levels of staffing and available space, which may need to be levelled out.

c) Whimsy

A key factor in the history of our institutions is the existence of whimsy and how that has influenced the services managers inherit.

A University may have the best indoor hockey pitches in Europe and no counselling provision because the Vice-Chancellor's daughter enjoyed hockey as a student and his wife once had a bad experience with an analytical therapist!

A determinant of priorities may be pragmatism, recognising the influence of whimsy and acknowledging the "flavour of the month." Previous decisions made on this basis may also influence priorities for disposing of or dismantling services.

d) Nostalgia

The determination of priorities for student services managers and acquisition of resources to implement them can be influenced by nostalgia.

Institutional culture and inertia may stem from nostalgic views of decision-makers. A particular level and type of provision has always been adequate in the past or the traditional approach to service delivery amongst the older

Universities is the "correct" model to which the newer Universities should aspire.

Managers may have to divert resources into challenging inherited attitudes or postpone developments in acknowledgment that some views will not be changed.

e) Airports or monasteries

One particular aspect of institutional culture, determined by history amongst other factors, is the organisation's view of itself as an educational establishment. The view may be traditional, regarding the institution as a community of like-minded, self-sustaining individuals with a common philosophy, the "monastery" model. The alternative approach focuses on the product rather than the philosophy and reflects management rather than academic culture. It is more about getting students from A to B in educational terms and has been described as the "airport" model.

The institution's ethos and related management style will have significant impact on how it regards its student services and the priority attached to various approaches.

2: Needs

One common means of determining service delivery priorities is to consider the needs of the client group and endeavour to orientate services to those needs. Needs assessment is a complex theoretical area as the introduction of Community Care has well illustrated.

Needs Assessment

Needs may be determined by the client or the service provider and systematic approaches to needs assessment can include the use of some or all of the following:

- surveys and market research
- secondary data eg published research
- views of key informants such as specialists or providers of other services
- group processes or public meetings
- service use or request statistics

Who is the client?

If needs-meeting is the prime determinant of service priority, the question of who is the client is paramount. Clarification of the nature of the client will help to establish parameters for service provision. This is an issue which has proved problematic in the application of Total Quality Management approaches in higher education.

In student services the principal client is normally assumed to be the students of the institution. However, clients may be one or several of the following:

- students, intending students, graduates of the institution
- students of other institutions
- members of the University management group
- members of the University Court
- the relevant funding council/Department for Education
- parents
- employers

- the local community
- whoever pays the fees
- teaching staff of the institution

What are the needs of the client?

Clearly these will vary depending upon the prime client. The following is an indicative list of some approaches to needs determination related to client.

a) **Students:-** the work done by Maslow and Alderfer on hierarchy of needs may be relevant for this group. They postulate a hierarchy of needs moving up from lower level or basic needs such as food and shelter, to middle level such as security and emotional fulfilment, to higher level needs such as self-actualisation (through activities such as higher education).

Their theories assume that higher level needs cannot be met until lower level needs are satisfied. In this context, in simpler terms, a student who is hungry or has unsuitable accommodation will be unable to achieve her/his full academic potential until these practical problems have been resolved. Similarly, counselling effectiveness may be jeopardised by the client's preoccupation with high levels of debt.

b) **University management:-** institutional mission, strategic plan, performance indicators and quality assurance procedures should all be taken into account in determining service priorities for this client group.

c) **Parents:-** might wish the institution to operate *in loco parentis*. An emphasis on the needs of this client could necessitate a shift from an empowerment model of service delivery to one more directive or staff intensive.

d) **Employers:-** the orientation of student services to meet the needs of this group of clients would be towards practical training and support of students in the development of personal transferable skills. The enhancement of links between employers and University to ensure that course provision is relevant to the needs of employers and a high quality would be a priority.

e) **Teaching staff:-** one might espouse the view that the primary function of the institution is teaching and that all support departments are therefore operating to maximise the effectiveness of the teaching staff. The implications for student services would include the identification of priorities such as training and personal support of academic tutors and provision of a first-rate occupational and student health service.

3: Demand

Demand or service use statistics have been identified above as a means of assessing need within a client group. Basing service delivery on demand may risk choosing a reactive rather than a proactive approach. Not uncommonly, as with the introduction of Access Funds, external factors

create a demand and a new priority service throughout the UK.

Demand can be measured in several ways and the measures chosen will reflect a degree of prioritisation. The principal amongst these are:

- the establishment of an average level of service *per capita* eg design a student charter which confers entitlement to various services such as one hour of individual careers guidance for final year students.
- numbers through the door (this may not be a real measure of demand as the totals can reflect geography or effectiveness of publicity rather than the need for a service)
- target service provision on particular groups such as mature students, culturally distant students, students with special needs etc and allocate resources on the basis of their needs alone
- base services on particular institutional imperatives such as reducing withdrawal rates, implementation of equal opportunities policies or increasing overseas recruitment.

4: Resources

Priorities can also be determined by the simple availability (or otherwise!) of resources. If funding is available for particular services, these will be the services we offer. If physical accommodation is limited or inappropriate then services will be based on most effective use of space. In reality it is highly unlikely that this would be the prime determinant of service delivery but aspects of resourcing influence rational decision-making for managers.

Resourcing can be considered in several ways to determine priorities. Examples are as follows:

- aiming to provide the greatest level of service for the greatest number of students
- concentration on essential, unique service provision - specialisation in services not available outside the institution such as HE Careers work or student financial service
- emphasis on services which will generate income such as quality recreation facilities or student accommodation suitable for conference activity
- focus on services which are cheap to provide (see section below on type of services)
- design services around the strengths of available staff - staff turnover is generally slow, payroll is upwards of 70% of expenditure, optimal use of staffing resource is highly effective use of funds.

5: Philosophy

Service priority can also be on the basis of philosophy, be it that of the institution or the department. Is the role of the department to change the institution, act as its conscience, or to reflect predominant values (whether they be those of the monastery or the airport)?

There are many philosophical or political approaches to the delivery of services in the context of higher education. These could include:-

- defining services in terms of their educational role for the student (concentration on skills development, cv-building through extra-curricular activity, health education rather than primary care, training in budgeting and debt management rather than fund administration etc)
- operating services on a means-tested basis - provision only for those who do not have the resources to secure these services elsewhere
- restricting entitlement to non-traditional entrants, thus reflecting government and institutional access priorities
- determining the nature and content of services by the establishment of a student contract or charter.

What is the nature of our services?

The lists above have identified many factors which may or may not influence decisions about the priority managers and users ascribe to the various services offered by the department. These have been grouped thematically in an attempt to give them coherence. They should assist in the determination of the "why" of service provision and, to an extent, lead to clarification of the "what."

There are, however, some over-riding principles which will govern the direction in which our service delivery will move, whichever of the above is identified as a priority. These principles concern the "how" issues. How will we provide student services?

1. Will the services be direct or indirect (one-to-one contact or through other mediums)?
2. Will the approach concentrate on student needs or staff needs?
3. Will services be provided internally or externally (eg by tender or through links with other agencies)?
4. Will the department provide the services or will it enable others so to do?

Processes or types of service delivery

The various processes of service delivery form a continuum moving from high individual client contact to low. Staff time being 70% of expenditure, the diagram below gives a crude indicator of the relative costs of different types of service. This may be a factor for managers in determining priorities:

HIGH STAFF INVOLVEMENT - HIGH COST

Counselling
 Advocacy
 Negotiation
 Guidance
 Advice
 Funding
 Information
 Referral
 Franchising

LOW STAFF INVOLVEMENT - LOW COST

How can these factors be assimilated into one model?

The listing of the above information is an attempt by the writer to establish an inventory of factors managers may wish to consider in departmental planning. It is not a comprehensive typography and has ignored significant areas such as student demography and future directions in higher education policy.

It should, however, be possible to select from such a list the factors which have particular local salience and relate these to the services which might be offered. The simplest way to do this is in tabular form. A worked example is given in Figure 1, the key factors being defined below the table.

The example given indicates that funding is the service which meets most the priority factors identified. Day Nurseries have a low priority in that they meet the needs of very few students and are expensive to provide. Clearly some of the issues in relation to individual services are self-evident. Less so is the relative priority of the different services which is important to determine if these services form the basis of one cost centre. The working of this example is based on a set of assumptions made by the writer.

It is possible to identify these separately and perhaps move to a model which could vary weightings attached to priority factors and build in varying assumptions.

Conclusion

There is a significant number of factors which may be taken into consideration in the determination of priorities for the planning of student services. These will vary in importance between institutions as a result of historical and other influences.

It is possible to design a simple planning model which may be used to isolate key factors and ascribe to them a level of priority in relation to the services which may be on offer. The writer is not aware of any literature which describes a methodology in relation to student services in higher education and offers this as an aid to rational decision-making.

It is hoped that this article may provide a starting point for discussion of this important issue amongst heads of student services leading to the refinement of this model or the development of different approaches.

FIGURE 1: TABLE ILLUSTRATING USE OF PRIORITY GRID

	Need	Demand	Withdrawal	Cost	Access
Accommodation	*	*			
Careers		*		*	*
Chaplaincy				*	
Counselling			*		
Financial Advice		*			*
Funding	*	*	*	*	*
Health	*	*			
Nurseries					*
Recreation/Sports		*			
Students' Union		*		*	
Study Skills			*	*	*

Need = high in hierarchy of need

Demand = high numbers requesting/using service

Withdrawal = significant impact on reducing withdrawal rate

Cost = low cost in £ per student

Access = high necessity for non-traditional entrants

COUNSELLING: THE WAILING WALL OF THE UNIVERSITY OR A FORCE FOR CHANGE?

Ann Heyno

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At an international conference last year in Bordeaux entitled "Student Counselling: a task of growing importance", a professor from Portugal commented on his impression of the student counsellors he was observing in a discussion group. 'You seem to be crying for your profession,' he said. 'You sound to me like a wailing wall.' It was his first encounter with counsellors in Higher Education. He'd been sent to the conference by the director of his university to brief him before the Conference of European Rectors met in Barcelona in September to consider "Universities as a Community of People". In earlier sessions he'd been an enthusiastic participant of the group, listening avidly to papers on sexual identity and learning, mature students, the development of thinking. He'd encouraged the group (consisting of student counsellors from Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Britain, Portugal, France and Germany) to take less of a back seat in education and to be more pro-active in influencing educational policy. What he'd heard counsellors saying about the factors which interfere with successful learning had made an impression on him.

So what went wrong in the last session? Well, I think it was something which often goes wrong between student counsellors and their institution. Student counsellors are often seen as the messengers of gloom and doom, the people in the institution who remind the university that not all students are happy all of the time and that some have difficulties with learning. In the first three group meetings in Bordeaux the atmosphere had been enthusiastic and the discussion interesting and fast moving. The group worked well together looking at why some students can't learn. Members worked hard compiling resolutions to put forward to the final plenary session in the hope of influencing the agenda at Barcelona and the professor was an eager participant.

By the fourth session, the group decided it wanted to spend some time reflecting on the experience of being a counsellor in an institution. We talked about student poverty, unemployment, rising suicide rates, alcohol and drug related problems. The group touched on some of the hopelessness surrounding being a student in the 1990s. The experience throughout Europe was similar. We talked of our own feelings of impotence and our feelings of failure

to generate change. For a group of counsellors it was a relief to share a common experience that extended beyond national borders. For the professor it sounded like a wailing wall. When he told us what he thought of us, it stopped us short and brought us back to reality. It reminded us that our reality, and what he saw as us wallowing in it, is unacceptable in academia. Like some other colleagues across Europe, he saw student counsellors as the embodiment of the unacceptable face of education - a symbol of its perceived failure. He helped us to see that to some people in higher education we act as an unwelcome reminder that students are people with the same sorts of problems as everyone else. Sometimes students can't work, sometimes they feel depressed, sometimes they're anxious and unable to function. Counsellors remind us that we're all human and, in education, students are sometimes expected to be superhuman. While it's acceptable for them to have practical problems such as accommodation, poverty or poor job prospects, emotional problems are still equated with failure and inadequacy. To name a problem is seen as depressing and unmanageable. The people who do talk about it are seen as a wailing wall and, by association, student counsellors can also be experienced as unacceptable, the part of the institution some managers would most like to be rid of. The hope is that if you get rid of the counsellors, you'll get rid of the sense of inadequacy.

Student counsellors can sometimes be seen as an expensive extra, as an indulgent luxury and the least cost effective part of Student Services. As our helpful professor pointed out, we, as student counsellors, don't always help ourselves, we very often lose sight of our potency and our capacity to generate change. In the group session at Bordeaux University we almost lost sight of our goal. We were there to quantify the factors which interfere with successful learning and to demonstrate how student counselling and increased pastoral care can help improve educational performance, lower unnecessary wastage and aid successful completion rates. One to one therapeutic work is one way of doing this and more and more students are requesting this sort of intervention but individual counselling is not the only thing student counsellors can offer education. We can also offer a considerable amount of

tutor support, staff development, insight into successful learning and enhanced exam performance. We can offer workshops for students and staff, support groups, therapeutic groups, exam stress groups, assertiveness training etc. And as the professor said, we could also be useful at the planning stage to influence the way new teaching methods are designed.

We shouldn't just allow our counsellors to be used to pick up the casualties of the system. Some learning problems can be avoided and student counsellors may have some useful contributions to make in generating change. But we need to be more assertive and less defensive. We also need the support of our AMOSSHE colleagues.

As a counsellor/manager, I am obviously sympathetic to the reality that counsellors need to adapt their approach to meet increased demand at a time of diminishing resources. But I'm unsympathetic to the view that cutting counselling and putting resources elsewhere will cut out the problems. Increasing the profile of counselling, in the way I've described, as a force for change, rather than a wailing wall, is the essential way forward. A good and potent counselling service can act as an important container of institutional anxiety and a reassuring source of support and advice, provided that it is flexible. Its prime purpose has to be to serve the needs of the institution and it can only do this by seeing itself and by being seen as an integral and important part of the structure. Counselling Services can help managers of Student Services to provide quality services in our institutions but it does involve time for discussion. Managers and counsellors need to get together to address issues and assess the best way forward, rather than apportioning the blame. Counsellors all too easily fall into the wailing wall mode and managers all too readily collude with this view of them. Both sides need to realise that student counsellors are potentially a forceful weapon in the armoury of Student Services and indeed in the service of quality in education. If we could shift our focus onto positives and dwell less on the negatives associated with counselling, we might serve all our institutions better and incidentally help a few more students in the process.

For the interest of readers, the following statements went forward from the group to the final Plenary of the IRTAC Conference in Bordeaux. The group's thanks go to the professor for encouraging a positive set of statements which will be extensively quoted in the final papers of the Conference.

1. There is a growing body of research which shows that psychological counselling can contribute to successful learning, completion rates and the unnecessary wastage of students in Higher Education. This can be done by personal counselling, staff development and institutional consultancy. Psychological counsellors are sometimes perceived as passive acceptors of the negative and the complaining elements in education but in fact they can be positive agents of change.

2. Academic institutions need to pay attention to the fact that there is normally a correlation between personal development and academic achievement. Unless this is taken into

account there will be lower achievement rates, higher drop out rates, increased depression and lower self esteem amongst students. This message which counsellors give is not one management always wants to hear. Possible solutions include the following: increased pastoral care, social support, social meeting spaces for students and psychological counselling. Diminished resources should not allow these important areas to be ignored.

3. Learning and developmental theory informs our thinking on how we should educate people. We would be wise not to ignore this or to lose sight of the intrinsic value of education by only focusing attention on training, which is the increasing tendency in Higher Education. Education is not only about the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also involves emotional processes, belief and value systems.

4. The trend is towards an increase in the intake of older students and other students with specific and special needs returning to education. Consideration of their differing aspirations and expectations needs to be taken into account in educational planning.

GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR GUIDANCE AND LEARNER SUPPORT

The Higher Education Quality Council has convened a Quality Assurance Network for Guidance and Learner Support, in order to produce a set of guidelines for higher education institutions. Members of the network have been drawn from all types of institutions and from a range of professional and disciplinary backgrounds. The guidelines are intended to complement HEQC's recently published 'Guidelines on Quality Assurance 1994', by providing a more detailed framework for institutions wishing to address the quality assurance of their guidance and learner support arrangements.

The draft guidelines will be piloted in a small number of institutions during the Summer Term, and then will be revised in the light of feedback from the pilots. The guidelines will then be published in the early Autumn. For more information, please contact: Vivienne Rivis, Assistant Director, Higher Education Quality Council, c/o Centre for Continuing Education, University of Bradford, Bradford BD7 1DP.

ACCESS OR HARDSHIP : TWO CONTRASTING MODELS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF ACCESS FUNDS

Ray Angel

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Last November's Budget told us that "Access Funds" are to continue in more or less their present form for at least another three years. Rumours and fears of major changes as part of the review of student funding have not materialised. Indeed the existence of Access Funds continues to be used by the Government as the justification for all the other policies that make student finances worse. Much play is made of the twenty million pounds for "Access Funds"; less of the fact that this gives an average of only a little over £30 per eligible student.

One rumour was that the allocation process would be taken away from individual universities and centralised in a new or existing agency. Now we know that we will have to continue to consider, some would say agonise over, how the funds should be distributed in our own University.

When "Access Funds" were introduced three and a half years ago many Universities felt ill at ease with their new role, not just because of the administrative work involved. Few, particularly among the then Polytechnics, had much experience of having to exercise their own discretion in distributing significant sums of money to students. Various scholarships or bursaries did exist but most were for specific groups of students or for relatively small amounts. Many felt ill equipped to start making the sort of judgements that they associated with social services and the welfare system.

Not surprisingly, partly as a result of inexperience in this area, a variety of systems and priorities emerged. We got used to students asking why they had been refused an award when the same circumstances had resulted in an award for their friend or relation at another institution. It probably did us some good to live with the problems of having to make such decisions rather than just join students in complaining about the inequity of others, such as local authorities, who have to allocate Discretionary Awards. Over time most universities have modified their systems. Perhaps of more significance is that many have become more committed to the operation of Access Funds, believing that whatever their limitations they provide a rare opportunity for the university concerned to offer direct help to those it considers most in need.

The continuation of Access Funds increases the need for those making awards to examine and make explicit the rationale for whatever system is being used. These funds are officially called Access Funds though they are commonly referred to as Hardship Funds. I believe that these two terms can be taken to stand for two very different models of how "Access Funds" should be distributed. The different elements within the debate tend to cluster round either end of the continuum

they represent.

At its simplest the Access model is about targeting funds at those with exceptional problems while the Hardship model stresses the difficulties faced by many students. The major difference in outcome is that the first gives relatively large amounts to relatively few and the second the reverse ie. relatively small amounts to larger numbers. To the extent that "Access Funds" are fixed there is no getting away from such choices, however much we might prefer to be able to do both.

The main elements of the two models can be summarised as follows:

ACCESS	HARDSHIP
Large amounts for few	Small amounts for many
Target specific categories	Use broad criteria
Predictability	Uncertainty
Early decision	Last minute decision
High risk	Low risk
Entitlement	Discretionary

1. Large amounts for a few v. small amounts for many

When Access Funds were first introduced, no guidance, let alone rules, was given on how large awards should be. It would theoretically have been possible to give all the money to one student or alternatively to divide the money equally between every student entitled to apply. Access Funds were established in part to compensate for the deterioration in other sources of student funding introduced at the same time, including for most students the loss of entitlement to housing and unemployment benefit. This led many to start from the assumption that a large proportion of students should get something from the fund. This often meant that any claim, other than the blatantly absurd, was felt to merit consideration, resulting in a large number of small awards, some less than £100 or even £50. Such amounts are unlikely to have more than a very marginal effect for any particular student. For those seriously considering

whether they can afford to stay on their course the need is usually for several hundred pounds, if not thousands.

2. Targeting v. using broad criteria

Guidance on how much to award is minimal. Advice on who to support is equally open ended. The Department of Education and Science circular on this point read in its entirety:

"The Access Funds are to be used to provide financial help to students where access to further or higher education might be inhibited by financial considerations, or where students, for whatever reasons, including physical or other disabilities, face financial hardship."

It is difficult to imagine what this would rule out. The result was that, at least at the beginning, many institutions considered almost every claim. This laissez-faire model has often been followed by a more rigorous approach, particularly when it emerged that far more complex judgements were necessary, even in areas where only small awards were being contemplated. For example, the question of whether to help students who did not get summer employment could involve a large number of detailed judgements and distinctions such as how hard did the applicant seek work? Was it full time or part time? Was it for all or only part of the summer? Is the level of pay relevant? If the student could not go home and therefore had higher accommodation costs should this be taken into account? Some institutions felt that all they were doing was supporting those who were "hanging around" the University while others with more worthy cases were not around to apply. Similarly there have been doubts about giving money on the basis of high rents since it penalises those who have taken low cost accommodation: endless gradations of awards are possible. The more open the system the more it took on the appearance of a lottery.

The alternative approach is to set a limited number of relatively specific priorities. This builds on the idea that resources should be concentrated on those who have problems significantly greater than those faced by the majority of students. The two groups most often identified as meeting these criteria are those with child care costs and those not receiving an award (sometimes restricted to those on courses which normally attract mandatory awards). Other exceptional circumstances such as costs resulting from an accident, assault or disablement may be included, but general hardship claims are not usually supported.

3. Predictability v. uncertainty

An important part of being student centred is to let them know the rules of the game. Targeting makes this much easier. It becomes possible not only to explain to a student the success or failure of an application but also to make clear whether it is worth the student applying in the first place. Approaches based on hardship leave the criteria as open as possible. This stress on flexibility often plays up the individual circumstances of each case and thus uncertainty at least from the student's perspective. Uncertainty is likely to increase the number of complaints and appeals.

4. Early v. late decision

The speed with which a decision can be made will be influenced by the extent of targeting and predictability as discussed in the two previous sections. The hardship model focuses on the problems the student has had to face rather than their cause.

For example the student is expected to apply only when s/he has run out of money and can't pay his/her rent rather than in advance if there are special circumstances that are likely to lead to such consequences. It would be preferable to focus on prevention rather than cure.

By contrast the Access model focuses on the cause of the problem rather than the consequences. This makes applications appropriate as soon as the relevant targeting has taken place. One result of this approach is that awards can be considered in advance of the student joining the course (payment of course is only made if and when the student takes up his/her place). This opportunity is particularly valuable, for example, for the mature student considering leaving a permanent job in order to join the course. S/he needs to evaluate the financial implications, including exactly how much they will get from Access Funds. Being told "You can apply when you have joined the course" is no help in arriving at a considered judgement. Awards made to such students give added meaning to the term "Access" in the fund's title.

5. High v. low risk

Some students, like any other group, will be economical with the truth or simply lie in the attempt to gain financial support. Universities do not have the resources of a detective agency to check out every application, and excessive enquiries are likely to deter nervous but worthy applicants. Inevitably, some, we hope not many, will deceive us. If the award is large, anxiety about such mistakes increases. The dangers can be reduced, but not totally avoided, by for example insisting on seeing the originals of relevant documentation such as child benefit books. The alternative is to make only such small awards that it is felt that they don't matter much. It is a matter of judgement whether this is prudent behaviour or just running away from difficult decisions.

6. Entitlement v. discretion

A major concern in all welfare areas is that the recipients are not humiliated in the process of applying for, or receiving, an award. An important mechanism for avoiding this is to make clear that awards are a right rather than dependent on the discretion, in some cases whim, of those making the decisions. Emphasis on discretion tends to increase the element of special pleading, encouraging tears, and a search for pity. Students should not be encouraged to play this game. The higher the degree of discretion, the greater the likelihood of inconsistent judgements, however well intentioned are those making the decisions. Once more the element of lottery is increased.

Access Funds are clearly not a total solution to the problems of student funding, for example, they are too little, and do nothing for part-time or overseas students. This does nothing to reduce the obligation upon those of us involved in making decisions on access awards to examine the rationale behind our choices and make explicit, not least to students, the basis for decisions. There are few areas where we have the opportunity and resources to help so directly. We need therefore to do it well.

The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of London Guildhall University.

PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE : THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF STUDENT SERVICES AND STUDENT UNIONS

Rupert Bristow

Dean of Student Services, South Bank University

Maggie Hammond

Adviser, Student Union, South Bank University

There is a real and constructive discussion to be had about the respective roles of Student Services and Student Unions within institutions of higher education. Based on our experience at South Bank and our links across the sector, we attempt here to identify the ways 'complementarity' can and, we would argue, should be the aim and outcome of a mature relationship between Union and University.

There are historic legacies in the new enlarged University sector. Institutions have tended to provide the 'core' support services to students: Careers, Chaplaincy, Health and Housing. Where there is a Student Services department, typically in most new Universities, Counselling and Advisory services and the Nursery are usually also part of that department, but elsewhere, typically in the old Universities, this service may form part of the Student Union's own provision. Sports throughout the University sector is an area of shared responsibility. So how should we divide up areas of responsibility? Are there some functions which should, by definition, be an institutional provision? Are there arguments for duplication or should all services be provided solely by one side or the other? Moreover, is it possible to have a professional, independent service in the Union, given their 'political' nature?

At South Bank, 'the University of Choice', we both believe in multi-access points for help and advice. The Union chose to provide a professional advice service for students to complement the counselling service, which had dealt with both practical and personal issues presented by students. The challenge for both services was to provide the best service possible, as professionally as possible, but in different ways; and, for the isolated union service, to learn to work with Student Services, without losing its independence. What has developed has been called the 'South Bank model'. It has evolved and continues to evolve as both services respond to changing client demand. Both competition and co-operation can be healthy if there is an openness to new ideas and a willingness to see those ideas come to fruition, coupled with a burning desire to keep students centre stage.

The model in essence is that the Union provides an Advice Service, similar to CAB. The University also has Advisory staff. However, Union Advice workers exclusively advise on legal matters to clients and all internal University procedures (disciplinary/complaints/academic appeals). These are the preserve of the Union, as the 'natural' advocates for students. University Advisory staff provide a more generalist service,

but with a particular emphasis on routing needy students to the University's charitable and access funds, demonstrating an institutional commitment to the changing and growing needs of students.

Every institution has a network of support which is much wider than the specialist counselling and advisory services on offer, which is why **information** and **induction** are so important for students and staff alike. It is also very easy to go into information or induction overload, without really engaging with the needs of people who enquire and of people who are asked. Two initiatives taken at South Bank illustrate how a need was identified and a project carried through. In the late eighties finance for students was - even then - becoming difficult and complex and there was no one leaflet or booklet that could show what a student was entitled to from statutory and institution sources. In regular discussions between the Student Union Adviser and Student Services this gap was identified and a handbook on 'Money Management' jointly produced, with sponsorship from a local bank. The guide is now in its fifth edition and has just undergone its first radical revision - even the best ideas need a fresh look from time to time! Meanwhile a further need was identified jointly - a brief guide for students at the admission stage on how to ensure proper financial planning before arrival, with the positive title 'Planning Your Success' and with different editions for 'home', 'EC' and 'overseas' students. That too is currently being revised to keep pace with new requirements. Now the talk is of pre-arrival financial helplines

Induction has been the peak of the relationship between student support services and the litmus test of its effectiveness. It is a risk to plan bigger events and centralise information, but it has worked! This is perhaps the key to the South Bank relationship - we both do what we do best. Brian Caul (1993) has suggested that all students can take in at the start is whether someone who is talking to them is a friend or foe¹: a salutary thought, though not a reason for inaction. The great challenge at induction is to recognize that there is an institutional agenda and a student agenda: the task is to bring the two as close together as possible and provide for both in the most enabling and creative way. That is where a joint University and Union initiative is essential. Establishing an agreed template of events and slots is half the battle, minimising the chaos of competing activities and ensuring the primacy of the student's course induction. But more important, it is a mar-

vellous occasion for University and Union to be working together for the benefit of new students. Arming student helpers with uniform sweatshirts and walkie-talkies coordinated by union advisory staff may seem an ego-tripping road to confusion, but the experience at South Bank is that it is the staff from the University who often need to take the lead from the Union for efficiency and enthusiasm in making students welcome.

The Union is about being a student led organization, servicing members' extra-curricular needs, dealing with complaints and arguing for change. Advice work fits well within that model, its youthful leadership and annual dynamic change of leaders creating the impression of energy, spirit and enthusiasm. Its location in the building housing bars, shops and entertainments reminds students that the Union cares for its members. It is in combination that students really gain from diversity.

The whole area of **advocacy, advice work and counselling** has grown hugely in recent years, not just in proportion to increased student numbers but also in response to the increasing complexity of the student experience, from battling with an inefficient local education authority for the correct grant, to coping with a partner's hostility to a student's return to learning; from arguments over eligibility for the council tax to making an appeal against an examination assessment; from complaining against sexual harassment to seeking an assessment for dyslexia. This has led to some development in counselling services but a bigger growth in advisory services, sometimes within Student Services, sometimes in the Student Union, sometimes (as at South Bank) in both. Is this growth planned or ad hoc, part of a grand strategy or a kneejerk response to events? In the case of counselling services, sadly it is sometimes only after a particularly tragic event or series of events (as at Oxford University last year) that counselling services are strengthened rather than for good developmental reasons; as far as advice work is concerned it has frankly been the only way that institutions - and Unions - have been able to cope with the overwhelming demands from students seeking to come to terms with the realities of being part of the unprecedented expansion in higher education, compared with the expectations that they cherished on arrival in the system.

This 'University of Choice' wishes to maintain the commitment of both the Union and Student Services to clients. Diversity is choice, perceptions determine and affect the point of enquiry of clients. This University wishes both to challenge perceptions and to provide multiple access points for students. The Union's service does not limit activities therefore to Advice work; both our agendas are about empowerment of the individual and improving our service. All guides/leaflets etc. produced by either service are discussed, proofed and include reference to the variety of services available. It is the proper diversity of skills, the larger team, that this model has helped to evolve at South Bank. From the Student Services/Union relationship the larger team (Registry/Faculties/Marketing/Admission Office/Property Services etc) has been formed and has grappled successfully with institutional matters such as disciplinary and complaints procedures.

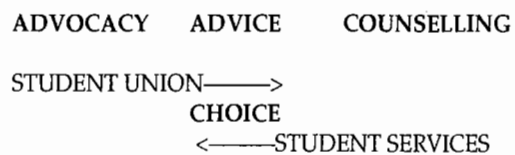
Outside the institution, sometimes a twin effort is needed, when Student Services and Student Union can work usefully in tandem - for example, on an immigration case, the institution pursuing the 'usual channels' of liaison with civil servants, while the union pursues matters through the student's MP or direct to the Minister.

Where good relationships - and regular contact - exist between the two services, there are other ways in which the skills

and expertise can be mutually enhanced. Thus the advisers in the Union at South Bank, grappling with the difficulties of coping with distressed students and wanting desperately to 'take away the sadness', began supervision with the counsellors in Student Services. This helped the development of different ways of working with clients to take on the concept of empowerment of the individual rather than trying to 'fix it' for the client. This, backed up by a code of practice for working with clients, developed by the Union, has eased the pressure and provided a more professional service. Meanwhile the advisers in Student Services have been able to provide good links with the Union for the identification and resolution of student needs in the area of financial information and guidance, particularly in relation to access funds, fee remission and University charitable funds.

Without the support and encouragement of Student Services the Union's staff would be unable - their belief - to continue to improve and in the short term, survive the stress. American visitors to the Union recently commented on the nature of the tour organised for them at South Bank. It was the only tour to include the variety of student support services and facilities. Moreover, they were shocked by our relationships with each other. We knew each other well. We worked as a team for students.

In the three areas of advocacy, advice and counselling our experience is that there is a spectrum of issues, some of which are clearly best handled by Student Services, some by the Student Union and some for which a choice is and should be available:



Whatever is said about the confidentiality and independence of Student Services - and it is a rigorously upheld principle - and whatever is said about the professionalism and unpolitical approach of advisers in the Student Union, there are some students (and perhaps staff) who will choose to believe otherwise. At least they have a choice and the multiple access point approach is a crucial one for such a diverse group of students as we have in higher education today. (At South Bank our non-traditional student is the 18 year old.) Provided the liaison is there between the services; provided one is not the clone of the other; provided there is acceptance of praise and criticism; and provided minds are open to new ways of doing things on both sides: then the University - and our prime clients, the students - are getting more than the sum of the two. And, just possibly, this practical example of working together will prevent - or at least mitigate - any major falling out between University and Union rather more effectively than any legislation.

Partnership is practice. It works for us (and not just because we are both graduates of Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, albeit some two decades apart!). We offer this as an approach which may also be relevant to other institutions and which we commend to you and prospective students.

¹ VALUE-ADDED: The Personal Development of Students in Higher Education by Brian Caul, published by December Publications, Belfast, 1993. (VALUE-ADDED is reviewed on page 16)

FEATURE : SPOTLIGHT ON AMOSSHE

Russell Rowley, Director of Student Services at the University of Central England in Birmingham, is the current Chair of the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE). The Association, which spans the whole of higher education, grew out of the Association of Heads of Polytechnic Student Services (AHOPSS). In this interview for CONNECT Russell outlines the role and activities of the enlarged Association and spells out his hopes for the future.

In a nutshell, what is the purpose of AMOSSHE and who are the people who actually join?

The main purpose of the Association is to provide a forum for higher education staff who have responsibility for the management or co-ordination of a range of learner support services, e.g. Accommodation, Careers, Counselling, Educational Advice, Financial Advice, Child Care, Learning/Study Skills, etc. This forum is designed to provide the opportunity for AMOSSHE colleagues to share ideas and to develop their skills and expertise.

Another important purpose of the Association is to draw to the attention of a range of central organizations issues which affect the total student learning experience. These central organizations would include the DFE, the HEFCE, and the CVCP.

In a nutshell, there is not a single purpose, each member has her/his own view of the Association's purpose and uses it accordingly.

When the polytechnics became universities there seemed to be no dispute about AMOSSHE being the appropriate professional organisation across the enlarged university sector. How do you account for this?

The "old" Universities in general do not have a similar management structure encompassing their learner support services. Not surprisingly, those of us in this management role view it as an efficient way to provide this range of services. It has the advantage of close collaboration between colleagues providing the range of learner support services, which we believe means students are much more likely to be referred to the most appropriate professional. Essentially, it emphasises an holistic view of the student, where the total student learning experience is just that, total.

AMOSSHE is not exclusively for universities, of course. How can other higher education institutions qualify for membership?

Really in a similar way to Universities. Other higher education institutions offering a range of learner support services, which are managed/co-ordinated through an individual member of staff (Head of Service), are eligible to apply. Just as students have the opportunity to choose from a range of higher education institutions so AMOSSHE needs to reflect that opportunity in its membership.

What are the current issues that most concern the membership?

My view of the current issues which most concern colleagues is based upon feedback which is largely reflected in the content of our meetings. The overriding issue is about how to provide a range of high quality services at a time of financial stringency.

Many members are involved in developing 'Charters' which give students an expectation of the service they can expect.

The contents of these Charters reflect a range of issues which concern members, e.g. - student access to information and help relating to personal, welfare and academic issues

What steps is the Association taking to address these important matters? Can you give an example or two of how AMOSSHE has had an impact already on the sector or on government?

The Association has taken on board the need to look at itself and determine what it is attempting to do. The reorganisation of higher education as a result of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act gave the opportunity to look at our constitution. The Association needs to continue to be aware of issues within the higher education environment which are directly pertinent to it. Accordingly we are addressing issues such as Charters/Codes of Practice.

The changing higher education environment requires the association to develop relationships with other representative organisations, including the HEFCE and CVCP. As AHOPSS the Association was asked by the CDP to represent it by giving evidence on students' financial situations to the Select Committee on Education and Science. More recently AMOSSHE has worked with the HEQC in submitting a bid on study skills to the HEFCE.

How do you hope that AMOSSHE will develop over the next couple of years?

My hopes for AMOSSHE include:

- developing as a respected higher education representative organisation, which is called upon to give advice on student matters by central organisations such as CVCP, HEFCE, DFE.
- influencing developments within the sector e.g. in relation to the level of provision for learner support services.
- continuing to be a support network for colleagues.
- the fullest participation of members to achieve these goals.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

STUDENT COUNSELLING IN HIGHER EDUCATION A Task of Growing Importance

A Conference held at University 11, Bordeaux, France 13-16 April 1993

NOTES OF THE CONFERENCE MADE BY JOHN ROLFE, HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHUMBRIA

Some 'Bons Mots':

- *Unhappy students can't learn*
 - *Doing more with less cannot mean doing the same*
 - *We are not teaching if, through the process of teaching, we have not learned more about THE PERSON*
-

FOREWORD

This Conference was organised by The International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling, and The Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities.

It was arranged in recognition of the growing need for adequate student services in higher education if students are to achieve their true potential in education. The purposes were a) to look at the role of student support services in enabling students to make the greatest possible use of the educational opportunities; and b) to offer the opportunity to share good practice and procedures and think about the benefits to the institution as a whole.

The need for this had been highlighted by the recent publication of the OECD report comparing higher education systems in the world's industrialised countries, showing that student expansion is failing to produce large numbers of graduates because of very high drop out rates - often understood to be a proof of University inefficiency. There was a hope that the example to be found in some English-speaking countries, especially in the USA where access is wide but completion rates high, would contribute to combating the problems students face.

The notes below are an attempt to synthesise the points made in presentations by the Conference Coordinators and keynote speakers. Not all points apply equally to every country:

- There are many differences in structures and access to higher education across Europe and also in what is felt

legitimate or appropriate for universities to provide in terms of student support.

- Use of terminology - not just of language - varies a good deal, too. Counselling as understood in British or US counselling services would appear to be virtually untranslatable into French. Yet the same word, "counselling", used in a broader sense, appeared to be the most favoured English word, probably in preference to "guidance", for the whole spectrum of information-giving, assistance with academic reflection and learning skills and option choice, careers guidance, personal counselling, and practical advisory work.

Conference Coordinators and Keynote Speakers:-

Mr Maitland Stobart, Deputy Director of Education, Culture & Sport, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Professor Malcolm Skilbeck, Deputy Director OECD's Directorate of Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

Ms Ellen Noonan, Head, Counselling Section, Extra-Mural Studies, London University

Professor Dr h.c. Werner Clement, University of Economics & Business Administration, Vienna.

Professor Dr Arnold Rothe, University of Heidelberg

Dr Andris Barblan, Executive Secretary, Standing Conference of Rectors of European Universities, Geneva.

Baroness Pauline Perry, Vice Chancellor, South Bank University, London.

Sir Peter Newsam, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Director of Institute of Education, London University.

1. HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE: ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT CONTEXT

- **Increasing Pan-European Dimension**, characterised by:
 - Mobility
 - Intercommunication
 - Multiculturalism
 - Multilingualism

Specific to Eastern Europe:

- Some progress following political changes, but
- With ensuing "Brain Drain" from East to West, so
- Potential damage to the East's countries and Universities

And there is a dark side, too

Through Europe generally:

- Ethnocentrism, xenophobia, racism, anti-semitism

For Eastern Europe:

- Negative aspects of political fragmentation:
- Widespread intolerance
- Student Refugees.

- **Instability, Recession, Unemployment**, outcomes of

In East Europe:

- Political changes
- Poor standard goods, inefficient production

In West Europe:

- Failure to keep with education, production and business developments of SE Asia - cf. all S. Koreans over 10 are computer literate!
- Pricing selves out of markets.

These lead to

- **Greatly increased competitiveness**, and between World Zones (eg E Asia, Europe, N America) not just countries:

And so to

- **An Education and Training "Offensive"**. So all countries are looking to education and training to enable their economies to produce high quality goods and services. But this is costly. Expansion of HE (to "Mass" or even "Universal") will involve "doing more with less." Hence need for efficiency and effectiveness in HE.

Do international comparisons indicate which HE model to go for? The correlation of Guidance & Counselling with good retention rates in English-speaking countries is attractive. **But beware of superficial comparisons and lessons:**

Relationships are unclear between:

- Numbers/percentages entering HE & Admission systems
- Percentages of national budgets spent on HE
- costs per student
- Student success rates

Whichever model is chosen, there are some "pluses" and "minuses":

- *Selective* system (eg UK) may be seen as elitist and less democratic, but may be high standard
- *Open* may be fairer to all, but with more "drop out", more who can't manage - though at least they will have had the experience.

2. GRADUATES AND EMPLOYMENT - ISSUES FOR INSTITUTIONS TO NOTE AND ADAPT CREATIVELY TO:

- From late 80s graduates increasingly caught up in more general unemployment, affecting especially graduates in Arts and Social Science (and especially young females in some countries, though not UK). More buoyant employment for Business Studies, Management, Engineering, Technology, Science.

- Current graduate unemployment unlikely to "take off".

- Reversal in one decade of proportions of graduates going into private or public sectors. At beginning of 80s, two thirds into public, one third into private. Now vice-versa.

- "Job Substitution" increasing (ie. employers "graduatising" previously non-graduate jobs).

- "Intellectualisation" of more jobs and functions, so need for:

- up-grading of existing qualification-holders;
- extending content of qualification programmes.

- Employers increasingly discriminating in recruitment practices, more critically aware of contents of different HE qualifications and of which courses at which universities best produce the competences they want, so

- "cosy" established relationships between particular universities and some employers cannot be taken for granted;
- universities which have previously enjoyed this will need to be on their mettle.

- Students increasingly discerning (and often their parents, too): less willing just to fit in and adapt to the university and put up with it.

- Students' expectations of and preparation for the reality of the "world of work" are often unrealistic or inappropriate because:

- "Traditional" professions still pre-occupy students and universities too much - at the expense of business (even in Germany).
- Students have too little awareness and experience of work contexts.

3. ISSUES FOR STUDENT COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- Value and promote the **wide continuum** of counselling roles and contributions to the university.
 - From practical to academic choice/learning skills to vocational to personal/developmental;
 - From private consultations to staff development contributor to institutional change participant-facilitator.
- Helping and supporting students is the responsibility of the University as a whole and of **all its staff** (including key "first-point-of-contact" roles such as secretaries and receptionists), and tends not to fall neatly into rigidly separate departments:
 - hence a need for networks, linkages, intercommunication between staff and communication with students.
- Note and act upon some important relationships:
 - the structural relationship between the student services and the University. The Head of Student Services should be a senior management role reporting to the office of the Vice-Chancellor;
 - the relationship between student services and teaching staff; each needs to be aware of one another's business.
 - Curriculum should in particular mesh with each end of the student's experience, and with what lies just beyond each end. Most countries recognise the importance of this, but feel that present arrangements tend to be unsatisfactory, and that institutions should attend to this. Regarding the beginning of the student's experience, particular attention should be given to:
 - the **mode** and **method** of what is given to students, and not just the content (note the contrast that faces new students);
 - induction** for new students. Vitaly important. Arrangements are often unsatisfactory. And it's a continuing process, not something that's over after the first couple of days.
- Careers Services are well placed to contribute valuably from their interface with students, employers, teaching staff and the University.
 - Some services need to redefine this role so as to market more effectively;
 - From the perspective of this interface, and building on the work students will have done in schools, and emphasising the "self" of the student and his/her abilities, services should:
 - Provide "clues" to the University, and those responsible for courses, and employment trends and issues and what employers are looking for in content and competences students learn in their courses.
- Employer feedback is often requesting:
 - Better career-related pre-course guidance (which in many cases can more practicably be provided through schools and other agencies rather than the universities; though these have a role in respect of their local prospective students, and the information material they produce);
 - Overall skills rather than specific disciplines;

- people-related skills;
- flexibility and adaptability;
- customer-centredness;
- computer skills;
- familiarisation with the world of work.

4. GOOD PRACTICE PROPOSALS

1. **Institutional planning and practice needs to be informed by student services' perspectives** - in some cases more than at present applies.
2. **Recognition of the importance of the role of the Head of Student Services.**
3. **Universities need to have a (preferably single) referral point** where "diagnosis" may be made of students' enquiries and then referral offered to services or facilities for, eg:
 - Information about the University's courses and programmes; learning skills;
 - residential accommodation;
 - practical information advice (eg practical/legal);
 - personal counselling;
 - careers guidance;
 - childcare;
 - health;
 - "Special Needs";
 - International/overseas students;
 - "mature" students;
 - Sports & Physical recreation.
4. **Performance indicators need to be developed.** Student Services must take the initiative in developing these, otherwise inappropriate ones may be imposed. This subject can generate anxiety - partly because of difficulties in defining "success". The issue of the retention of students illustrates the tension between loyalty to the student (for whom "withdrawal" may be the most positive course of action) and loyalty to the institution (which may be worried about "drop out"). So it is probably best for Student Services to concentrate on performance indicators related to enabling students to be more effective.
5. **Developing "Peer-tutoring"** - and the training/systems necessary for this.
6. **Professionalising Student Services** - through preparatory training and staff development and, where necessary, having clearer terms of reference.
7. **Research:** for example on:
 - students' perceptions of counselling/guidance/support services;
 - what do they find helpful?;
 - supporting international students;
 - careers counselling methods;
 - student stress (though stress is not a global concept, and generates different meanings in different cultures;
 - anxiety, if not quite the same, may more widely be recognised);
 - urban problems facing students in many countries.

FLOWERS WILT

A REPORT ON A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR (THE FLOWERS REPORT) LONDON, 14 JANUARY 1994

IAIN MACARTHUR

HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Since the final version of the Flowers Review of the Academic Year blossomed in late 1993, there seems to have been very little discussion at national or local level of its outcomes and recommendations. Of course, the Chancellor's 1993 autumn budget statement, which has caused Principals and Vice Chancellors to rip up their short, medium and long term plans, has been the major item on all recent agendas, but it is clear that Flowers, if implemented, will cause us to rethink just as radically.

What is it that Flowers has recommended? Back in April 1993, in his interim consultative document, Flowers was clearly banking on support for one strong option: move the Academic year forward to a September start, allow those with semester systems to complete the first Semester by Christmas, and say goodbye to students in May. By November 1993, the position had changed to a recommendation to invite each of our HE institutions to decide for themselves.

Four options have emerged: a University may choose to remain with three terms spread in traditional fashion around traditional vacation breaks; semesterized Universities may wish to stick with the first semester straddling Christmas; some semesterized institutions will go for the early start model giving themselves the opportunity to introduce a third Summer Semester for fast-track programmes, pre-sessional or income-generating vocational courses; and some might choose a later start, November or even January, to allow a break after school exams and assessments are complete.

The 120 people who came to see Lord Flowers set out his stall in London on 14 January 1994 seemed to expect something more definitive and coherent than what was on offer. The "traditional" "older" Universities were at the forefront of the "stick with three terms" option: a strong defence was presented by Dr Bruce Coleman, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Exeter, who stated that his research amongst his students indicated any change was unpopular. Dr Tony Higgins, Chief Executive, UCAS, was most concerned about

streamlining A-Level procedures and bringing publication of results forward by at least two weeks to early August (it is possible, he said).

There are a number of other barriers to change: we seem as a nation to be slaves to the concept of three week breaks at Christmas and Easter, and we have admission procedures and criteria which are varied and difficult to manage. Why will we not publish in advance our admissions criteria and guarantee places for those who meet the criteria? Why do we not adopt a German-style Numerus Clausus system or follow the Irish approach? Why do we make things so difficult for ourselves?

The afternoon workshop on Learning Support was hijacked for some time by staff-driven concerns on running three semesters within the Academic Year. When will we catalogue our books? When can we find time to service our computers? We cannot even manage on present resources and time allocation! When we eventually came to looking from the student's viewpoint, we articulated concerns about the fate of induction programmes, ability of students to manage short-burst intensive study periods, the contraction of the gap between school or college and higher education, the acceptability of an early start for overseas entrants, the concentrated pressure on learning resources, and acceptability of changes of the timetable of graduate recruitment.

Auriol Stevens, Editor of the THES, chaired the Conference and cracked the whip throughout the day. Lord Flowers and Dr Coleman had some barbed exchanges about elitism, Dr Higgins raised the basic but unresolved issues about entitlement to entry to Higher Education, and we, the audience, voted by a large majority for September starts and a unified pattern throughout the sector: Lord Flowers told us we may choose our Academic Year for ourselves, but most of us asked to be told.

ref: The Review of the Academic Year, publ. HEFCE, November 1993.

Caul makes it plain that he is seeking to preserve the essence of higher education against attacks from the policy-makers: "The main thrust of this book is not only to celebrate and reassert the bedrock academic values associated with liberal universities, but to argue vigorously that the maintenance of these values in the protected world of higher education is crucial for democratic society."

While this is in many ways an admirable aim, it needs to be backed up with rigour and in-depth analysis. Instead we are presented with a kaleidoscope of images, including some excellent 'one-liners':

- "The object of good teaching is to instil the enthusiasm to go out and explore."
- "The cultural enrichment which HE should reinforce has to do with the fostering of the belief that all human beings can not only enjoy but personally participate in the creation of their own culture".

There are tantalizing glimpses of valuable concepts - freedom to learn, measurement of value-added, even some exploration of Maslow's theories of self-actualization - but the core chapters lack the development of a 'big idea'.

Reverting to a handbook approach in the later chapters the author once again shows his ability to summarize by describing the main elements of a student support system, backed up by illustrative case studies, before finishing with the fashionable and important subject of quality assurance.

Informative rather than inspirational, this book nevertheless deserves a wide audience and for some will be a springboard for developing further the important notion that personal development is the real value added by higher education.

Rupert Bristow, South Bank University

HELPING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS

John Earwaker

Open University Press, 1992. 141pp.

ISBN 0 335 15665 7 Price (pbk) £12.99

John Earwaker's is a welcome and valuable book. Welcome because there is such a shortage of major publications addressing the support of students in specifically British higher education. Valuable because it faces key questions in a fresh way, and clearly articulates topical thoughts which are usefully based on careful and systematic study he has undertaken.

Why do students need support? What are the institution's responsibilities? Higher education is for most students a major and stretching experience - intellectually, socially and personally. Inevitably, then, it generates pressures. Some of these are a direct function of advanced study, and others will vary according to the interaction between the demands of learning and the individual stu-

dent's personal circumstances.

Anyone needs support, Earwaker argues, as they go through points of big change in their lives and, depending on which these changes are, they can derive support from many sources including family, friends, and beyond. In some contexts of change, the issues, processes and resources essential to facilitate the experience are integral or specific to the context. Higher education is such a context. This defines the criterion of institutional responsibility, and the limits to it.

Earwaker shows strong interest in and concern for the role of the teacher as tutor, and the key part the tutor plays in supporting students. But the nature and appeal of this role has been encumbered in various ways and is thereby impeded. Perhaps Earwaker overstates some of these:

- Given the British tendency to pragmatic evolution, rather than radical philosophical clean-sweeps - and Earwaker stresses the need for education and student support to fit the culture - it is not surprising if the ancestors of practice can be traced. But I doubt that there is much kowtowing these days to a doctrine of pastoral care, steeped in the values of *in loco parentis* and of moral responsibility for the student.

- Nor, I suspect, has the influence of professional counselling so pervasively dis-empowered tutors that they feel that the core of student support is what counsellors do, and tutors just do amateurish things at the edge.

- The complementarity of the support roles of tutors and extra-faculty support services (and Earwaker is right to put a question mark over the term *central services* for these) may not be generally so poorly understood.

- And perhaps it is a pity that, as recently as 1992, the year of publication, there was still felt to be the need "to shift the [student support] argument away from the question of how to provide safety nets for those who fail" - not that it should be allowed to become "incorrect" to provide for the minority who do have problems or are faced with failure.

Even so, all these themes have something in them that we recognise. The overstatement is a function of the energy with which the vision is presented - "the questions are posed as sharply as I can" - and does not spoil it.

Earwaker puts the tutor centre-stage. "Supporting students is not an additional thing that tutors do when they are not teaching them; it is a way of so managing the learning process that students are both challenged and sustained". Applause for this. Tutors have the central role in this central task. Others work with them in this, not just the obvious ones in libraries, IT resources, registrars' departments and student services but many others in many different ways. And students support each other, of course: there is a useful section on peer-support.

Earwaker modestly expresses his contribution in terms of posing questions and opening up discussion. In fact, he has given us the most useful contribution to a conceptual analysis of student support in British higher education I have come across. Readers are likely to be appreciative of his having done this - and with such insight and such warmth for all concerned.

John Rolfe, University of Northumbria

Caul makes it plain that he is seeking to preserve the essence of higher education against attacks from the policy-makers: "The main thrust of this book is not only to celebrate and reassert the bedrock academic values associated with liberal universities, but to argue vigorously that the maintenance of these values in the protected world of higher education is crucial for democratic society."

While this is in many ways an admirable aim, it needs to be backed up with rigour and in-depth analysis. Instead we are presented with a kaleidoscope of images, including some excellent 'one-liners':

- "The object of good teaching is to instil the enthusiasm to go out and explore."
- "The cultural enrichment which HE should reinforce has to do with the fostering of the belief that all human beings can not only enjoy but personally participate in the creation of their own culture".

There are tantalizing glimpses of valuable concepts - freedom to learn, measurement of value-added, even some exploration of Maslow's theories of self-actualization - but the core chapters lack the development of a 'big idea'.

Reverting to a handbook approach in the later chapters the author once again shows his ability to summarize by describing the main elements of a student support system, backed up by illustrative case studies, before finishing with the fashionable and important subject of quality assurance.

Informative rather than inspirational, this book nevertheless deserves a wide audience and for some will be a springboard for developing further the important notion that personal development is the real value added by higher education.

Rupert Bristow, South Bank University

HELPING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS

John Earwaker

Open University Press, 1992. 141pp.

ISBN 0 335 15665 7 Price (pbk) £12.99

John Earwaker's is a welcome and valuable book. Welcome because there is such a shortage of major publications addressing the support of students in specifically British higher education. Valuable because it faces key questions in a fresh way, and clearly articulates topical thoughts which are usefully based on careful and systematic study he has undertaken.

Why do students need support? What are the institution's responsibilities? Higher education is for most students a major and stretching experience - intellectually, socially and personally. Inevitably, then, it generates pressures. Some of these are a direct function of advanced study, and others will vary according to the interaction between the demands of learning and the individual stu-

dent's personal circumstances.

Anyone needs support, Earwaker argues, as they go through points of big change in their lives and, depending on which these changes are, they can derive support from many sources including family, friends, and beyond. In some contexts of change, the issues, processes and resources essential to facilitate the experience are integral or specific to the context. Higher education is such a context. This defines the criterion of institutional responsibility, and the limits to it.

Earwaker shows strong interest in and concern for the role of the teacher as tutor, and the key part the tutor plays in supporting students. But the nature and appeal of this role has been encumbered in various ways and is thereby impeded. Perhaps Earwaker overstates some of these:

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Typed by

Vidhya Jayaratnam, South Bank University

Production Management by

Kieran Paul Crowder, South Bank University

Printed by

Romsey Print & Design Co., Eastleigh, Hampshire

Set in Palatino and 95 Helvetica Black

Published by

The Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE)

c/o Department of Student Services

University of East London

Longbridge Road

Dagenham

Essex RM8 2AS

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