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FACILITATING EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING.

NAREND BAIJNATH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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JUNE 1997

PROMOTERS: PROFESSOR DIRK MEERKOTTER
PROFESSOR OWEN VAN DEN BERG

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis my project is to examine the Academic Development Programme (ADP) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) as a project of possibility mirrored against its basic premises and the practices which flowed from its implementation.

The central proposition I develop is that the ADP at UWC was predisposed to have a limited impact on the development project at UWC for several reasons. The first of these is that the ADP's initial conceptualisation was driven primarily by the political considerations of equity and access. This political impetus behind it set it in tension with the avenues for improving higher education which are used at universities elsewhere in the world, which have been driven primarily by a concern to improve quality. The effect was to shift the critical gaze away from the quality of educational provision and the institutional conditions at UWC which affect quality.

The main evidence I provide in developing the thesis is a narrative account of my own practice as an AD practitioner within the Economic and Management Sciences Faculty at UWC. I offer accounts in the areas of student development, curriculum reform and staff development as case studies which I make the objects of my extended analysis.

I also argue that the access imperative failed to give adequate attention to the possible consequences of changing the access policy without anticipating the impact it would have, and how it would be influenced by, the material conditions prevailing at the University. I argue in the light of this that planned change in curriculum, staff development, and staff development, as well as the service sectors of the University are the *sine qua non* of changed access policy.

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From the analytical thrust of my thesis, I develop the proposition that for the AD enterprize at universities to become institutionalised and sustainable on the long term, it is best undergirded by a wider discourse of quality improvement, which makes legitimate demands on academic staff to pursue development objectives and programmes which are consonant with those of the ADP. In this way the resistance which accompanies an ADP driven primarily by the access imperative is obviated.

I maintain that the higher education policy terrain nationally, and the policy environment institutionally have not been conducive to a coherent approach to the challenge of facilitating access. In particular, I explore how this lack of an enabling policy environment at an institutional and national level impacts on the AD programme within the University.

The methodological position from which I develop my thesis is that a study of the nature I have undertaken must take account of historical and contextual factors with an overall cohering influence provided by the narrative. I begin with a historical perspective on change within universities in South Africa and locate the advent of AD withing this broad canvas of educational change. My proposition in this regard is that it is in the genesis of the higher education system in South Africa over several decades that the roots of the current problems and challenges are to be found. I provide an account of how racially based schooling has impacted on the education of blacks and produced the AD challenge.

Thereafter I episodically construct a narrative of the change process which I experienced focusing on the individual, departmental and institutional levels. In doing so, I try to illuminate the inherent complexity of the change process by critically analysing the multiple factors which influenced its texture. In addition to this, I gave attention to my

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positionality in the change process, accounting for my assumptions about AD, addressing the vexing issue of representation, and developing a methodologically justifiable position for using the narrative as PhD genre.

I propose ways of reconceptualising AD so that more focused attention is given to student, staff and curriculum development. I suggest how the role of agency in curriculum development may be enhanced. In addition, I argue that curriculum development can only be systematised through the establishment of an appraisal system which provides incentives or pressures for improvement. In the area of staff development, I advance an argument for a reflective practitioner model. This should be supported adequately by policy, incentives and rewards which elevate and emphasise the value of good teaching.

In short, I develop my thesis along a trajectory which enables me to answer the question: What can be learned about educational change in the university setting from this experience of facilitating AD?

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DECLARATION

I declare that **FACILITATING EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING** is my own work, that it has not been submitted before any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

FULL NAME: NAREND BAIJNATH **DATE:** JUNE 1997

SIGNED: ....

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my co-supervisors Professors Dirk Meerkotter and Owen van den Berg for their meticulous and incisive critique of my work; their encouragement, and unwavering dedication to the project.

Former colleagues of mine in the Academic Development Centre (ADC) at the University of the Western Cape were a frequent source of critical feedback and support. The dynamic intellectual environment in the ADC over several years helped me shape my understanding of the conceptual issues in academic development. In particular I want to mention Melanie Walker and Terry Volbrecht from whose feedback and interaction I have gained much.

My brothers, sister, and my parents have been a constant source of encouragement and moral support. However, I owe the most to Roy for his inspiration, material support and dedication to my education - without which I might well have never got to university in the first place.

My wife Indira and children, particularly Mohini, endured considerable neglect for me to see this project to fruition. To them I am most grateful.

I owe a debt of gratitude to members of the Economic and Management Sciences Faculty at the University of the Western Cape for allowing me the space to pursue my research interests and for their generous support. Special thanks are due to the Political Studies Department.

Thanks to Raeez Rayner for assisting me in the editing, formatting and layout of the thesis.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the Centre of Science Development by way of a part-time bursary.

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FACILITATING EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The Academic Development enterprise has since its inception been driven by equity and access concerns. As a simple political project, its aim was to provide access to higher education to students who were denied it and/or disadvantaged through impoverished schooling under the apartheid government. The term "Academic Development" (AD) is now accepted as a generic term to refer to the broad educational project whose brief is to devise strategies and programmes and to undertake research which enhance the possibilities of success of such students. An allied objective is to foster qualitative improvement in educational provision more generally at institutions of higher education.

The first systematic initiatives at a programmatic level were taken by the historically white English universities (HWEUs) which set up Academic Support Programmes (ASPs) as avenues of access and support for disadvantaged students since the early 1980s.

The ASP model, however, did not conceive of disadvantage as a majority phenomenon. The strategies which were employed were adjunct courses, academic skills programmes and foundation courses, which were geared towards equipping disadvantaged students to respond to the demands of the university. The "problem" was located with the student. The objective therefore was to change the student to fit the university. Moreover, there was not any public acceptance that there might be something wrong with the university and that the university might need to change as well.

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At the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the roots of the Academic Development Programme (ADP) can be traced back to 1982 when the University's Council adopted a new mission, out of which flowed a changed admissions policy opening access to all qualified students, regardless of colour. Over the next few years enrolment at the University doubled without a concomitant increase in personnel or resources.

Whereas previously the student body was largely Coloured, students from other disadvantaged sectors of the population now entered the University in large numbers, leading to considerable linguistic diversity, and diversity in terms of the quality of the educational experiences in their schooling which they carried with them. These developments precipitated a crisis of significant proportion at the University and was to place the institution under tremendous strain in the years to come.

At issue was the preparedness of the University to respond creatively to the new conditions and the difficulties encountered by students in coping with the demands of university study. This was an environment which was alien and not as supportive as was necessary to help them overcome the ravages of inadequate schooling and socio-economically deprived backgrounds.

It became plain to UWC that special efforts had to be made to assist students to cope with the demands of university study. The ASP model was not considered to be an option, for the University did not begin from the premise that the problem lay with the student, therefore the student had to change to fit the University, as was the implicit logic of ASPs. It

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was taken as axiomatic that the University needed to change as well. This different political position had significant ramifications for the ADP at UWC.

The way in which UWC conceived the AD enterprize envisaged incorporating everyone at the University in a programme of curriculum appraisal, reform and innovation to enhance the educational experiences of students; hence it was called the "Infusion" model. A contextualized account on attempts to advance this enterprize will constitute a large part of the story which undergirds this thesis, and I shall elaborate upon it in the next three chapters (2, 3, and 4).

My overarching concern is to examine the ADP as a project of possibility at UWC mirrored against its basic premises and the multitude of intended and unintended consequences flowing from its implementation. In particular I am concerned with accounting for the difficulties encountered in institutionalising the programme.

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My main proposition with regard to these difficulties, around which the fuselage of my thesis is built, is that the development programme at the University, driven primarily by the political considerations of equity and access, was predisposed to have a limited impact on the development needs of UWC.

I contend that the main reason for this limited impact is that the political impetus behind it sets it in tension with the avenues for improving higher education which are available and acceptable at universities generally.

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The focus on equity and access had the effect of shifting the critical gaze away from the quality of educational provision and institutional conditions which affected the educational project. I shall elaborate my argument in the thesis to corroborate this proposition. The main evidence I shall advance in support of the thesis is a narrative account of my own AD practice, refracted through broader AD practice at UWC.

I shall also argue that the change in the admissions policy at UWC effected sudden and overwhelming pressure on an educational institution which was already in need of development in the crucial areas of curriculum, staff development and student development programmes, apart from the administrative, service and support infrastructure. The absence of institutional policy and adequate planning in these areas also meant that critical conditions necessary for such large-scale change to take place constructively could not be created.

In addition, the change in admissions policy failed to anticipate adequately the consequences of the policy in its impact on the material conditions prevailing at the University. In short, the absence of planned change, which ought to have been the *sine qua non* of a changed admissions policy, provoked the (often silent) resistance of large sections of the University to the necessary AD project. With perceptions among staff that the situation created by the changed policy was intolerable if not impossible, many legitimated their resistance to the AD challenge on the grounds that teaching was untenable under the conditions of adversity which prevailed.

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However, this is only one half of the proposition.

Flowing from the analytical thrust of my thesis, the rest of the proposition is that in order for the AD project at universities to become institutionalised and sustainable on the long term, it is crucial that it be underpinned by the wider discourse of quality improvement, which makes legitimate demands on academic staff to pursue development objectives which are consonant with those of the AD programme.

In addition, an effective mechanism, co-ordinated at a national level to monitor and audit quality, teaching and research at all universities needs to be instituted. In pursuance of this line of argument, I shall provide a perspective on how planned change might occur and what the enabling conditions for these are, accepting that our goals are to provide a quality educational experience for the students whom the University admits.

Tying in with the proposition I have outlined above, it is my assertion that the higher education policy terrain nationally, and the policy environment institutionally have not been conducive to a coherent approach to the challenge of facilitating access, ever since the inception of AD initiatives at universities. In particular, I shall explore how this lack of an enabling policy environment at an institutional and national level impacted on the AD programme within the University.

The central task I have undertaken in this thesis project is to produce a critical and adequately theorised narrative account of AD within a university setting. The account will be based on my experience as an AD

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practitioner working in the Academic Development Centre (ADC) at UWC, but responsible for AD in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, as Coordinator. I have circumscribed a three and a half year period from July 1991 to December 1994 to make the focus of my analysis. The main reason for this is that it was a period of intense activity during which I developed my AD practice against the backcloth of an emerging AD practice in the ADC and more broadly at UWC. It is also the period during which most of the main issues I intend to address in this thesis arose.

I shall offer case studies of change in the areas of student development, curriculum reform and staff development at the departmental level. These three areas of endeavour constitute the main avenues of practice in the ADP and my own AD practice.

My focus on the department is deliberate for it is the basic unit of organisation within the University and is the point at which a confluence of issues relating to the AD project occurs. It is also the level at which my own interventions as an AD practitioner threw up the most significant challenges. I shall elaborate upon these in the thesis.

In pursuit of the task I have set myself, I shall seek to integrate history, context and narrative in a way which is methodologically justifiable and acceptable. I shall try to achieve this by letting the overall narrative provide a cohering influence, while the historical perspective, and the case studies of AD practice index the matrix of factors which are of significance. This is undertaken in Chapter Two.

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The adequacy of the account I propose to develop turns on some crucial dimensions. A historical perspective on the university sector as well as of the AD movement in South Africa is an essential starting point in order to sketch the background and locate the study within its institutional and national contexts and the general firmament of educational change within South African universities.

It is in the genesis particularly of the higher education system in South Africa over several decades that the roots of many of the current problems and challenges are to be found. In addition, it constitutes critical background for the main propositions in this thesis. Consequently its proportional weighting in the thesis is not insubstantial. The trajectory I propose to follow to accomplish this objective is to sketch the formative events and turns in the history of higher education in South Africa which have contributed significantly to the creation of the current context. This task is accomplished in Chapter Three.

The study will be located within the context of the institution (UWC) which provides the setting, and the broader context of higher education in South Africa. What I aim to achieve through the case studies is to episodically construct a narrative of the change process which I experienced and to attempt to capture its complexity, following several avenues at the individual, departmental and institutional levels.

The process has not been linear or neat in its development. Part of my project in the thesis is to make coherent meaning of the untidy and fragmented efforts at change by seeking out the essences of particular

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aspects of my practice and to shape it into a narrative form so it can be illuminating and meaningful for me in how I represent it to myself and to my colleagues in the field of AD. In that, it may also be illuminating and insightful for other practitioners attempting to understand the dynamics of change within a university setting. I undertake this task in Chapter Four. In view of the enormity of this task, this chapter constitutes the most detailed and lengthy of all.

Apart from providing an account of AD practice from my vantage point as AD practitioner, I intend to illuminate the inherent complexity of the change process by critically analysing the multiple factors which influenced its texture. Put simply, my concern is to answer the question: What can be learned about change within the University through this experience of facilitating AD? This question is addressed substantially in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six, I reflect upon some of the meanings which suggest themselves in my account and explore what new questions they provoke. I also explore the way forward in terms of the AD project at UWC and suggest further avenues of research.

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An important dimension of the thesis would be for me to account for my positionality in the change process. Apart from a personal curiosity value, it is an important methodological consideration. In other words, how do I come to see things in the particular way in which I shall represent them in this thesis? And, what makes my representation valid? To clarify my position, I shall consider critical moments in my own development as a constituted and constituting subject in the change process by making excavatory forays into my autobiography. I shall do this initially in Chapter

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Four. However, I shall also try to account for my representations reflexively. I intend to do this in a *post hoc,* Chapter Seven.

In summary then, the premise from which I develop my thesis is that an understanding of the limits and possibilities of the AD project at universities is only possible through an examination of the broad canvas of historical, institutional, policy, and practical contexts. This will be undergirded by a narrative of change at the individual, organisational and institutional levels out of which I shall tease out relevant issues for analysis and discussion.

I turn next to a consideration of the methods through which I shall attempt to achieve the aims of this study.

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CHAPTER TWO - METHODOLOGY

2.1) Methodological Integrity

In my quest for an appropriate methodology, I have sought a configuration which would help me integrate context and history together with narrative in a manner which I could justify in terms of the required conventions of the PhD thesis. The expanse I have indicated I wish to cover for the thesis is self-evidently broad and draws on multiple sources of data including notes, semi-structured interviews, ethnographies, documentary data, reports, and published and unpublished practitioners' accounts of implementing AD at UWC.

Given the breadth of the terrain which my study traverses, a considerable methodological challenge is to circumscribe the area of study into a manageable project while maintaining methodological integrity. As I outlined in the Chapter One, I propose to accomplish this in two ways. The first is to allow the narrative of the change process to provide the cohering influence over the multiple avenues along which I shall develop the thesis.

The second is through the account of practice I shall provide, wherein I shall index the matrix of factors which influenced my practice and which might be considered in a study of AD in a university setting. Out of this I shall generate the conceptual and practical issues which I shall make the focus of my elaborated analysis, apart from building conceptual bridges with the literature.

My ultimate objective is to generate a theorised account on how AD takes place in a university setting, albeit based on the "thick description" of a single study. How I intend to escape the confining effects of the single

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setting is by following Atkinson and Delamont's (1985:40) invocation of comparative perspectives to make "characteristic features, problems and issues which may be common to a range of different concrete settings" the object of comparison and analysis; and in this way "free(s) the researcher from the potential straight-jacket of restricting attention only to the particular setting directly available to study."

In short, while my focus may be the single setting, my concern is with depth rather than breadth. My main project is not to derive a set of insights about AD which can comment on AD generally. Rather, it is about examining the development of AD at UWC within its peculiar context and the confluence of internal and external forces which have impinged upon it. Nonetheless, I shall refract my analysis through a set of organisational, political and conceptual features and indicators which might apply to other AD programmes at universities generally.

2.2) Why Qualitative methodology?

By virtue of the kind of data I am interested in for the purposes of this thesis, and ways in which I intend representing them, my research is located firmly within the qualitative paradigm. However, while the sources of data I have indicated I shall draw upon suggest implicitly the techniques I might employ, they do not quite address the complex issue of methodology.

The question I feel I must necessarily address first then is "why qualitative methodology?" The virtue and particular value of qualitative methodology and its objects are well documented (Bogdan and Biklen 1982; Burgess 1985; Strauss 1987; Bryman 1988; Hammersley 1990; Van Manen 1990; Vulliamy, Levin and Stephens 1990; Delamont 1992).

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Walker (1985:45) argues that "a methodology should specify methods but only in order to justify their use for defined purposes in specified situations and circumstances." In addition, he argues (1985:47) that a method is there to be tested as well. While both these objects coincide with those of this thesis, they are still insufficient in conveying a clear sense of where my project leans methodologically.

The particular relevance of a qualitative methodology in terms of the parameters of this study lies in its privileging of the natural setting as a source of data. Its recognition of the researcher as principal instrument (Bogdan and Biklen 1982:29) has particular resonance with this study. The researcher's insight is a key instrument of analysis, and in addition it attributes considerable importance to context; as postulated by Bogdan and Biklen:

> ...action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs...the setting has to be understood in the context of the history of the institutions of which they are a part (1982:29-30).

Van Manen (1990) gives a more elaborate view of methodology in research which provides a greater purchase on the significance of a methodological standpoint in a research project of this nature. He declares that methodology:

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> ... refers to the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective. It includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human which is associated with or implied by a certain research method. We might say that the methodology is the theory behind the method, including the study of what method one should follow and why (Van Manen 1990:27).

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In the light of the above, I intend to lay out a clear basis for the key propositions which I make or extrapolate from my practice. Importantly also, I shall attempt to make transparent the bases of the assumptions I make and the position I hold. This is where my intended foray into my autobiography is crucial in providing a candid picture of what has shaped my outlook and positionality in my practice and my approaches to inquiry.

Being a participant in the phenomena and practice which I have made the objects of my study demands a high degree of methodological self-awareness. Can one assume multiple roles as participant, agent and investigator of a process as I intend to as a researcher? What are the implications for methodological integrity?

The concept I have found useful in helping me come to terms with the particular conundrum posed by these questions is that of reflexivity, as put forth by Delamont (1992). She tenders the following definition:

> Reflexivity is a social scientific variety of self consciousness. It means that the research recognises and glories in the endless cycle of interactions and perceptions which characterise relationships with other human beings. Research is a series of interactions, and good research is highly turned to the interrelationship of the investigator with the respondents (Delamont 1992:8).

But there is more to the issue of reflexivity than is contained in this position. The observation made by Usher and Edwards (1994:16) in regard to my conundrum posed earlier, is as compelling as it is penetrating:

> Reflexivity is not just a matter of being aware of one's prejudices and standpoints but of recognising that through language, discourse and text, worlds are created and re-created in ways of which we are rarely aware. We cannot always recognise that we are subjects within language and within particular historical, cultural and social

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> frameworks. The key questions then become how we both constitute and are constituted by language, and where lies the power to interpret and control meaning.

These observations are particularly significant in the postmodern world, where huge epistemological and methodological challenges confront researchers and writers of theses in the social sciences.

These have been complicated further by the virtual demise of positivist conceptions of social science, as a result of a sustained onslaught from various methodological and metatheoretical positions. The postmodern contribution to this discourse has been to bring under intense scrutiny the issues of power/knowledge relations in research; the way in which things are represented (textually and politically); and the role of self in research; amongst other things. Jay (1994:10) gives us an insight into some of the dilemmas which these provoke:

> The questions we face might be put this way: "Who represents what to whom, for what reasons, through what institutions, to what effect, to whose benefit, at what costs? What are the ethics of representation? What kinds of knowledge and power do authorised forms of representation produce? Who owns or controls the means of representation? And what new ways of representation might better achieve the goals of justice and democracy in the overlapping worlds of education and politics.

These questions go to the heart of dilemmas facing the research and thesis writer. Given our history of inequality in South Africa, and the (racially) distorted relations of power, especially in the knowledge production arena, they are particularly significant for us. Representation, not only in the political sense, but also in the depictive sense (textual and non-textual forms) have assumed a deeper significance in the light of our history.

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In the academic arena these questions have forced us (albeit quite inadequately), to consider the anomalies in representation of blacks, especially in the student body at universities. Moreover, it has forced us to give fresh attention to the curriculum and to seek ways of enhancing the learning experiences of students (who have had inadequate schooling) through curricular innovation and other AD initiatives.

How does someone writing a PhD thesis begin to engage with these complex epistemological, methodological and political concerns in a climate of such immense contestation then? I would suggest that the first step would be to develop a methodological position which engages these complex issues and positions one in relation to the key methodological challenges we face.

The first position reflected above (Delamont 1992) reveals clear potential to rescue me from the conundrum I confront. In particular it suggests guidelines through which I could maintain my multiple-role position without loss of methodological integrity. The pre-condition of course is to maintain the methodological self-awareness propounded by Delamont above.

However, it is the second which is considerably more relevant for my thesis. My interest is in attempting to unravel the constructedness of my self, my identity, and my knowledge in the field in which I work, and in relation to the narrative account I shall develop.

In the light of my declared aims and objectives to pursue an integrated methodological framework incorporating a focus on history, context and narrative, the possibilities opened up by qualitative methodology for pursuing inquiry through an examination of context and history should

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hopefully be self-evident by now.

Indeed, such an integrated methodological perspective, while scarce, is not without precedent. Lou Smith, in a critical introduction to Hammersley (1990:11) argues for an integration of ethnography, history and biography as methods of pursuing educational inquiry, observing that problems in (school) innovation and improvement require such an enlarged view. I concur strongly, and suggest that this holds true for universities as well.

2.3) Epistemological Considerations

What is of particular relevance of a qualitative methodology for my study are its epistemological assumptions, as I have indicated above. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:32) sum these up eloquently as follows:

> The meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary to what the experience is. To understand behaviour, we must understand definitions and the process by which they are manufactured. Human beings are actively engaged in creating their world, understanding the intersection of biography and society is essential (Garth and Mills 1953). People act, not on the basis of predetermined responses to predefined objects, but rather as interpreting, defining, symbolic animals whose behaviour can only be understood by having the researcher enter into the defining process through methods such as participant observation.

The ADP is centrally about the metastasis of the change process flowing from differing perceptions of what it is and how it should happen, the diverse subjectivities which are rooted in what each participant brings to the process and how each experiences it, and the different vantage points which we occupy in the complex organisation that is the university. And these are only some of the factors which are readily apparent. In this project I seek to

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uncover and index an elaborated range of factors to enlarge our view of how AD takes place in a university, and how it might be advanced.

In view of the epistemological interests I have outlined above, my methodological position eschews a view of causation as "a matter of regularities in relationships between events" (Sayer 1992:2). As such, the index is not preconceived, but will be derived through a grounded theory approach. The main thrust of such an approach, according to Strauss (1987:5), is "toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests."

However, this does not suggest that the research is intended to proceed in an opportunistic or methodologically expedient fashion. What it suggests rather is a particular understanding about research which correlates closely with that expressed by Clough and Barton (1995: 2):

> ... Research does not merely address or discover the objects of its inquiry, but... it begins to create them from the first moment of identification of a topic; how we choose to research a subject is itself constitutive of that subject. In this respect, to select a 'method' is to attach immediately a quite particular view and a particular ideology.

Put differently, my intention is not to seek out evidence or data to support or dispel preconceived hypotheses. However, it is theory building in the bottom-up sense that Bogdan and Biklen (1982:31) suggest. The story is constructed as fragments are collected and fitted together. Part of the excitement lies in not knowing where the story will lead to. Part of the study is about learning to ask the timely questions which help to weave a credible, interesting and illuminating story.

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Most important however, is that as researcher, how I am constituted as a subject, and the assumptions and propositions I make, influence the constitution of my research every part of the way. However, I begin from the premise that to make such an acknowledgement would be mere bluster if it is not justified methodologically. It is to this project that I turn now.

2.4) Narrative Reporting and Methodological Integrity in the PhD Dissertation.

There was a film on the circuit recently called "Short Cuts". It is based on a book by Raymond Carver. The feature of the film which is quite striking is that its storyline weaves a tapestry of a number of smaller stories which develop into a bigger narrative, the lives of the main protagonists crises-crossing and intersecting into a complex and aesthetically pleasing whole. The whole is tantalising in the multiplicity of meanings which could be inferred from its relationship to its parts. It has many of the ingredients of what might be called a "good" story: there is intrigue; the protagonists and antagonists are complex characters whose action or inaction locates them as agents or victims in the wider politics and protracted drama of human relationships; and it unpicks and lays bare the repressed tensions of individual life in the postmodern world.

The film is evocative in its development of characters, and able to sustain dramatic tension throughout its three hours of screen time, keeping viewers wondering about what novel twist there was likely to be next in the multiple dramas unfolding before us. Above all, the story and the sketches contained within cohere well and are believable, as are the circumstances and events which inspire the links between the sketches, to form the larger narrative.

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The significance of the film is that in many ways its form is analogous to the narrative dissertation project. Essentially, in this thesis the story I tell invokes many of the devices used in the film. However my story is about innovation and change in an institutional (university) setting. It is about educational change, more specifically the complexities of individual and organisational change. The form of the thesis demands that I make certain choices about what I draw attention to in my bigger narrative, and it is in the way that I represent the significances and the account I give for the particular representations that are of ultimate importance for the narrative thesis as an academic genre.

The most significant point of comparison between the film and the thesis is that in telling my story the complexity and diffuseness of the events, circumstances and significant factors influential in the project make it impossible to write an account which is all encompassing, detailed and *representative*. Therefore, as in the film, my story, to be coherent and feasible as a project, has to be *selective* and *representational*.

The conceptual difference between being *representative* and *representational* arises from my epistemological position, which eschews a view of reality as capturable through representation but independent of it. I shall expand upon this distinction later in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that an important distinction between the film and the thesis is that while the film is a creative product, and is fictional, this particular thesis attempts to be *representational* of reality. (It is nonetheless possible to produce a thesis which is creative and fictional, but it is not my intention to do so in this project).

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An important aim in my thesis then is to relate a story about change from the particular vantage point I have come to occupy as an AD practitioner. I want also to reflect on my role in different ways. One would be to provide a historical perspective - to examine how my own assumptions and practice in AD, the role of agency, and curriculum issues arose and was shaped. Part of my story is therefore autobiographical.

I also want to explore how power relations influence change in a setting where there is constant contestation among differing interests. Another part of the story is therefore about the politics of change. It reflects views about the nature, purpose and roles of university education. Consequently, it is also about that convergence of forces including policy, planning, development and evaluation in higher education which shape the emerging story and predispose its plot in particular directions. Finally, the story is rooted in a historical perspective - including the personal and institutional.

What becomes immediately apparent is that the particular set of choices I make about what I want to be the focus of my attention is only one among many that can be made and justified. For my own purposes, there is an inherent logic to the selection of the areas of focus I have chosen. In pursuit of coherence, compatibility of explanation of the events and issues I shall draw attention to, authenticity and believability of my account, and maintaining methodological integrity, it is for me the most constructive and feasible way of engaging in the project.

2.5) Short Cuts and Long Trailers

So, how shall I go about the ostensibly complex project of generating a narrative when there is so much which could be told but in relatively little

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space, while bearing in mind all the guiding precepts I have drawn attention to above?

My immediate objective is to try to construct a narrative in which I give an account of change which is contextualised within the history of universities and the ADP at UWC. But I shall also try to provide vignettes which illustrate the underlying drama and hidden tensions involved in the change process. My story also has some of the elements of a good narrative - there are protagonists and antagonists who are central to the narrative, there is political intrigue and machination, there are idealistic intentions and designs which become subject to the drama of human relations and action, and much more. I also have to overlay this story with others which are central to the plot, for background is essential to illuminate my setting.

I also believe that there are other stories I would need to uncover in the process of telling the story of change which might significantly influence the way I tell it, and what I infer from it. For instance, my own subjectivity and its constitutedness needs to be uncovered to establish my subject position as an AD practitioner, researcher and writer. While I am bound by a certain linearity in the construction of the narrative, I would need to make several forays into methodological issues, and follow the trajectories of other stories insofar as they are meaningful to the thesis. In doing so I shall have to guard against the pitfalls pointed out above.

The beauty of "Short Cuts" lies in the writer's ability to offer a number of sketches which ultimately tell us a much bigger story about life in our times - the *short cuts* make up the whole story. My story differs quite fundamentally in this regard. My starting point is that in an important sense the story already exists, for the events I seek to represent in my story have already occurred. The task I have set myself is to uncover the plot and construct a

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story which draws attention to the significant events and shifts which illuminate the period under consideration (from July 1991 to the end of 1994.)

So my narrative will also offer *short cuts* to make up a whole; but my whole will be less than the full story that could be told. Also, on occasion I would need to step out of the narrative to engage in some reflection on the deeper significance of particular events or action in the story about change. I have already mentioned the issue of power relations, and the methodological issue.

But there are other key issues as well. How does change take place in an institutional setting such as the university? What are the forces which abet it or impede it? What kinds of programmes and initiatives sustain it? What kind of policy environment fosters it? What practice is effective in giving substance to these policies?

Clearly if my narrative is to cohere in a way that the thesis demands, I have to be more than narrator; I have to assume multiple roles. Apart from being storyteller, sometimes I am protagonist; frequently I am antagonist; sometimes victim - but always actor in the wider drama of change.

This is where the analogy with the film ends; for while the film can invoke various artistic and literary licences for its depiction of reality and consequently enjoys much flexibility in the way it accounts for its form and the devices it employs, the thesis form prescribes quite strict criteria for determining the adequacy of a particular representation of reality. Even though my own subjectivity is recognised, I still have to demonstrate my understanding of my own subject position, as well as account for it.

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Put another way, all I can offer are long trailers of the full story and hope that the licences I invoke to explain the gaps in the full story are credible and convincing according to the conventions used to judge the thesis as genre.

2.6) Historicity

The historical has a special significance for my narrative. The position from which I develop my narrative is that narrative and history are comfortable bedfellows in the thesis project. Barzun and Graff (1985:5) take a decisive stance on this and go so far as to declare that the historical attitude underlies all research and reporting. The argument they tender is that the technique employed by researchers and writers of research reports derives directly from the discipline History, for it is through this discipline that "writers at large have learned to sift evidence, balance testimony, and demand verified assertions."

Later in the work cited they give a more elaborate account of history and its value:

> History proper is more than its elements; it is more than information about objects, customs, and situations: it is a chronological narrative of actions by persons with motives, these actions and motives clustering in what is called events. To understand the motives and their outcome certainly requires knowledge about artifacts, habits, and institutions, but unless a synthesis is made of these elements with each other and with the element of time, the reader is not supplied with a history (Barzun and Graff 1985:253-254).

The type of account which I shall attempt to provide resonates closely with the position expressed by Barzun and Graff above. However, while my narrative will be constructed chronologically, and is concerned with actions, motives, customs, habits, situations, and institutions, it is not about objects and artifacts (in the historical or anthropological sense of the terms). This is

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one slight extent to which my account differs from the "pure" historical perspective. Ultimately, my intention is to let the depth of its description, dedicated attention to chronology, penetrativeness of its interpretation and thoroughness of its synthesis render the account authentic, persuasive and valid.

2.7) Narrative, Anxieties, Pitfalls and Other Dangers

The narrative thesis, while engaging as a method of writing, and ostensibly simple in form is rather more complex than it first appears. Were it mere description of a sequence of events, it could justify the conception of easy form. However, my quest is to go considerably beyond a mere account of the practice, spectacles and events which make up my narrative. It is also to explain particular behaviours and sequences of action, and to explore some of the myriad factors which have influenced them.

The sources of data are also necessarily diverse. Apart from documentary data, and notes which I have kept of my practice, I shall also make use of ethnographic data, interviews, autobiographical data, course materials, evaluation reports, reflective memoranda and published accounts of practice. The narrative can therefore simultaneously be historical, sociological, anthropological and autobiographical.

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And this is where problems may arise for the writer as well as reader of such an account. For the account to be perceived as authentic, plainly there has to be a shared set of assumptions - what Barzun and Graff (1985:261) call "a common mood." What might this entail? As I have suggested earlier in this chapter, we occupy a time and space in research and writing now in the post-positivist era where critical conceptual dilemmas confront us in

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research and report writing, not less so in narrative writing. Dissertation writing has traditionally followed the science report format prior to this. Now new genres are emerging, prominent among which is personal narrative (Ceroni, Garman, Haggerson, McMahon, Piantanida and Spore 1996).

The development of new genres has occurred against the backdrop of the critical debates about representation. Much of the debates centre on the validity of any representation of reality. Postmodern discourse provides a useful purchase on the conceptual problem encountered:

> [I]t (postmodernism)... puts forward the notion of a reality constructed by representations and therefore of multiple perspectives where representations become *reality* and where reality is *always*, necessarily, represented...
>
> At the same time, postmodernism recognises that representation is not a neutral process, that there is a *politics* of representation where all forms of cultural representation have a 'complicity with power and domination'... Knowing the world is not a matter of faithfully representing it since the very act of representation is itself discursively bound up with values and power (Usher and Edwards 1994:14-15).

Consequently, in the light of my earlier distinction between *representivity* and *representationality*, narrative writing makes no claim to be *representative* of reality. What it does is provide a self-conscious account, sensitive to its *representational* nature, drawing attention to its limitations and rootedness in perspectives of the self (identity and autobiography), context, history, and practice, and the discourses which shape all of these.

However, in spite of attempts at producing a self-conscious and sensitive account which renders it valid, the anxieties and pitfalls confronting prospective writers of narrative dissertations are severe and numerous. These include questions of what data are legitimate, what styles of writing

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are appropriate and valid, what authenticates an account and its inevitable subjectivity, whether it counts as research, whether it will satisfy the prevailing conventions applicable to the PhD dissertation at the institution, whether the examiners are open to innovative ways of doing and reporting research, and many more.

At the 1996 American Educational Research Association conference in April, I attended a symposium on The Dissertation as Personal Narrative (Ceroni *et al.* 1996) which engaged with these and other issues. I was at once reassured and confronted with the magnitude of challenges facing anyone embarking on such a venture. Here was a discourse community who had constituted themselves as a support group in order to help each other engage with the problems that were common to all of them, while also engaging with the methodological and institutional challenges confronting them. The accounts they gave of the difficulties and obstacles they faced in "disturbing our universe" were as sobering as they were inspiring.

The positions they articulated resonated with mine and alleviated my sense of uncertainty about the viability of the narrative dissertation as an approach to research.

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The problems facing writers of narrative dissertations remain real though. A fundamental problem is that of what counts as data in narrative inquiry. Their position was summed up as follows:

> Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that the telling of lived stories, including biographical and autobiographical writing, is an important source of data in narrative inquiry. Well-constructed, well-narrated stories provide texts rich with potential meaning. Through well-warranted interpretations, the meanings embedded in such texts can be brought to light, interrogated, and connected to theoretical

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> discourses. In this way, conceptual bridges are formed between the singular and the general, the concrete and the abstract, the fragmentary and the enduring (Ceroni *et al.* 1996:2).

It is at the level where dissertations get read and scrutinised, particularly by examiners, supervisory committees, and other professionals that the bases for the anxieties mentioned earlier become clear. One of the symposium participants expressed the problem she was confronted with thus:

> When I began to share the stories, I did not immediately realize that the first question other professionals would ask was not concerning the characterization or themes of the stories, but rather what data supported these accounts. I truly did not understand the problem. To me, the stories resembled stories, crafted pieces of fiction, clearly related to my professional life, but too crafted to be actual accounts. Life is not that neatly literary. Life has loose ends and does not usually provide catharsis and understanding during events and interactions. Yet my stories represented long periods of contemplation of relationships at the university and often reflected very succinct and convenient products of such introspection (Spore 1996:2, in Ceroni *et al.*).

The evocative power of narrative writing lies not only in its potential as a vehicle to produce text which is rich and varied in meaning, but to generate in-depth understandings, primarily of self - self located within the text, and self embedded in and interacting with reality. Therefore, as pointed out by Haggerson (in Ceroni *et al.* 1996:2), "the language of the personal narrative is direct, experiential, contextual, phenomenological, perhaps poetic."

However, inasmuch as such accounts are reflexive and grounded in theoretical discourses, they remain introspective and highly personal, thereby permitting a tendency towards self-indulgence at best and solipsism at worst. This is a major obstacle to overcome in the writing of a narrative dissertation. *Solipsism*, as defined in the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (Bullock, Stallybrass and Trombley 1988) is "the theory that nothing

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else really exists but me and my mental states...If the ultimate source of all factual knowledge is taken to be introspection or self-awareness, and if immediate experience is held to be the only thing that is directly known, solipsism is a consequence hard to avoid."

Piantanida (in Ceroni *et al. 1996:2*) identifies three potential pitfalls inherent in the solipsistic tendency - naive sentimentalism, self-promoting narcissism and self-serving expediency.

The first - naive sentimentalism - according to Piantanida, arises when the researcher tries to create personal narratives of the stories of others, thereby assuming that she can "give voice" to the stories of others. She cautions aspirant narrators that "such an inquiry entails tremendous skill, commitment, and energy and should not be undertaken lightly."

The second pitfall - self-promoting narcissism - is best reflected in her own words:

> Many times we encounter students who enthusiastically declare that they want to "study their practice." We call this the "gee whiz" syndrome, because a little prompting generally brings to light the subtext, "Gee whiz, I have this great technique, this terrific programme, this wonderful intervention and my dissertation is going to prove just how fantastic it is." To students who equate personal narrative with such narcissistic self-promotion, we have begun to pose two questions. So what? Who cares? (Piantanida in Ceroni *et al.* 996:2)

While the response to students may appear somewhat harsh if not cynical, it brings to light quite starkly the necessity to treat the narrative project with great circumspection and commitment.

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The third pitfall - self-serving expediency - is perhaps most significant for those of us under pressure to complete dissertations under the stress of work and other pressures. The following account of experiences with some of her students gives a side view of how one may become victim of this pitfall:

> Personal narrative is seen as an "easy" way to "finish up" the degree. In the rush to have a study proposal passed, such students often skim the surface of the literature, refusing to immerse themselves in the nuances of the professional discourse. Similarly, they gather data with little genuine curiosity about the phenomenon under study. Often these students appear to their peers to be making great progress. When the time for writing the narrative arrives, however, the expedient students have great difficulty making meaning from the data. Consequently, the narratives are often quite banal if not downright boring (Piantanida, in Ceroni *et al.* 1996:3).

In urging caution against these possible pitfalls, Piantanida proposes three safeguards:

> i) the careful creation of a rich and stable text of one's thinking about one's practice
>
> ii) developing a careful rationale or "logic of justification" (after Smith and Heshusius) for her research methods, thereby making clear the principles followed for interpretation
>
> iii) rigour and elegance in connecting the narrative text to broader discourses.

In the light of the above, the methodological challenge I confront rests in the decisions about what snippets and details to weave into my own narrative so that it has coherence and captures the complexity of the untold parts without distorting its essential plot and key elements.

In a later chapter where I revisit the question of methodology, and conduct a *post hoc* analysis of the process of narrative writing, I shall engage with the

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issue of epistemology in greater depth, not only because of its importance as a methodological concern in my thesis, but also because of the crucial debates currently on the politics and practice of representation which are of relevance to anyone involved in research and reporting; which I alluded to earlier.

I also argued (after Jay 1994) that what gets represented, how things are represented, in whose interests representation occurs, amongst others, are crucial questions in our context which challenge the ways in which we conduct inquiry and report on it. The position I shall argue is that methodology cannot be separated from history, context, biography and politics.

2.8) Introducing the Narrative

The first long trailer I want to provide then, begins when I came into the Academic Development Centre (ADC) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) after working for three years on an Academic Support Programme (ASP) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Associated with AD are the key objects of change - "disadvantaged" students, the ethos of universities, academic culture, curricula, universities as organisations, and departments as centres of change, amongst others. And the subjects - academic development and support centres and programmes, AD practitioners, discipline-based staff and tutors.

In the light of my earlier argument about the impossibility of providing the full story in all its detail, it immediately becomes apparent how futile it would be to provide an account of change focusing adequately on each of these

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different elements. Consequently, the rationale for trailers of the bigger and fuller story becomes obvious.

What became clear to me as I began the job at UWC was that there was no agreed upon notion of what AD was. While a programme of change, underpinned by certain principles and a faculty-based infrastructure broadly defined as the "Infusion Model" of AD had been conceived, as related in the previous chapter, the theory and practice of AD had not developed in any coherent way. Some academics had given serious thought to how the educational experience of students might be enhanced given the burgeoning numbers and myriad problems students experienced in responding to the demands of university study.

Others remained diffident. Yet others were resistant to the idea that they should be any more responsible for teaching and learning than they already were. So an important background story in my thesis will be an account of how the Infusion Model of AD arose and developed at UWC. But the details and complexity of the model itself, its possibilities and inadequacies will only be gone into to the extent that it is relevant to my own story, as I have indicated earlier.

As I became an actor in the unfolding drama of educational change, I confronted for the first time the complex challenges of trying to be an agent of change. My own growth and the growth of the AD programme at UWC is deeply interwoven with the political, institutional, interpersonal and organisational dynamics unleashed as we (at a programme level) tried to implement the Infusion of AD into departments and faculties.

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Out of necessity, I shall have to take certain short cuts in the bigger story to get to my narrative. Put another way, from the broad tapestry available, I will focus on those elements which have a relevance to the story I want to tell, insofar as it is methodologically justifiable to do so.

As would be apparent, the ambit of AD is very broad and intersects with many more areas including access and admissions, student development, staff development, computer-supported education, language policy and development programmes, research into teaching and learning, formative evaluation, and curriculum reform, amongst others. My work in departments and within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) as an AD practitioner has included elements of all of these - but focused chiefly on tutorial programme development, curriculum change and staff development initiatives.

While it may be useful to provide a narrative of the change process in all of these areas in a substantial account reflecting on my role as a change agent, it would ultimately mean sacrifice of depth. Moreover, in view of the broad spectrum of issues, practices and conditions which would need to be covered, it would not be a practical thesis project.

The challenge I confront then, is to offer a narrative of change which is adequate to raise the theoretical and methodological issues of concern to me, within a practically manageable thesis project. Consequently, the central focus of my narrative would be selective accounts of my efforts at initiating and/or supporting student development, curriculum reform and staff development in the EMS Faculty at UWC.

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Having set out a methodological vision for how I propose to generate the narrative, I shall now turn to the practical tasks entailed in the next chapter. In the light of the stress I have placed upon history and context, the first major task I have set myself is to provide a historical background to the advent of AD at UWC with the objective of providing some insight into the institutional and higher educational context.

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CHAPTER THREE - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, CONTEXT AND THE ADVENT OF AD.

3.1) Introduction

The university system which developed under National Party control has come to be generally regarded as poorly coordinated, inadequately regulated, and racially skewed. In addition, it may be characterised as being split into three large blocs - historically white English universities (HWEUs), historically white Afrikaans universities (HWAUs), and historically black universities (HBUs). The blocs become significant in the light of historically privileged treatment of the HWEUs and HWAUs by the apartheid state, and discriminatory treatment of the HBUs since their inception.

HWEUs, particularly the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand, can be distinguished further by their historical ideological opposition to the State, while HWAUs generally aligned themselves with State thinking under National Party rule and in many instances provided an intellectual buttress for state policies.

HBUs have been saddled with problems from their inception. At their inception, questions were raised about their academic credentials, apart from their outright rejection by significant sections of the communities they were meant to serve. Their problems were amplified by inequities in resourcing compared to historically white universities (HWUs). In more recent years they have faced perpetual beleaugrement.

One set of pressures has been to provide opportunities for access to disadvantaged students, and the need to enhance the quality of educational programmes in the face of rapidly increasing numbers. Allied with this has

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been the necessity to respond to huge academic development and support needs in the face of declining resources in real terms.

Compounding these pressures has been considerable political activism by students, some inspired by events within universities, but most by the wider politics of resistance provoked by apartheid.

While the need for AD is most visible and prevalent within the university sector, and is indeed related to the way in which universities developed in South Africa, it is not here primarily that the problems confronted by "disadvantaged" students at universities have their roots. One of the most devastating effects of apartheid education has been the under-development of the capacities and ordinary potential of blacks through discriminatory provision of schooling. Consequently, I want to return to this later in this chapter to index the contribution of black schooling to the AD challenges which universities have faced in recent years.

What I want to do first is conduct an excavatory foray into the discourses about universities during their formative years, particularly the 1950s and 1960s, when the influences of National Party rule impacted most significantly on universities. My project in this regard is not to conduct an in-depth study of the history of universities in South Africa. That would be too ambitious a project for the space available to me here.

Rather, my intention is to provide some glimpses of how the dominant thinking of the time had a moulding effect on the fragmented and racially divided system of higher education we have inherited, and which we are presently trying to reform. My main thesis in this regard is that the need for AD and ASPs arose as a consequence of systematic and sustained

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emasculation of black education through policy and design by the National Party government over a number of years.

I hope that through this project, I shall in the first instance provide a better perspective on the AD project, and a deeper insight into the hurdles confronted in developing higher education in South Africa. In the second instance, I hope to sketch out an historical context which adequately grounds my thesis and provides the backdrop against which my main propositions can be developed and examined.

3.2) The Racially Based Origins of South African University Education

In a major study of white universities commissioned by the Government in the late 1960's (The Van Wyk de Vries Commission 1974), we are provided with a window on the racially based origins of higher education in South Africa, with disparate views between HWEUs, HWAUs and HBUs which largely prevail. It became apparent from the report of the Commission that HWEUs and HWAUs saw the nature of university education quite differently. This impacted upon their policies and programmes.

After considering all the submissions, the Commission distilled the following picture of the nature of the university as perceived by universities:

> 1) it is an autonomous community of scholars, bound by universal ideals and traditions, pursuing the truth
>
> 2) it exists "on a supranational platform with an independence free from any national bond, and any interference with its autonomy by the state, society or the community is improper interference"
>
> 3) it is "essentially a bulwark of intellectual liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and the educator of the national political conscience"

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> 4) it "is not of South Africa, but geographically merely happens to be in South Africa" (Van Wyk de Vries 1974:26).

The Commission contested this view and considered that the view of the university as an autonomous group of scholars and students pursuing the truth an idealised view for it did not allow for the State or society as part of the nature of the university (1974:19). In the Commission's findings, it was the English universities which favoured this idealised view. On the contrary, Afrikaans universities stressed the university's "coherence with the nation" and "interwovenness with a particular community" (1974:27).

The Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand were those HWEUs which were initially known as "open" universities. They were thus called for the policy they maintained to admit non-white students and to treat them on a (largely) equal footing with whites. When the Government announced its intention in the mid 1950s to seek legislation to empower it to prevent them from admitting non-white students, the "open" universities expressed their perturbation and called a conference in January 1957 to prepare a statement defending the value of the "open" universities in South Africa.

They called attention to the nature of the university and their joint statement defending, inter alia, university autonomy and academic freedom. This was emblematic of the ongoing battle they sustained with the Government to attain autonomy from the State. Many years before the sitting of the Van Wyk de Vries Commission, the joint statement of the universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand spelled out their position on their view of universities. They claimed:

> A university is not merely organised for teaching, learning and research. It is also an institution based on certain universally acknowledged ideals and traditions, which are part of our western

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> way of life today, and formed part of western European civilization long before the first European settlement was established at the Cape. The open universities in this country, although they are of very recent origin compared with the ancient universities of western Europe, are members of an international community of universities that has continued to enlarge itself along with the extension and diffusion of our kind of civilization and culture. It is by virtue of these universal ideals and traditions that a particular university may on occasion find itself in conflict with sectional interests or with a narrow interpretation of national loyalties and interests (Centlivres and Feetham 1957:25).

In many submissions to the Commission, the value of autonomy was strongly stressed. Some universities wanted the right to decide who shall be taught and who should teach without regard to race or colour. Interference in this area by either State, society or the community would be regarded as "improper interference" (Van Wyk de Vries 1974:26). The freedom accorded universities in this regard was derived from an international tradition. However, the Commission's response to this was stated categorically: "It is unrealistic and fallacious to argue that such a community of "scholar" (or university) has a right or freedom derived from [such a] tradition... "

The Commission made a distinction between autonomy and academic freedom. While autonomy focused on the managerial and administrative aspects of the university, presumably including policy matters; academic freedom referred to freedom in teaching, learning, research, and publication. It had long been the position of the National Party Government that the state had the right to call the tune, for it paid the piper. However, the "open" universities had a clear response to this argument too in their 1957 joint statement:

> If the time were to come when the piper theme had to be taken seriously, we might perhaps ask who does really pay the piper? Is it

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> the government or the taxpayer? And are all the taxes paid by whites? In any case, the Government by no means provides all the finances necessary for the proper functioning of the open universities; each of them holds in trust endowments from benefactors (including non-whites) who have recognised and indeed acclaimed its 'open' character. The Government is at present concerned not with who pays the piper as much as with a determination that it, itself, shall call the tune (Centlivres and Feetham 1957:32).

The Commission argued that the autonomy under which a university operated was a conditional one ie. within the bounds of its autonomy, it could only admit students and appoint staff with due consideration to the interests of the community, the society and the State. Consequently, the university could not demand the right to determine the interests of the community, nor ignore them for that matter. What becomes apparent is that however unhappy the "open" universities were with the setup, they were still subject to apartheid policy and edifice of statutes supporting it.

While the Commission supported the notion that the university transcended national boundaries (supranational), maintaining relations with other such international institutions, it did not accept the whole argument advanced by the "open" universities. Its rejoinder was that the university was a statutory corporation, whose nature, functions and obligations were prescribed by the state.

This conception of the relationship of the university to the state provoked considerable criticism. For instance, Bunting (1975:84), contested the idea that the university as a supranational body could maintain links with other international institutions in the way the Commission conceived it. He pointed out that as a statutory corporation whose nature and functions were determined by the state alone, "the university could be turned by law into the lackey of the state" (1975:85).

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In fact the Commission acknowledged the moulding influence that state control could have on the university sector by observing that "a unique characteristic of universities in South Africa is that they have settled into shape in the social order based on the principle of multi-national development" (1974:18).

Afrikaans universities, many of them creations of the National Party Government to provide substantially increased access to Afrikaners, had little problem with following the dictates of State and apartheid ideology, for the ideals of both were essentially in unity, and was in stark contrast to the position of the "open" universities. However, the threat of withholding public funding, and the spectre of action by the security police, had a muting effect on their ("open" universities') resolve to test the National Party Government in years to come.

The Van Wyk De Vries Commission put forward a view of the interested spheres in universities that synchronised with that of the strongly nationalist Government. It maintained:

> ...there are various interested spheres which belong together and go to make up the university:
>
> a) a group from the community with certain common needs and characteristics, outlook and philosophy of life undoubtedly being the most important, for which reason they have a need for a particular type of higher education. The group expands as alumni are produced and as others join it and it supplies the university with people and means.
>
> b) the State, which has to protect and promote the welfare of the whole country, has an interest in the development of the community, standards of scholarship, the development of leaders in all fields, and in the preservation and fostering of art, culture and the nature and character of the nation.

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> c) The body of academics, consisting of teachers and students each pursuing knowledge in his own way, the teachers being organised in the senate of the university (1974:20).

It has been argued elsewhere (van der Merwe and Welsh 1977:131) that the university is very rarely able to remain aloof from "the powerful, and often divisive, forces of nationalism in the society in which the university is situated." Even prior to the National Party coming into power, the Government of the day was unambiguous about the interests it served.

The racial mind set and resultant discrimination against blacks was well established during colonial times. In asserting and promoting the interests of the dominant minority over the majority through technological and intellectual supremacy, the interests of white supremacy were being promoted (Welsh and Savage 1977:135).

Our historical memory tends to stretch back only to the role of the apartheid state in creating the circumstances we confront. Indeed, this has to do with the fact that the apartheid State held power for more than forty years, aggravated by its notoriety for institutionalising racism and persecution of blacks. If we look beyond the apartheid sojourn in power, there is a clear indication of racial thinking even in the pre-apartheid period.

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We get a glimpse of some of the thinking before the National Party came into power in 1948, when the then minister of Education, Arts and Science in 1946, J.H. Hofmeyer, made the Government's intention with regard to white universities very clear:

> We have institutions for a European population of 2 000 000, but those institutions have to train persons to serve a population of 10 000 000..." For that reason, (he continued), "it is necessary ...that a

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> larger percentage of the European Population should go to the universities than in any other country (Welsh and Savage 1977:135).

Even earlier, in 1936, over the issue of racial mixing at the "open universities," Hofmeyer made clear to them the implications of not toeing the Government line:

> All I can do is to prohibit the universities, by means of legislation, from registering non-European students. I do not intend to do that...The universities are, in the first place, responsible to the public, because if they do not get support form the public they cannot get support from us either, and then they cannot continue. Therefore, if the universities do not follow a policy which the public approves of they would very soon feel the consequences (in Welsh and Savage 1977:139).

Plainly the pattern of racial discrimination against blacks was well established even as early as the 1930s. The *raison d'etre* for such discrimination, as is apparent from the foregoing was rooted in a paternalistic attitude towards blacks, coupled with a desire to protect and promote the interests of whites through the provision of considerable opportunities through education to sustain white control.

The position adopted by the "open" universities was clearly subverting the policies and plans of the Government for they posed a danger to the maintenance of white power. The "open" universities had a position on this too, and issued a defence along the following lines:

> Our view...is that unless Western civilization is communicated comprehensively to at least the elite of the non-white population, the very existence of the white man in South Africa will be in jeopardy. The open university is effectively fulfilling this task of communicating Western knowledge and values. These cannot be communicated by the printed page and the teacher's word alone. Irrational modes of thinking, the magical view of the world, and all the heritage of barbarism have to be replaced by a true and inner assimilation of rational modes of thought, the scientific view of the world, and the

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> spiritual values of the west. This process requires, we believe, the kind of contact which the open university affords to the non-white: personal contact with the actual daily practice of western ways of thinking and living. It is only in this manner that western civilization can be preserved in South Africa (Centlivres and Feetham 1957:37).

This statement by the "open" universities provides a revealing side view on their intent to assimilate the small number of blacks who got access to their universities into a mainstream of university education rooted in a eurocentric culture and world view. In addition, the assimilationist tendency was not aimed so much at providing blacks with opportunities for access to university education, as it was to perpetuate white domination. It was in line with the imperialist thinking at the time, when colonialism had aggressively subjugated almost the whole of Africa and substantial parts of the rest of the world.

A further insight into the prevailing mind set which shaped the "open" universities' view of university education in South Africa is reflected in another part of their 1957 statement:

> "..it should be recorded that there is no evidence to suggest that the racial composition of the open universities might so change, in the foreseeable future, as to become predominantly 'Black.' This eventuality would seem to lie in the distant future and it depends on remote and incalculable contingencies" (Centlivres and Feetham 1957:21) .

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What suggests itself clearly in this remark is that the "open" universities themselves recognised how deeply entrenched white power and privilege had become, so much so that an alternative reality was too remote to even contemplate. Moreover, in spite of their opposition to the more virulent aspects of National Party government, the statement gives a clear indication that their access policies were not driven by a genuine commitment to establish equity.

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There was no intention of steering their universities on a course to a racial composition which reflected the demography of the country. While they made it possible for a number of blacks to gain access to their universities (500 between them at the time), it was implicitly their intention that blacks would remain a minority. This is supported elsewhere too. Welsh and Savage for instance make the following observation:

> Black students have never been more than a small minority at either of the open universities: in 1957 blacks comprised 5 to 6 per cent of the total student body at both institutions. The admission of black students had been for both institutions a matter of acquiescence, rather than an active concern to promote any kind of racial 'integration'. The universities were deeply conscious of powerful segregationist norms in the white community outside, and were accordingly reluctant to go any further than permitting black students to 'academic equality' while seeking to preserve social integration inside each institution (1977:138-139).

The views reflected above had considerable ramifications on how academic support and development initiatives came to be contrived eventually as I shall seek to show later on when I examine the genesis of academic development programmes.

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By the time the Van Wyk de Vries Commission conducted its inquiry, the desired effect that the government wished to have on white universities, ie. to be recruited to the service of white hegemony and control, had largely been achieved. Lax admissions policies had made it possible for a steady increase in the number of white students at universities. A major concern which preoccupied white universities at the time the Commission sat was how to stem the high failure rate that this resulted in. The Commission received much evidence from universities which suggested that raising the admission requirements would stem the high failure rate. The existing

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mechanism failed "to keep out would-be students who lack the necessary intellectual capacity" (Van Wyk de Vries 1974:235).

In some statistics provided by one university, it was stated that the failure-rate among first time entering students without a first-class matriculation exemption certificate was thrice as high as those who had a first-class matriculation pass.

The Commission proposed that stricter admission requirements "would incur the risk that too many who might actually make a success of a university education would be denied admission to a university." It went on to argue that "in the special circumstances obtaining in South Africa, it is essential that every white person should be trained to the maximum of his (sic) intellectual capacity and that there should be no artificial barriers to debar persons who are capable of a university education." The Commission expected a gradual increase in the student population in the next two decades. At the time the Commission sat, the situation was described thus:

> As it is, White students, excluding Unisa students, constitute over 15 per thousand of the population. This figure compares favourably with that of the USA and is considerably higher than the corresponding figures for the countries of Western Europe. The Commission also went into the proportion of newly matriculated persons who go to universities in the Republic and noted that the figure had already reached the high level of 80%... (1974:465).

The Commission projected that by the year 1990, White students at university (excluding those of Unisa) could number 90 000 (1974:465). In fact the concerted campaign to increase access of whites to university made it possible for this projection to be met five years earlier than envisaged, when the number of white students at university, (excluding Unisa, which had a further 46 096), had reached 85 400 (Cooper *et al.* 1985:401).

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3.3) Afrikaans Universities

The question of how Afrikaans universities developed and were harnessed to the service of Afrikaner interests deserves special attention. Afrikaner nationalists wanted an education system in which the child could be educated from kindergarten to university through the medium of Afrikaans (Welsh and Savage 1977:136).

When the National Party came to power in 1948, they had a clear set of imperatives for establishing their domination. Ralekhetho gives a useful account of the developments in this regard. He observes that they used the the State and its instruments to:

> consolidate white hegemony in general and Afrikaner hegemony in particular by legislating racial divisions, by invoking religion and by utilising education to legitimate differences between and within groups...the National Party government adopted the functionalist view that knowledge must be acquired to suit and respond to what was thought to be society's needs: a continued reproduction of mental (for whites) and manual (for blacks) division of labour (1991:102).

Against this backdrop, the idea of a *volks universiteit* (people's university) was prominent in the minds of Afrikaners as the vehicle for the preservation and promotion of Afrikaner culture. Degenaar (1977:152) conducted a study of the concept of a *volks universiteit* and found in various sources a concern to serve and protect the "unique character of the volk", and "anchored in its traditions and fired by the desire to serve the volk in accordance with its own view of life". He also found that there was a commitment to develop the intellectual capacity to serve the interests of the volk (1977:153).

According to Degenaar, Afrikaans universities were implored by one writer (Hugo 1941) to present the student with a life and world view, based on Christian tenets, the history of the Afrikaner and on European culture (1977:153). Yet another writer (Brummer 1918) expressed the concern that

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the “soul of the volk” might "suffocate if the national character was made subservient to international ideas." According to him, universities therefore had a responsibility to develop the *soul of the volk*.

Afrikaans universities rose effectively to the challenge. While in the political arena mobilisation of Afrikaners by invoking nationalist fervour was to ensure political control, the establishment of Afrikaaans institutions would prevent a fledgling Afrikaans culture from being swamped by a stronger and more entrenched European culture, and help them develop the capacity to be more effective players in the economic sphere too. The four Afrikaans institutions - Potchefstroom University College, Stellenbosch University, Pretoria University and the University of the Orange Free State were the bastions of Afrikaner nationalism even before the Nationalists came into power (Welsh and Savage 1977:137).

However, Afrikaans universities (and many Afrikaner intellectuals) were not concerned only with preservation of the soul of the volk, and the cultural identity of the Afrikaner. They have also helped in giving intellectual support for the "justification, pursuit and extension of Apartheid policies" (Jansen 1991:25). Du Toit (1981), recognised this extension of their role as essential:

> Afrikaner intellectuals must of necessity have a stake in the cause of Afrikaner culture, ... with the rise of modern Afrikaner Nationalism, commitment to that cultural cause has come to be almost inextricably bound up with vested interests in the Afrikaner power structure" (in Jansen 1991:25)

At a more practical level this support entailed involvement of Afrikaans universities and intellectuals in producing the types of knowledge which gave sustenance to the interests of the Apartheid state through military, policy, strategic and other relevant research (Jansen 1991:25). With time, and increasingly organised political and social structures, the dividing lines

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between the interests of Afrikaners, the nation and the state became less and less distinguishable.

3.4) University Education for Blacks

As far as university education for blacks in the country was concerned, the Government was only concerned about it to the extent that the economic and political supremacy of the Afrikaner were maintained (Ralekhetho 1991:101).

While non-whites had always been admitted to the universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand, as has been pointed out earlier, successive Governments in South Africa were opposed to the idea. However, none were as virulently opposed as the National Party Government that came to power in 1948. Even the "open" universities which were ostensibly in favour of equal access maintained segregation as far as accommodation, sport and social functions were concerned. While at the universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand, segregation in academic matters was not maintained, at the University of Natal it was applied. Behr and Macmillan provide a snapshot of how segregation worked:

> At the University of Natal, non-Whites were admitted in Durban from 1936 on, a policy of academic segregation being followed. i.e., separate classes were provided for White and non-White students, the same staff being used for teaching purposes, the same examinations being set and the same degrees being awarded. In 1950, a non-White medical school was established in Durban as part of the University of Natal, the first graduands being capped in March, 1958 (1971:236).

The position with the other white universities was considerably bleaker. From inception to the late 1980s, the Universities of Pretoria, Orange Free State, Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom admitted no black students. When the new University of Port Elizabeth (1965) and Rand Afrikaans University

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(1968) were established, they maintained policies similar to those of their more established sister universities.

The decisive move to enforce separate university education was made in April 1957 when the Minister of Education introduced the Separate University Education Bill into parliament. The policy was represented in the following way:

> The necessity of maintaining ethnic ties in university institutions flows from the conviction that the future leader during his training, including his university training, must remain in close touch with the habits, ways of life and views of members of his population group. What we envisage is to make provision for a separate university college for the Xhosa population group at the existing University College of Fort Hare, as well a separate University College for the Zulu group in Zululand, one for the Sotho group in Northern Transvaal, one for the Coloureds at Athlone in the Cape Peninsula and one for Indians near Durban in Natal. The Coloured population is concentrated here in the Cape Peninsula and their institution will, therefore, be in their midst, and that also applies to the Indians in Durban (Behr and Macmillan 1971:238).

The declared policy suggested a paternalistic concern for the development of members of black communities within a socio-cultural ethos with which they were familiar. Politically, the undeclared objective was to keep different black groups separate in pursuance of the Government's divide-and-rule policy. The Government's fear was that contact between different groups would allow them to mobilise and pose a threat to the minority whites. Blacks were only an effective majority if they could escape the ethnic consciousness which the Government was very committed to cultivating and perpetuating.

Even though they opposed the apartheid Government, the "open" universities harboured fears which resonated with those of the Government, albeit differently. They felt that ethnic universities would lead to a network of

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non-white universities resulting eventually in "centres of narrow and intense nationalism; that their students are likely to be contemptuous of authority and will come to look upon the white man with bitter prejudice and resentment" (Centlivres and Feetham 1957:39).

Ostensibly while the Afrikaner dominated Government favoured segregation, the English universities favoured assimilation.

While Afrikaner nationalism surged to its zenith in the 1930s and 1940s, a counterforce of African nationalism was indeed taking shape at the University of Fort Hare; however, it was influenced by an ethos of non-racialism which was unique to that institution, relative to the anti-white feeling generated at the University of the North for instance. (Welsh and Savage 1977:138).

By 1959, a racially classified university system was statutorily in place through the Extension of University Education Act (No.45 of 1959). This led to the establishment of a number of ethnic university colleges. The ones for black Africans came under the control of the Minister of Bantu Education. The ones for Coloureds and Indians came under the control of the Department of Coloured Affairs and the Department of Indian Affairs respectively.

In a recent study (Badat, Barron, Fisher, Pillay and Wolpe 1994), the intended purposes of apartheid Government for black universities is summed up succinctly:

> If a major function of the early HBUs was to generate the administrative corps for the black separate development bureaucracies, the ideological task was to wean new generations of

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> students away from black nationalist and socialist sentiments and win them to the separate development project through the appropriate mix of repressive controls and the promises of economic opportunities in the bantustans and around the social services needs of blacks (1994:12).

At least initially, the tentacles of Government control wrapped tightly around the black universities. Even in their academic programmes, they did not have the autonomy which is normally associated with universities. However, this had more to do with their fledgling status and lack of capacity than with a desire to control the curricula of these university colleges.

To maintain adequate academic standards, all of the students at these institutions wrote the examinations of the University of South Africa (Behr and Macmillan 1971:240). In 1969, a number of university acts were promulgated which led to these university colleges being established as fully fledged universities.

Ultimately, whatever university education was available for blacks led to limited employment opportunities. Blacks did not have many avenues open to them to follow careers which led to knowledge production vocations, severely limiting their capacities to impact positively on the development of the communities from which they came. University education for blacks, as seen by blacks was expressed in the following way by magazine Black Review (1974/75:185):

> By and large, higher education for Blacks still remains education for subservience. This has resulted in most educated Blacks having to depend on civil service employment for their main livelihood, which makes them and their educational wisdom and experience completely useless for the real development of the community from which they come. This cannot be surprising because any meaningful involvement in real community development almost invariably incurs the disfavour of the powers-that-be (Welsh and Savage 1977:141-142).

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The sketch above offers a picture of the lines along which university education developed. As such it provides an important set of insights which reflect upon the academic development challenges confronted by universities today. In particular, on the one hand, a sustained policy of separate development of universities by the National Party Government was calculated deliberately to advance the interests of whites, and in particular Afrikaners.

On the other hand, its project was to circumscribe the development of blacks. Consequently, provision of university education for blacks was limited not only by resource constraints, but also through limited course offerings, and control of senior appointments so that the overall policy goals of the National Party would be advanced by the senior management.

However, this picture is only partial. In order to render it complete, it is necessary to develop an understanding of the contributions of black schooling to the AD challenge confronted at universities and other institutions of higher learning.

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3.5) Black Schooling

A parallel process of separate development occurred in black schooling. Its emasculating effect on the development of the potential of black children has been horrendous not only for the intentions which underpinned it, but for the stultifying effect it was destined to have on generations of school leavers, and those aspiring to university education.

The history of segregated schooling can be traced back to colonial times. Limited study opportunities were provided for slave children in 1685 (Behr and Macmillan 1971:357-359). Schooling was segregated in order to

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perpetuate the class division between slave and colonist (Molteno 1983:14).

For white children, schooling was for supremacy. The rationale for such schooling was expressed by the Cape Superintendent-General of Education in 1889 when he accounted for how the Government saw its duty:

> ...to recognize the position of the European colonists as holding the paramount influence, social and political; and to see that the sons and daughters of the colonists... should have at least such an education as their peers in Europe enjoy, with such local modifications as will fit them to maintain their unquestioned superiority and supremacy in this land. (Quoted in Wilson and Thompson 1975:222, in Molteno 1983:24).

In 1799, the first school for Africans was founded near what later became King Williamstown (Molteno 1987:21). In 1822, the first school in the Orange Free State was founded; in 1835, in Natal; and 1842, Transvaal; respectively.

For the most part, schooling for Africans developed slowly in the 19th century, buttressed only by the provision of schooling by several missionary societies (Behr and Macmillan 1871:359-375). At the turn of the 20th century, schooling for Africans became increasingly important with the rise of industrial capitalism. However, the trend towards greater control was already there since the 19th century, as Molteno (1983:38) suggests:

> Its importance began to increase from the second half of the 19th century. This can be induced in part from the growth of state interest in "Native Education" as well as from the growing numbers in black schools.

The object of such interest was ultimately to shape schooling to the needs of industrial production, precipitated by the discovery of minerals; the building of railways, which opened up the interior to economic exploitation; and the development of new cities and industries - all of which required labour.

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This trend was to continue well into the 20th century. When the National Party came into power in 1948, it began to devise clear policies for the education of blacks which provided the economy with cheap labour.

Shortly after the National Party came into power, they appointed the Eiselen Commission on Native Education (January 1949) whose recommendations were influential in education policy for blacks which was introduced in 1954 (Horrell 1968:5). The underlying philosophy of the recommendations is reflected in the following:

> Educational practice... must recognise that it has to deal with a Bantu child, that is, a child trained and conditioned in Bantu culture, endowed with a knowledge of a Bantu language, and imbued with values, interests and behaviour patterns learned at the knee of a Bantu mother. These facts must dictate to a very large extent the content and methods of his early education.
>
> The Commission considered that Bantu education should be an integral part of a very carefully planned policy of socio-economic development for the Bantu peoples. It emphasised the functional value of the school as an institution for the transmission and development of the Bantu cultural heritage (Horrell 1968:5).

In subsequent restatements of policy, the particular conception of education aimed at promoting an ethnic cultural outlook was reaffirmed:

> It has been constantly borne in mind that the development of the Bantu and their homelands must be firmly rooted in their own cultural institutions and customs with due regard to their full self-determination. A further object pursued in the educational field is to bring about self-supporting Bantu communities which can develop fully in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres. In order to realise this ideal, a place of honour continues to be given in the school to everything of value in the Bantu culture so that the Bantu may thereby retain his identity despite the acquisition of Western knowledge and techniques which are indispensable to him (Horrell 1968:6).

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While the conceptualisation of school education for blacks was underscored by parochial attitudes on the part of the policy makers, the malaise in black schooling was exacerbated by the insufficiency of resources. The funding of black education was linked to taxation of blacks. As early as the 1920s, African nationalists expressed the concern that the amount of money made available for black education was disproportionate to the amount of tax collected from blacks (Walshe 1987:78).

By the time the Eiselen commission made its recommendations, its finding was that the economic situation of blacks was not strong enough to contribute fully to the financing of its own services (including education). Consequently it observed that the direct taxation paid by blacks could not be used as a determining factor in the funding of black education. While the Commission felt that blacks should play a direct part in the finding of a certain proportion of the funds, it recommended that black education be funded by the Government as an investment in the future until the improvement of the economic position of blacks warranted a reassessment of their ability to pay for the service (Horrell 1968:28).

The nett effect of the policies followed by the Government for black education and the resources made available for it had a debilitating effect on the quality, breadth and depth of education received by blacks in the decades which followed. Poorly trained teachers working with poor facilities in large classes, compounded by inadequate textbooks, weak management, and graft, resulted in poor teaching and learning at black schools. In this regard, Scott (1994) makes the following observation:

> Apartheid schooling has generally been cited as the major, if not sole, cause of the under-representation and relative under-performance of black students in HE. The deficiencies of the school

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> system are common cause and, together with the sacrifices made in the interests of political change, have undoubtedly been the major obstacle to black students' educational advancement (1994:5).

Randall (1993), drawing on various research, provides a picture of some of the cumulative effects of decades of Bantu education:

> In South Africa today 60 per cent of those under 30 are not engaged in formal employment and most of those have never been so on a regular basis; 64.4 per cent of the black population are functionally illiterate and, as Chisholm notes, 'what is startling about this figure, is that the highest number of illiterates occur within the generation schooled by apartheid, those between the ages of 16 and 34'. Of those at work, 66 per cent have not gone beyond primary education. There is a pool of unskilled labour (7.5 million) chasing 1.5 million jobs (1993:45).

The decades of neglect, deliberate policies of under-resourcing of staff and facilities, maladministration on a gigantic scale, and teaching uncritical modes of learning, have left their mark on generations of students emerging from the black school system.

An aggravating factor is that the majority of blacks live under conditions of acute poverty - lacking the benefits of basic amenities such as adequate housing, purified water, sanitation, and electricity. The Reconstruction and Development Programme of the new Government is committed to eradicating the cumulative neglect of black communities over many decades. However, as is becoming apparent, this will not be accomplished easily or quickly.

Such limiting conditions have impacted negatively in other ways which are felt once students enter university. They do not provide the impetus for developing a culture of learning enjoyed by those privileged by good schooling, home environments with an abundance of reading material, and

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whose major pre-occupation in life is not economic survival. Moreover, children emanating from such a milieu do not easily imbibe the tacit assumptions about the values and purposes of knowledge and knowledge creation. With illiterate parents and relatives, the absence of any useful mentorship and guidance which are taken for granted in privileged sections of the society merely aggravate the problem.

The school system is plainly in need of reform to the level where it is producing graduates of the calibre required to meet the demands of university with ease. The advent of a new Schools Bill (Sept 1996) has set the process well on its way by setting out a vision of how the aims functions and practice of school education may be reconciled. The impact of this on the outgoing graduate (from the school system) has yet to be seen or felt. The prognosis is that it will be some while before the positive consequences of the changes are felt. For the forseeable future therefore, it will have to be assumed that students emerging from the school system are disadvantaged.

3.6) "Disadvantage"

I have tried to address the root causes of "disadvantage" above. However, I feel it is necessary to develop a slightly more elaborate perspective on the concept since it is so pivotal to the AD project.

While it is not clear what proportion of students from impoverished backgrounds actually make it to university, what is clear is that a significant proportion of black students entering the university system struggle financially. Moreover, they also experience difficulties in fulfilling the demands of university education.

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The South African university system, rooted as it is in a European socio-cultural ethos, was never geared towards integrating African values and cultural outlook in the same way that Afrikaners pursued theirs.

Consequently, even though we have witnessed the demise of colonialism, what we continue to see in how blacks get access to and are supported in university education, are vestiges of assimilationist tendencies reminiscent of the colonial and apartheid eras. This is a line of argument I shall pursue later at a more appropriate point in the thesis.

The roots of current "disadvantage" become plain given the particular history of education in South Africa. A key aspect of "disadvantage" entails the thesis that the school experience of the majority of our students has not prepared them adequately to cope with the conventional demands of university study. (Also see Agar 1990 for a student perspective on difficulties they experience).

However, an added problem once they enter university is that for many, the medium of instruction (English) they encounter at university is either a second, third or sometimes even fourth language for them. Moreover, the culture of universities - the value frameworks which underpin its practices; particular attitudes which prevail among staff; and the ground rules by which universities conduct themselves - also present impediments and create sources of alienation for "disadvantaged" students (Agar, et al 1991:21).

In the case I have made earlier in this chapter, a clear trail from the disadvantage experienced by students at university presently can be traced back to the educational policies followed by the apartheid Government over decades, which in turn was preceded by segregationist, discriminatory policies throughout colonial times.

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Deliberate cultivation of an ethnic cultural outlook under apartheid robbed black students of the opportunity to assimilate the learning of the dominant culture, whose assumptions about knowledge and socio-cultural predilections suffuse higher education today.

One more dimension to the problems students experience is that of disrupted schooling. From 1976 onwards, black schooling has been characterised by severe stresses and conflicts as the educational arena became one of the few loci available for political activism and struggle under an increasingly repressive apartheid Government. Black students themselves began increasingly to reject the bases on which provision for black schooling was made. They expressed their lack of faith in the schooling system through demonstrations and boycotts from the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s (Pavlich and Orkin 1993).

This has resulted in generations of students having experienced some interruption of their schooling programme at costs which have not yet been calculated, but whose impact is clearly discernible. (In Chapter Four, in an autobiographical aside, I explore the impact of some of these disruptions from firsthand experience).

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The use of the term "disadvantaged" to refer to students with the profile described above has met with severe criticism from some quarters. Although terms such as "educationally under prepared" and "disadvantaged" have been used quite commonly in the past decade, neither of these terms has been satisfactorily received, for they suggest a deficit on the part of students; and are not sufficiently sensitive to the historical conditions which gave rise to the condition they describe; nor to the power relations through which students are constructed as such. Ndebele (1995), in a UWC

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memorandum, made the point more eloquently:

> When I first came across the expressions 'students from disadvantaged backgrounds' or `disadvantaged communities', 'under-prepared students', I recall experiencing an instinctive revulsion. The context was a discussion of academic exclusions which also touched on the role of the academic support programme at the University of the Witwatersrand.The terminology underscores a major criticism of the ASP: how black students with a DET background are identified, set apart from the rest of the students, in the main white, and made ready to join the rest of the student community once they have been sufficiently 'prepared'...The namer isolates the named, explains them, contains them, and controls them. In this way, a numerical minority can, in part through linguistic manipulation, simulate a majoritarian character by assuming the role of a standard political and psychological majority exercising considerable epistemological power (1995:4).

What Ndebele draws attention to is the effect of black student as "other" in a system of education which was designed specifically to exclude them. Consequently their "disadvantage" is conceived as a pathology by universities which have not, until very recently, given significant attention to the historical, social and political conditions which have created them. AD practitioners have therefore had to tread a careful path in how they characterise such students, in order to avoid offending their sensibilities and those of political groupings.

However, a resolution of the conceptual dilemma in defining "disadvantage" remains elusive, and is complicated by the politics which suffuse the discourse on it. Again, Ndebele (1995) is incisive in drawing our attention to the underlying contradictions:

> Now, it is true that blacks are `disadvantaged'. But 'disadvantage' in the currrent South African context implies that there is an accepted, normal, advantaged standard world outside of which is a minority of

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> marginalised, disadvantaged people: the unfortunate victims of social progress. This concept of disadvantaged typifies the epistemology of the illusory psychological majority referred to. Seen in this way, the 'disadvantaged people' become a sociological phenomenon requiring a professional, humanitarian, and curative intervention. The method is to manipulate context by substituting sociology for politics. The notion of 'disadvantage' enables us to avoid such 'embarrassing' expressions as 'black students', 'the oppressed'. That way, the issue is depoliticised through a deft avoidance of race and all it implies in South Africa. Beyond that, the minority deals with the ever-present threat of the majority by reducing the threat linguistically, thus rendering it a problem of smaller, controllable dimensions (1995:4).

Ndebele makes plain what the problem is with the term 'disadvantage' - how it conceals the history of discrimination, oppression and denial of opportunity during apartheid and pre-apartheid (colonial) times. What is not contestable though is that the pragmatic reality which confronts us in higher education is that a significant majority of black school-leavers have to compete on unequal terms with their white counterparts in the university system.

3.7) From Access, To Creating Conditions for Success

In recent years, against the backdrop of the sweeping political changes, universities which had not already embarked on a progressive path in their access policies, have confronted increasing pressure to facilitate greater access to those disadvantaged under apartheid, and to put into effect programmes which enhance their opportunities for entry as well as chances of success (Pavlich and Orkin 1993).

Comparative figures for 1989 and 1993 between different universities reveal that much progress has been made in changing the rates of access so that more black students have places at university. However, whites still occupy a privileged position in relation to the number of places they occupy at

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universities - 54%, relative to the proportion of the population they represent (Cooper et al 1994:743).

Changed access policies at universities has swelled the numbers of students entering universities from disadvantaged backgrounds. Figures for 1989 and 1993 show that the numbers of black students at the English HWUs doubled on average. The Afrikaans HWUs show more dramatic increases - as high as 581%. However, the picture may be somewhat misleading: the Afrikaans universities have generally had very small numbers of black students in 1989 but reflected rapid growth by 1993. But whites still account for the majority in the student body. For instance, Table 1 gives the overall picture for the University of Pretoria.

Table 1

University of Pretoria Enrolment: 1989 and 1993

Classification	1989	1993	Increase (Decrease)
African	199	1023	414%
Coloured	87	176	102%
Indian	28	94	236%
White	23 054	21 916	(5%)

(Race Relations Survey 1993/1994:745)

Numbers notwithstanding, universities still have to grapple with the challenge of creating learning conditions which address the particular needs of "disadvantaged" students. Some of the English HWUs began in the early 1980s to develop strategies such as bridging and support courses aimed at

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"preparing" their small numbers of black students so that they could cope with the demands of university. The programmes they pioneered are well known as Academic Support Programmes (ASPs).

3.8) Academic Support Programmes at "Open" Universities

Academic support programmes (ASPs) at the "open" universities took the form, in the words of Hunter (1989) "of structured teaching arrangements which are supplementary to mainstream departmental provision of lectures, tutorials and practicals, or which constitute enriched forms of mainstream courses. The rationale for such supplementary or enriched provision is the perceived inadequacy of certain entrants' schooling, judged as preparation for university study" (1989:68). This approach was buttressed by attention to other obstacles which students experienced in achieving success in the university, viz. finance, accommodation, and appropriate teaching methodologies (1989:68).

Moulder (1991) characterised the programmes run by the "open" universities in the following way:

> Most of the programmes are support programmes. Students take them before they begin to study for a degree.
>
> Support and bridging programmes are different apples in the same basket. They help students to overcome deficiencies in their schooling. They help them to get knowledge and skills that they didn't get at school, but must have to study successfully for a degree (1991:5).

As ASPs established themselves and developed a depth of practice, they were able to clarify their aims and objectives in the light of experiences in creating the necessary conditions for "disadvantaged" to succeed. At Wits University for instance, in 1987, the ASP's statement of objectives included

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the following aim:

> The immediate aim of the ASP is to maximise academic performance in students disadvantaged by the inadequacy of previous educational opportunities. The concern is not only that these students pass their courses as well as possible, but that they become learners who are critical, independent, exploratory, creative and effective in processing, organising, and communicating facts and ideas (Hunter 1989:73).

At The University of Cape Town, after beginning with a focus on support initiatives and extended curricula as its main strategies in providing access and facilitating the success of "disadvantaged" students, by the early 1990s, this focus shifted to staff and curriculum development. Moreover, the design of the ASP programme was effected in such a way as to give ownership of academic development over to departments and faculties (Pavlich and Orkin 1993: 9.7).

At he University of Natal, the ASP took the form of foundation and bridging courses - initially inter-faculty and faculty-based - but subsequently housed in the University Educational Development Programme. Bridging programmes had the character of a non-credit bearing foundation year offered to a small number of Engineering students selected by industry.

A further initiative was to provide " 'slow stream' or 'augmented' programmes which offer(ed) intensive, concurrent support in a reduced first year course-load for students who (were) identified as having potential." These were offered in Science, Economics and Management (Pavlich and Orkin 1993:9.13). In the 1993 assessment (Pavlich and Orkin 1993) it was observed that the academic development programme was not infused to maximum effect across the university for reasons relating to organisational complexity and power struggles, amongst others.

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Nevertheless, trends towards an integrated strategy which focused on the whole learning environment were visible. This was precipitated in part by the increase in the number of black students gaining admission, rendering impracticable initiatives which focused on supporting small groups separate to the mainstream (Pavlich and Orkin 1993:9.15).

The sketch above illustrates a major trend at all of the "open" universities: ie. a shift from an adjunct, support model of AD, to a focus on the whole teaching learning context. While some of the impetus for this arose from a rapid change in the student profile (considerably more blacks), it was also a response to an increasing understanding on the part of AD practitioners as well as university managers that the critical gaze needed to be widened to focus on the whole institution and its activities, and how they impacted on the teaching/learning project.

In spite of the merit of most of the efforts in academic support, since their inception they had difficulty in becoming institutionalised. The most significant factor influencing this was that state funding did not make provision for such programmes. Consequently, their success came to depend upon donor funding. The deleterious effect that this had on the development of the programmes is noted by Muller (1988) in a paper presented at the 1988 ASP conference:

> on't have to tell you about the depredations about living off 'soft' money at a parastatal institution. First, it keeps the staff temporary: that is to say, it keeps them without conventional benefits, including clear career paths enjoyed by mainstream academics. This means in turn, that it is difficult to attract and to retain academics who are or would be competitive in the mainstream. ASP has thus come to depend on young (and not so young) idealists with more talent than clout in the universities. Secondly, `soft' money is not only difficult to

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procure but unstable, especially when coming from foreign donors (1988:8).

The upshot is that ASPs have had a measured impact on the institutions in which they are located. The precariousness of their funding kept them at the margins of the mainstream of university education.

Under different circumstances, with funding by Government, the outlook might well have been different. Even where the institutions themselves may have had the commitment to use their own coffers to support large-scale development initiatives, since the mid 1980s, state subsidies to universities have been progressively reduced. The apartheid State tried to link funding of universities to self policing on the part of the universities in order to restrain dissent and political activism.

Muller (1988:7) perceived the cuts as having a more sinister agenda on the part of the government ie. to curtail the growth rate of of blacks gaining access to higher education. In addition, he saw ASP as associated in the state's mind with the growth of black students at "open" universities. Plainly it was not a scenario that the apartheid State wanted to countenance.

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3.9) The Emergence of AD at the University of the Western Cape

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At the University of the Western Cape, the starting point was quite different to that of the "open" universities. Beginning from the premise that "disadvantage" is a majority phenomenon, the university declared that any efforts at mediating the learning of students had to reappraise the whole environment; including their curricula, underlying assumptions about the knowledge students enter university with, appropriate teaching and assessment strategies, staff development imperatives, and mechanisms to

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assure quality. Out of this understanding of the challenges faced by the university, an academic development programme called the "infusion model", was conceived in the late 1980s. This approach found favour at a number of other institutions which came on board the AD enterprise much later.

In the past few years, convergences have taken place between the two models (support and infusion) - so much so that it is difficult to discern many differences in the practice of academic development (the generic term which is now widely used to refer to both ASPs as well as ADPs). In the preceding section, I have illustrated the trend at the "open" universities.

The 1993 recent research report on academic development at South African tertiary institutions which I cited earlier, characterised the central problem confronting most South African universities as "how best to increase the diversity of their student populations, while attempting to provide quality education in the context of limited resources" (Pavlich and Orkin 1993:10).

Most tertiary institutions now have either an ASP or ADP with an agency role in facilitating and supporting educational change. The field of AD incorporates three broad areas of endeavour - curriculum reform, staff (professional) development and student development. These intersect at various points in institutional policy, organisational and individual change.

The AD programme at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) was influenced by quite unique circumstances. Although the programme was only formally instituted in 1990, the University had embarked on a path of transformation many years before. The UWC strategic planning document (UWC 2001) marks 1973 as a "watershed year" when the university shook of

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the fetters of its apartheid beginnings. With new leadership in 1975 (Richard van der Ross), a more enlightened future was charted for the university with aims to "address the problem of educational disadvantagement"; and strive towards the "ideal of a completely open university", amongst others (UWC 2001:6).

In 1987, the appointment of the new rector (Jakes Gerwel), who had a more radical political outlook, saw a clearer identity and political mission developing for the university. These changes were influenced and abetted by, and indeed responsive to a climate of wide scale political activism and restiveness within the educational sector throughout the 1980s. By the late 1980s, the university had also established itself openly as a critic and opponent of the government.

Against this backdrop, the need for change at UWC gathered urgency. While the university already served the disadvantaged Coloured community, an innovative admissions policy strove for a clearer balance in terms of race, gender and class, and provided access to large numbers of African students. Table 2 (following page) provides comparative figures for the years 1989 and 1993.

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Table 2

University of the Western Cape Enrolment: 1989 and 1993

Classification	1989	1993	Increase (Decrease)
African	2 239	4 995	123%
Coloured	9 106	6 848	(25%)
Indian	433	648	50%
White	156	194	24%

(Race Relations Survey 1993/1994:746)

A significant point to note here is that while there was this rapid increase in student numbers, staffing levels remained the same. The Government's subsidy formula punished those (HBUs) which pursued "open" access policies. The way in which UWC perceived this is reflected in the following statement:

> Our heritage is one of deprivation, dispossession and dis-advantagement, yet we receive from the state the least financial support of any South African university - in spite of having the highest growth rate and in spite of having a student population on a par with other universities (UWC 1989:1).

Beginning from a base where resources made available to the university were already discriminatory, the challenge faced by the university was even more acute: how to provide students with a quality educational experience in the face of decreasing resources?

To begin with, the university saw its development project as a far bigger one than providing support for students alone. The infusion model of AD focused

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its attention on the whole curriculum, and made curriculum review and reform at a course as well as at a programme level central to the AD project. But the consequences of increased numbers and decreasing resources meant more pressures on individual lecturers and AD practitioners and impelled them to take an imaginative look at the barriers to effective learning at UWC, and possibilities for enhancing teaching and learning under these circumstances.

As a first step, a critical appraisal of the most apparent problems was conducted and goals devised for their resolution. At a workshop held on 15 March 1991, some of the following was arrived at:

When one thinks of realisable goals for the immediate future, is is suggested that:

> 1) We look critically at whether language related substructures are in place. And here one thinks of the crucial role study guides (according to UWC's 1985 criteria) could and can play, however:
>
> * Are all our study guides available in English, the academic lingua franca of UWC (One presumes that all departments make use of such material).
>
> * Are lectures well structured? For a person who is not fully conversant with the medium of instruction, understanding what is being said and taking notes are a problem. That is why it is so important that lecturers should anchor their lectures by way of written material - topic abstracts, worksheets, one page summaries, graphical displays, charts, etc.
>
> * Are works of reference readily available? The process of comprehending academic text is a developmental process which is above all time consuming. To have a few reference books on the reserve shelf for a few hundred students does not serve the purpose of additional reading. (ADC 1991:1)

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The list is more extensive and offers several more practical ideas about how the learning experience of students may be enhanced, and how the language challenges they experience could be alleviated. What the identified concerns reflected was a need to immediately address the problems which were being experienced. There was little time to theorise about AD and its conceptual underpinnings. It is not surprising therefore that the imperative to respond immediately and practically to the perceived difficulties at the teaching and learning interface did not allow for a coherent understanding of AD to develop. Some of this had to do with the difficulties of getting everyone to see eye to eye on the issues. Much of it had to do with diverse conditions, expectations and degrees of commitment at a departmental and individual level.

The workshop referred to earlier provides a window on the complexity of defining AD. The minutes of the workshop reflect the dilemma as follows:

> 1) What do we mean by 'academic development'?
>
> i) What does the term 'academic' refer to? The choice of the term 'academic' poses difficulties because it basically refers to both teaching/ learning and research. Given the separate Research Development Programme on campus, our use of the concept 'academic' in 'academic development' is more restricted and implies a primary focus on the teaching/learning aspect of the academic endeavour (cf. University of Natal's choice of the term 'university educational development) including research relevant to that aspect.

The difficulties with clarifying the term in the ADC were merely a shadow of the problem experienced in developing a university-wide, common understanding of the term, as emerged in later years. I give a more elaborate account of the challenges of developing and implementing AD in chapter four.

Suffice it to say at this stage that as agents working at the interface where the envisaged changes were to take place, AD practitioners were challenged

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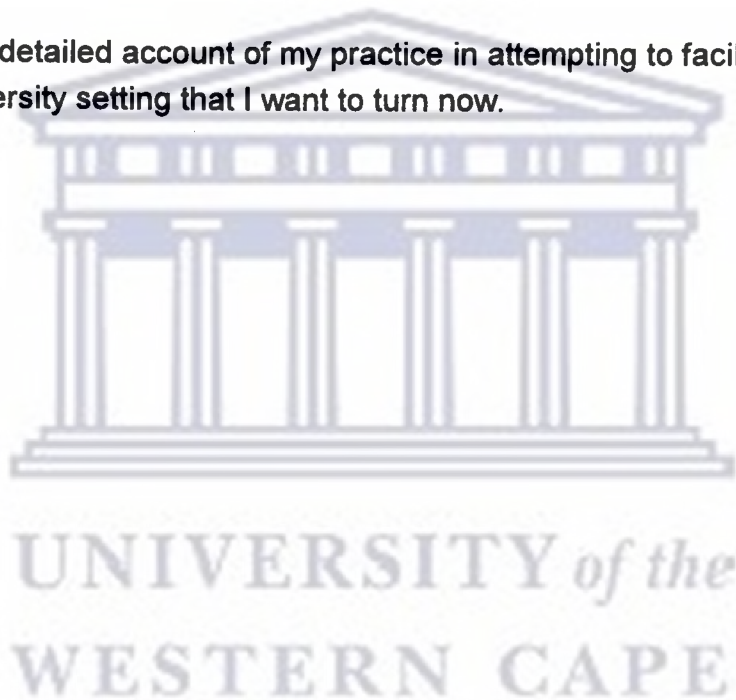
to foster innovation and change which made real the ideals of the AD programme.

Confronted with the conditions of adversity I have described, and the effects of cumulative discrimination, the questions which arise then are: How could the academic development project be best advanced at UWC? Was the Infusion model practicable under the material conditions which operated at the University? What are the limits and possibilities of the Infusion model of AD. What are the necessary conditions which need to be created to foster academic development at the University? And, most importantly in terms of my thesis, what are the most appropriate and effective practices which advance it?

It is to a detailed account of my practice in attempting to facilitate AD within the university setting that I want to turn now.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CHAPTER FOUR - A NARRATIVE OF CHANGE

4.1) Introduction

In using the analogy of the film "Short cuts" in Chapter Two, I drew attention to the difficulties of constructing the full story of the ADP programme I was involved in for the period under scrutiny. I also pointed out that all I could hope to achieve in producing an account of my involvement was a series of long trailers which give a coherent, adequate and credible representation of the myriad factors and events which impacted upon the AD project and upon my own practice. In addition, I pointed out that my subject position as a constituted and constituting subject would necessarily influence how I represent the events which make up my account.

My project in this chapter therefore is to stitch together a number of representational vignettes which characterise my experience and practice of academic development. This in itself constitutes a considerable methodological challenge. I want to undertake the task first without the tediousness of justifying myself methodologically throughout the chapter. What I intend is to give focused attention to the methodological challenges of constructing a narrative account in my *post hoc* analysis. There I shall elaborate upon my subject position and attempt to illuminate how this thesis project has influenced and reshaped it. What I shall do in this chapter however, is to give a short autobiographical profile which might suggest the influences in my life which have helped propel me into the the field of AD.

In the light of the above, the central focus of my narrative in this chapter then would be my efforts at supporting student development, curriculum change and staff development in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at UWC, for the substance of AD practice, as conceived by the

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ADP at the time, consisted largely of these activities. I shall begin by relating how I came to find myself in the context of AD at UWC. Thereafter, I shall proceed to sketch out the background and development of an AD vision at UWC, before I shift to the autobiographical profile mentioned earlier. The bulk of the remaining chapter consists of an elaborated account of my AD practice, and the primary focus of my analysis in this thesis. It is to these tasks that I turn now.

4.2) First Encounters

On the morning of 22 July 1991, as is characteristic for that time of year, a billowy cloud enveloped the Cape Town sky and threatened rainy torment for the rest of the day. I made my way to the University of the Western Cape along Modderdam Road to begin my first day at work in the Academic Development Centre (ADC). The road cuts a swathe through the drab working class townships of the Cape Flats, which were built in pursuance of the apartheid government's separate development policy.

The road is bumpy and ill-cared for, in spite of the heavy traffic it carries, and is reminiscent of the physical neglect which is characteristic of most working class suburbs in South Africa. As I stopped at the first intersection, I noticed a crowd of students waiting for a lift to the University.

Scores of eyes tried to make contact with mine, as if willing me to offer a lift. At my slight nod, three students piled into the front of my old Toyota Hilux bakkie. Another ten or so scrambled onto the back in an instant. Yet others who were not agile enough to exploit the moment of opportunity retreated, seemingly dejectedly, to the pavement to await the next prospect.

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[They would soon learn that in the scramble for opportunities, and a better quality of life, it is those who are quick and alert, or those who have no qualms about elbowing themselves to the front, who always seem to take the lion's share. The biggest challenges they would confront at university would be to silence the disparaging voices of their apartheid education; the effusive self-effacement of a Christian upbringing; and the eloquent rhetoric of the struggle for liberation, which taught socialist values and the primacy of the larger group. These various forms of conditioning would need to be undone before they could exploit the full potential of university education.]

As the nose of my bakkie reared upwards and the rear sank close to the tarmac in spaniel-like submission to the weight and weak leaf-springs, I caught myself wondering how long the suspension on my bakkie would last if it had to be weighed down by a daily payload of tightly packed humanity.

But I felt immediately chastened by the memory of spending up to five hours a day travelling from home to university and back as an undergraduate student in my first year. I remembered particularly how this daily travail left me fatigued and distracted: applying my mind to my studies often came low down on my list of priorities. With a twinge of guilt at my selfish thoughts, I banished any thought about my bakkie's fate from my mind.

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As I approached the University, I was struck by the imposing new entrance to the Campus. The entrance road curved slightly to the left and then veered to the right and to the left again before a short straight brought me to a stop street opposite the elegant library building with its attractive architecture, and the less imposing administration building.

Having been a postgraduate student in the Education Faculty during the

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politically turbulent years of 1985 and 1986, I was more familiar with the old entrance, which confronted one with a less flattering, graceless cluster of squat and drab face brick buildings dating back to the inception of the University. On another occasion I was to wonder whether it was for this reason that the new entrance was built - to conceal the drabness of the original. First impressions, it crossed my mind, are, after all, important.

However, it occurred to me that the new entrance might also have something to do with the fact that the huge parking lot of the Spoornet premises across the road from the university had offered the ideal launching pad for assaults by the police on UWC staff and students whenever there was protest action at the Campus.

Located as the University was on the sandy wastelands of the Cape Flats (hence the nickname "Bush" College), it was close neither to the transport grid nor to the facilities and conveniences of the city. Apartheid's social engineering never gave attention to the comfort and conveniences of its subjugated masses. Students living in residences therefore have a difficult time finding cultural and recreational pursuits within easy reach. As a result, as in many townships where similar austerities exist, there is tendency towards relying on alcohol to ease the tedium of residential life in the hostels, or merely for entertainment.

I approached the University with a feeling of exhilaration as well as trepidation. I felt exhilarated because I was finally going to be working at the university that was so influential in my own intellectual development and shaping my view of the world. In the preceding weeks I bubbled with enthusiasm and idealism.

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The idea of working at what in 1987 was dubbed "the intellectual home of the left" by the Rector Jakes Gerwel conjured up exciting images in my mind, although I had not thought deeply about what this meant, nor could I at the time articulate a convincing explanation of my own political identity. What I was clear about though was that I belonged to the liberation movement.

I had visions of participating in profound discourses which would challenge me intellectually and interrogate the condition of our society and shape its transformation. South African society was already embarked upon a course which would propel us into a new era politically, with the dramatic about turn of the apartheid government announced in February 1990 ie. to relinquish white domination and set us on a path towards a democracy.

My trepidation came from being uncertain about what was in store for the future. How would I be received in the Faculty where I would work? Might there be hostility to a newcomer and outsider? What kinds of demands would be made on me? Would I be up to fulfilling them? These questions churned in my mind.

The day began with what was to be the first of many meetings. My newly appointed colleagues and those appointed some months earlier were present. The atmosphere at the meeting was congenial, with courtesy slightly exaggerated. I perceived the first of several hints of an undercurrent of tension between some of the older staff. In the weeks to follow, it became increasingly apparent that there were political dynamics within the ADC which I needed to understand.

It appeared that the meeting would be concerned mostly with orientation of the new appointees. It was proposed that we would begin with a historical

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overview of AD at UWC, move on to an evaluation of current efforts, then explore definitions of AD and expectations from the new appointees. Thereafter we would look at operationalisation of the AD programme within campus structures, and explore the issue of communication - between the ADC, the eight Faculties, Senate Committees, Senate Academic Planning Committee and the Senate Research Committee.

4.3) Background and Development of an AD Vision at UWC

At the meeting, a chronological sketch was drawn of the development of the AD Programme (Personal notes 22/07/91; Notebook 2,19/07/91-18/09/91).

It was reported that in 1980 UWC established a Teaching Centre whose brief was to give direction in academic planning and teaching development at the University. The key challenge which confronted the Teaching Centre according to its then Director Prof Dries Sinclair, was how to bridge the gap between school and university.

Although it was not mentioned as a motivating factor at the meeting, 1980 was also a year of intense political activity at black (including African, Coloured and Indian) schools and universities. The quality of educational provision at black schools and universities came under intense scrutiny, fuelled by the rhetoric of the student movement which rejected "gutter education."

There were prolonged periods of class boycotts at schools and universities in 1980, which prompted teachers and lecturers to re-examine their emphasis on class contact for teaching and learning. Consequently, it could not have been merely coincidental that the University chose to place teaching development under the spotlight at this time.

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The report went on to state that the strategy which was employed at UWC was to explore ways of individualizing instruction, for it was quite apparent that the demands and limits of classroom-based education had little potential to bridge the gap. The shift towards computer-based education in 1979 for targeted and amenable courses was an important development in pursuance of the strategy.

As secretary to the Academic Planning committee, the Director of the Teaching Centre had access to this important platform to influence senior management (especially deans) on matters relating to teaching and learning development.

A further important development occurred in 1981 when the corporate sector was invited to the University and prompted to acquire a stake in education at UWC. Sponsorship which was secured as a result of this made it possible to purchase the PLATO computer based learning system which had been in use in the USA for some years. The technology was geared towards supplementing the learning of students initially through a drill and practice methodology. (Later the methodology evolved into something more sophisticated as hypertext technology became feasible, and desirable).

The 1985 class boycotts at UWC heightened the urgency for a departure from entirely class and lecture-room based teaching and learning. The Teaching Centre was asked to come up with a framework to facilitate this. Interestingly, the concern (to seek new teaching approaches which made it possible for teaching to continue during the boycotts) was perhaps reflective of the changed political dynamics at the University since 1976.

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The report was in broad brushstrokes and avoided some of the most pressing political issues and historical context which I shall try to illuminate. The rest of the picture is derived from a perusal of University documents and publications relating to AD.

As I mull over the report now, it occurs to me that with more people whose sympathies lay with the student struggle in positions of influence and power at the University in the early 1980s than was the case in the 1970s, it was to be expected that their approach to the crises posed by prolonged boycotts of classes by students would be more sensitive to where students were coming from. Whereas the response in earlier boycotts might have been diffidence if not hostility on the part of the University authorities, in 1985 the concern was to look for ways of keeping the teaching and learning project on course even while students were not attending class.

During 1985, I had the - I am not sure whether to call it privilege or unenviable position (after some thought I still cannot resolve the ambivalence) - of two windows on the student protests of 1984 and 1985. Begun initially as a protest against the Tricameral parliament set up by the National Party government, the movement rapidly gained momentum, underscored by a discourse of "liberation first, education later."

As a teacher at Rylands High School, I daily witnessed the drama of student protests, police brutality, and the insipid reaction of teachers and the educational authorities in dealing with the class boycotts. The student protest movement careered from near anarchy to moments of intensive and impressive organisation.

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I became a kind of hanger-on to the movement; as a photographer, documenting as much as the day to day travails of the protest as possible. My status as teacher did not allow me to come out in open support of the class boycotts, but my tacit approval was clear in the clandestine support several colleagues and I gave to students, and, under threat of losing our jobs, our refusal to cooperate with the educational authorities and security forces in breaking the boycott. In addition, we looked at creative ways of advancing the educational cause without students actually having to attend class.

We agreed eventually upon a strategy of tutorial letters coupled with self-study materials based upon the syllabus. However this effort dwindled in the face of difficulties with organising students and non-responsiveness by most, who were more used to having the comforting presence of the teacher to help them along and explain where they reached stumbling blocks in their learning. However, the student leadership frowned upon the initiative as having the potential to undermine the boycott.

As a student at UWC studying towards a B Ed degree, I was confronted by the choice of supporting the class boycotts there or attending class. There was no contest really. It was inconceivable that I would not support the boycott at UWC while supporting that of students at school.

The real dilemma of course lay in deciding whether I should continue to study towards my degree through a self-paced programme or not. Many students at school held the opinion that this would be contrary to the spirit and intent of the boycotts. Others held the position that it would be foolhardy to arrest the education of students. The differing positions were reflected in some of the dominant slogans at the time "liberation before education," and "education before liberation."

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The dilemma was not really resolved. Left to their own devices, and having been immersed in a culture of dependency (upon the teacher or lecturer) in learning, many students tuned off and dropped out. Others enjoyed the breakdown in traditional authority structures at school and the escape from the monotony of the classroom. Those who made it through school and into university were confronted by the consequences of disrupted schooling.

In moments of sanity and emotional stability, during the most traumatic period of my working life, I felt uneasy about the way things were developing, particularly at school. Some of my uneasiness probably had to do with the loss of power and collapse of the ordered world which my day to day teaching job entailed. Moreover, I was unable to articulate a credible critique of the way things were going at school and the near anarchy and collapse of the educational project.

I could anticipate the costs to students and the black community of sustained boycotts of classes. However, to challenge the status quo would have been almost blasphemous anyway, and perceived as a sellout of the ideals of the struggle. What I discovered in liberation politics was a quick propensity to label and construct on the basis of merely a politically incorrect utterance. So I opted for prudence (and perhaps the way of the meek) and remained silent.

As the graduates of the school protest years made it to universities, the universities were themselves challenged to deal not only with the aftermath of apartheid education, but also that of disrupted schooling. UWC was no exception.

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The year 1987 saw a sharp rise at UWC in the number of students from a Department of Education and Training (the educational authority administering black African education) school background. This was partly as a result of changing demographic pressures in the student population, but also because of the commitment of the new rector (Prof Jakes Gerwel) to give greater access to African students.

What the changed student profile translated into was a greater proportion of students who had English as a second language; inadequate development of their learning at school because of poor educational provision; and disrupted schooling because of several class boycotts. The University had to sit up and take notice.

Prof Jakes Gerwel, who became the rector of UWC in 1987, declared his commitment to re-examining assumptions about teaching and the university. In his inaugural address, he declared the following:

> We need to pursue an in-depth discussion of and investigation into what university teaching means and involves in an historically transitional period and situation like ours. We shall have to examine afresh for ourselves the definition of "the university"; to determine for ourselves what is essential to that kind of institution which can rightly call itself "university"; to see how we can replace where necessary that which is non essential with features necessitated by our context and circumstance... (Gerwel 1987:4).

Nothing changed the context and circumstances at UWC more than the arrival of significant numbers of students at UWC who had experienced disrupted schooling, or African students for whom the two mediums of instruction at UWC viz. English and Afrikaans, were second or third languages. To give practical effect to the commitment expressed in his inaugural address, the Rector set up an *ad hoc* Committee on Academic

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Development. The main issue which the committee had to address (in the light of the changed student profile) was: "Is the university honouring its commitment to the students it is admitting?"

In 1988/1989, a survey was conducted of student academic needs. The essence of the study is captured in part of the preamble to the questionnaire:

> For many students, studying at university is a difficult and even traumatic time. Students are faced with academic demands for which they have not been prepared by schools, and which result in feelings of mounting dissatisfaction with their academic performance and despair as to what to do to enhance success in their studies. While this may not be the case with all students, it does apply to a large number of students. This study is concerned with understanding the nature of student academic experiences at UWC, and in determining how widespread your problems are (AD Research Project 1988: Questionnaire).

While the ensuing report was made confidential, the main problems (marked as serious in the questionnaire by more than 50% of respondents) were: not having money for books) (68.9%); knowing what to emphasise in the exams (57.7%); interruptions of the academic year (54.3%); obtaining recommended books (52.9%); finding enough time to do academic work (52.4%); and obtaining recommended material in the library (52.1%). Reading and writing problems, note-taking, effective study methods, doing research, doing assignments, and answering exams all hovered in the upper 40 percentiles.

In addition to the survey of students, a survey of staff expectations was also carried out. The main complaint of staff was that they carried an overload of work with the new conditions spawned by the changed access policy. It was reported thus in the conclusions of the report:

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> There was an overwhelming feeling of dissatisfaction with the practical difficulties of teaching at the university. This has left staff feeling abandoned and many departments feeling crisis ridden in the changed educational context of the university (AD Research Report 1989:6).

A key proposal flowing from the views of staff was that UWC should launch an Academic Support Programme of the kind run by the University of Cape Town and the other Historically White English Universities. However, the survey report advised against the creation of a separate Academic Support Programme as a way of resolving the multiplicity of problems arising from disadvantage, arguing that "The wide base of student problems will make an adjunct AD model very problematic" (AD Research Report 1989:10).

By June 1990, staff who had been recruited to work on establishing an AD programme at UWC produced a policy document - *"Proposal for the Establishment of a Programme of Academic Development"* - which laid out the foundations for an AD programme at UWC. The proposals attempted to reconcile existing structures for AD at UWC, notably the Teaching Centre, with new structures. The end result was a two tier structure - Faculty Academic Development Committees (FADCs) and an Academic Development Centre (ADC). The aims and functions of the FADCs were outlined as follows:

> -to monitor key aspects of undergraduate teaching in the faculties including:
>
> *student pass rates
>
> *teaching and learning methods and support
>
> *methods of evaluating students
>
> *degree curricula and course syllabi

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*lecturer and course evaluation

-to monitor admissions and exclusions

-to identify areas for research and development and to initiate appropriate action

-to ensure adequate evaluation of academic development projects

-to disseminate information between departments and to provide a forum for debate and networking

-to offer advice on project proposals

-to discuss academic development proposals initiated by departments

-to examine ways in which teaching, education-related research, and community service can be rewarded

-to encourage formal research in academic development

-to nominate the Faculty representative/s on the Student Selection Committee

The functions of the ADC on the other hand were outlined as follows:

-to coordinate academic development initiatives on a University-wide basis

-to promote and undertake research into learning and teaching including issues such as admissions and placement as well as the language question

-to build a database of the UWC student profile in order to inform research and academic planning

-to raise funds for projects of the Centre and of the FADCs

-to provide audio-visual services for the University

-to provide academic counselling for students

-to provide computer based education (CBE) support for departments

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-to coordinate evaluation of academic development projects of the University (Badsha and Boughey: 1990).

What struck me most in the first few weeks of working in the ADC was that although these elaborate goals were worked out and a University-wide infrastructure was devised, there wasn't really a programme to implement in the conventional sense that programmes are developed and implemented.

Those of us who were newly appointed as Faculty AD Coordinators (Melanie Walker, Uta Lehman and myself amongst others) decided to put our heads together to see how we might make our debut in the faculties which we were assigned to: Walker - Education; Lehman - Community and Health Sciences; and myself - Economic and Management Sciences. The assigning of the faculties was presented as a *fait accompli*.

Although motivations were given, I felt that they had been railroaded through. This was the first of several feelings of uneasiness which I experienced about the process. As the political dynamics in the ADC became more complex in the next few years, I felt more and more estranged and at times marginalized from the centre of power, with tensions flaring up from time to time in staff meetings.

I had the strong perception of a conspiratorial air about decision-making in the ADC, ostensibly by an inner circle. It was not always possible to put a finger on it, but the feeling was always there, and by observing the dynamics of exchanges in staff meetings and patterns of support for decisions, it became more and more apparent as time went on that crucial decisions were being lobbied in advance and presented as *faits accompli* at staff meetings. This led to a climate of mistrust which pervaded the ADC, and was to weaken its project considerably.

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What the proposal did not speak to was the role of the Faculty AD Coordinators. As it turned out in practice, the envisaged role of the incumbents was not distinguishable from that of the FADCs and was consequently a source of tension. In Chapter Five, I shall offer an interpretative account of the sources of this tension, and, amongst other things, account for some of the successes and failings of the ADP.

In Chapter Three, I described the context of HBUs in general and more specifically that of UWC. I pointed out that a central feature of the development of higher education - indeed the education system in general - was its race-based character. What the sketch in Chapter Three did not do however, was provide an insight into the insidious effects of race-based education on its subjects and objects.

Not only has apartheid education sought deliberately to undermine the development of the natural potential of blacks, but it also sought to emasculate the culture of blacks, and exploit difference not only between black and white, but also among blacks in order to maintain white supremacy in South Africa. The labelling effects of apartheid have left many in today's South Africa with a deep-seated crisis of identity which manifests itself from time to time in our politics and in our educational practice amongst others.

It is by now axiomatic then to state that the idea of race is very deeply inscribed in the South African experience. The best sense I have been able to make of its pernicious effects on my own struggle with identity has been through an autobiographical excavation which I conducted recently (Soudien *et al.* 1996). I want to go into it to the extent that it sheds light on my constitution of self, and the influences that my early experiences had on the trajectory I followed into the area of AD work. Indirectly, I hope that it offers a perspective on disadvantage as well.

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4.4) An Autobiographical Aside

My great grandfather came to South Africa from India as a contract labourer to work on the sugar cane fields of Natal at the turn of the century. According to historical records, most Indians who came to South Africa as contract labourers stayed on as "free Indians" once their contracts expired. My great grandfather was one of these.

Others, especially traders, came to South Africa as "free Indians" having paid their own way. I established that my great grandfather acquired a piece of land with his savings as a labourer and grew flowers. It is the only significant detail I know about his life. I once caught a glimpse of his birth certificate when I was a child, and have a recollection of a brown, bromide picture of a turbaned, gaunt and moustached man.

I remember making inquiries about him at a young age. Not much information was forthcoming either from my parents or grandparents. My parents were curiously reticent. My grandfather was the archetypal patriarch. No one dared question him. I developed the clear impression over the years of my youth that family origins were a taboo subject. There was good reason for this. While in India, he would have been positioned inescapably as a member of a particular caste through heredity. His castly status would be marked by his name and his occupation.

The caste system consisted of four main classes - the brahmin or priestly order, the shatriya or warrior class, vaisya or merchant order, and the sudras who were servants and labourers. Below this hierarchy came an underclass called harijans or untouchables. It is not clear to me exactly where in the order he would have fallen, although it could be inferred that in view of his status as an agricultural labourer, he might well have belonged to the sudra caste. However the reliability of this is challenged somewhat by his name, which suggests he might have belonged to a lowlier caste.

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The forebears of most Indian South Africans came to South Africa between 1860 and around 1910 (when recruitment of indentured labourers was stopped for various political reasons). A strategy that was used by some of them in attempting to escape the insidious tentacles of the caste system, was to obfuscate their origins by changing their names and cutting off ties once they had left India.

If this were not possible, because of an indissoluble paper trail (through registration papers for instance), it was quite usual for offspring to be registered with the first name of the father given as the last name. For instance, my last name, Baijnath, is the first name of my father. His last name, in turn, is the first name of my grandfather. In this way, it is impossible for anyone educated in the caste system to pinpoint with any precision my castly status without a revelation of my great grandfather's name and occupation.

The irony of such elaborate strategies to escape the labelling effects of the caste system lay in the fact that a more virulent form of social stratification was to be imposed on his progeny based on an indelible indicator, viz. skin colour. This system we have come to know as apartheid.

My earliest consciousness of identity can be traced back to the time I went to school for the first time. I grew up in a rural sugar farming area of South Africa. The primary school I went to was called the Bhagwandas State Aided Indian Primary School. (Later I was to go to two high schools which were also called "Indian" high schools, and to a university that was set aside for those of Indian origin). All the students were classified "Indian", as were the teachers.

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My playmates and contemporaries who were classified "African" had to either walk or take the bus to the nearest African school, which was a considerable distance away. Most of their parents were labourers and could afford neither the bus fares nor the costs of books.

While my compatriots and I were given textbooks on loan by the school and state-subsidised stationery, the economically much worse off African children had to buy their own textbooks as well as stationery. Only reading books in the official languages (English and Afrikaans) and one of the indigenous languages were supplied through state subsidy.

Consequently, most children of labourers in the area in which I lived did not go to school at all. While it was usual for most, if not all, Indian, Coloured and White children to attend school minimally from the age of seven until their teens, it was not so for African children. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, and reiterated above, the apartheid government had designed a deliberate policy to subvert the educational development of Africans.

Even at that young age I was conscious of and uneasy about the disparities of race-based education. While politics was strictly taboo at schools, every now and then some teacher would seek to explain the inequities or racial discrimination. The argument normally followed a jingoistic track - how "our" forebears who came to South Africa as labourers toiled on the sugar cane fields, and in the absence of efforts on the part of the colonial authority to provide schooling for their children, built their own schools funded by bequests from some rich landowners and the paltry savings of indentured labourers.

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With nationalistic fervour stirred, and conscience assuaged, I pushed my unease out of my mind. As a result, throughout my school years, I was fixed on the idea that it was through effort, sacrifice and dedication that one made progress in education, and if one did not make it, one only had oneself to blame. I therefore developed no understanding during my school years of how the socio-political machinations of government had a bearing on my life.

My entire school life was spent in segregated schooling. Apartheid's grand scheme to label, keep divided and politically emasculate the racial Other was working. In pursuit of my rural adventures amidst the serenity of the sugar-cane fields of Natal, it was easy to be oblivious to the shifting sands of national politics at the time.

Newspapers did not easily reach our neck of the woods. Even if they did, there were other competing priorities for the meagre resources of the family, like kerosene to keep the lamps burning, or bread for sandwiches to take to school.

We had a radio at home; however it was strictly forbidden to expend the batteries surfing the different stations. The power had to be saved for the weekly escape into fantasy land afforded by a few popular radio serials, when the family assembled in the sitting room-cum-dining room-cum-bedroom for the weekly ritual and the kerosene lamp was turned down low to conserve fuel.

Once the serial was over, the radio would be carefully wrapped in a calico sheet and put into the cupboard where it would remain for the next few days, until the next occasion.

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One thing we all dreaded was the demise of the batteries in the middle of a gripping episode of our favourite serial. I discovered on a visit to one of my relatives that if weak batteries were warmed in the sun, they would acquire a fleeting but precious new lease on life.

On many a night I was the intrepid hero who risked having the batteries blow up in my face as I warmed them over the heat of the kerosene lamp, having deduced that if the heat of the sun worked, then any other source of heat was bound to work as well.

Having elbowed my way to the forefront of my parents attention as "technological expert" it was a short hop to winning concessions on access to the radio. (I was fourteen at the time). After I had rescued the evening, my parents did not have the heart to refuse, and my brothers did not show an inkling of resentment. After a while it became accepted that once serial time was over, the radio was all mine. I would retreat with it to the kitchen-cum-bedroom where I would clear the table and race through my homework (which was bound to get me a crack on the knuckles the next day from my teachers for untidy writing).

I would then settle down to a pilfered cigarette and a few hours of blissful listening with the volume turned down as low as possible to avoid the often shouted remonstrances from my parents to turn the radio off to conserve power. Sometimes I would fall asleep with the radio still on and be wracked by guilt for days on end for having squandered the battery power so.

When I reflect upon how I found it possible to escape the poverty trap and, even worse, the restricted imagination and world view forced by a rural existence, I have to attribute it in the first instance to that early access to the radio. Later it was having free reign in the school library through the generosity of my English teacher, Mr VK Naidoo, who saw some potential in me that escaped my own attention.

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I read voraciously and within a matter of two years found it increasingly difficult to choose a book that I had not already taken out of the library. Informed as I was through the world of books, I swelled with pride and self-importance whenever remarks were made by my friends and family acknowledging this.

In 1976, at the age of sixteen, I was in my penultimate year at school. It was a watershed year in South African history, for schools in Soweto, an African township in the north of the country exploded into violent rebellion against having Afrikaans imposed as a medium of instruction.

This was the start of wave after wave of mass political action over the next decade and a half which culminated in the political accord beginning in 1990. So effectively cocooned was I in my secluded rural setting that I and my contemporaries were completely oblivious to the developments of 1976.

When I finished school, I was all set to find a job to support the family, like my elder brother had done. Fortuitously, he had thought somewhat more extensively about my future than I had. He proposed that I should go to university in an exchange whose brevity was in inverse proportion to its significance for my future. It is therefore firmly etched in my memory.

> "And who would pay my way?" I asked.
>
> "I would", he said.
>
> "And what if you should decide to get married or something?"
>
> "Well I've decided I won't until you are done," he said.
>
> "Okay," I said.

[He kept his end of the bargain and a considerable amount more].

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Shortly afterwards, without any ceremony or fuss, I was whisked away to the city where the university was located, never to return to my rural roots except for short visits to family and friends. I registered for a BA at the University of Durban Westville. I had a fleeting grand ambition to do Law, but immediately abandoned it when the reality of how long it would take confronted me.

The undergraduate degree plus articleship added up to six years before I would be able to earn any money - my driving imperative. So I made the prudent choice of a teaching career as the shortest route to becoming a salaried person.

In 1980, in my second year at university, and bereft of the protective cocoon of the sugar cane fields, I was confronted by the stark reality of our inequitous society. And my political education began. Whereas I wavered initially in my consciousness of the heavy financial burden my brother carried on my behalf, I was swept along by the tide of righteous anger at the brutality with which the security forces of the apartheid government crushed all student protest, which consumed black schools and universities in the wake of Soweto 1976.

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When protest action broke out at Coloured schools in the Western Cape townships, solidarity action at the black universities and schools in other African and Indian townships broke out almost spontaneously. Any possibility of a consciousness of "Indianness" or "Colouredness" dissipated in the face of the ideology of the struggle which continually reinforced a view of blacks (Africans, Coloureds and Indians now) being all part of the oppressed majority, doing battle against an oppressive white minority.

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Looking back on my undergraduate education at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) during the years 1978 to 1981, I can now see how that experience had a formative influence on my eventual decision to work in the area of AD. I became acutely conscious of the inequities in the schooling system, and how these carried over into the university system.

First year classes were large - it was not unusual to have classes over a thousand students, even though the largest venue could accommodate no more than 800 students comfortably. The end of a lecture normally meant a mad dash from one venue to the other in the hope of finding a seat. Otherwise one had to sit on the floor, or in the hallway.

The opening gambit of some lecturers in these large classes used to be:

> "We have space for only two hundred in the second year class, so more than half of you will fail, lots will drop out."

On that ominous note, the lecturer would begin dictating his notes for the rest of the lecture period. (Later I was to discover that at UWC such an opening gambit was not unusual. Several lecturers relished the power they wielded in this way, and frequently threatened students that they would fail).

It was not unusual for lecturers to dictate notes. However, this was not the worst experience I had as an undergraduate student. One lecturer spent the lecture talking about every conceivable thing except the subject she was supposed to teach (one which I majored in!). Her favourite topics included her trips overseas, the trials and tribulations of compiling her winter wardrobe, her anorexia, and her family.

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I ruefully confess that my colleagues and I encouraged her, for it drew attention away from our lack of preparedness for the lecture. We became quite adept at posing the pseudo-intellectual conundrum, or the superfluous observation, or the innocuous personal question which would prompt the lengthy diversion into banality.

When exam-time arrived, we ran around helter-skelter looking for tips and working out the best "spots". We probed lecturers doggedly for some indication of what the most important areas of study were. Eventually some did relent. Others misled us. We had long since realised that it was futile or stupid to slug it out with six or seven hundred students for access to the limited number of photocopies available on short-loan in the library. It would have been ideal of course to buy the prescribed textbooks. But I baulked at the prospect when it became apparent that the lecturer referred to it very little if at all.

However, a more pressing obstacle was one of cost. When I calculated that it would cost the equivalent of two months of my brother's salary to buy all the prescribed textbooks I needed, I went only for the absolute essentials. The received wisdom amongst my compatriots was that if one gave back to the lecturer what was in the textbook, one was likely to fail; a focus on the lecturer's (dictated) notes would get one a good pass. By and large this worked out.

I left university politically conscientised, armed with a degree and certificate in teaching, and flushed with the sense of victory over the system, but dubious about whether I was equipped to do anything. Fortunately, I got a job as a teacher at a school in Cape Town.

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As I drove down to Cape Town (in the car that my generous brother had donated to me) to take up my job at the beginning of 1983, I had a sombre sense that I was embarked on a new era in my life where I would be called upon to translate my ideals into practice. My sojourn at UDW had challenged me in all sorts of ways. I was far more acutely aware of the glaring inequities and complexities of our society. The years of involvement in protest action at UDW were formative years for me politically, and shaped my outlook and practice for the next decade.

However, as I settled into being a teacher, I grew more and more aware of the inadequacies of my experience as an undergraduate student at university, and acutely conscious that I had been shortchanged academically. This increasing realisation was to influence me to pursue a B Ed degree at UWC some years later (1985 - 1986) where I encountered my first real educational challenges in such courses as Metatheory, Philosophy of Education and Language Education.

By 1984, when the government allowed Indians and Coloureds into parliament in a sideshow called the Tricameral Parliament (Africans were excluded from this dispensation), those who participated were branded "sellouts". The apartheid government had banked on a strong ethnic consciousness on the part of Indians and Coloureds to woo them into their deal in which they (the apartheid government) relinquished very little power. Indian and Coloured representatives were elected by the tiniest of polls - as low as 1% in some instances.

The by now powerful ideology of blacks as oppressed doomed the initiative to failure. To assert an ethnic consciousness in this climate was considered extremely reactionary. Subscribing to the ideology of the liberation struggle meant in effect a denial of any identity beyond a generic blackness.

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Unfortunately, the concept was never adequately developed in relation to the racial complexity of our society.

A wave of political action broke out across the country to protest against the discriminatory tricameral dispensation which sought to further drive a wedge between Africans, Coloureds and Indians. This was to continue until 1986 when all resistance was temporarily crushed through the imprisonment of tens of thousands of activists and leaders and the declaration of two states of emergency.

It was becoming plain that even the increasingly repressive conditions imposed by the state were not going to quell the mood of rebelliousness prevalent in the country. Moreover, repeated waves of protest action politicised and radicalised the youth of the country and brought on board throngs of new recruits to the cause of liberation. Even members of the older generation who had been thoroughly cowed by apartheid repression were emboldened by the insurrectionary mood sweeping the country.

As a schoolteacher at Rylands High School on the Cape Flats, I was once again caught in the thick of things. Many of my students were activists and involved in insurrectionary activity on a daily basis. Virtually the entire school population boycotted classes for months on end.

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The conditions of near anarchy that this caused at schools have had a negative impact on the culture of learning on generations of school students throughout the 1980s. While the ideals of the struggle were noble, for many students the boycotts were a great adventure. The novelty of attending school where traditional authority structures and formal educational programmes had broken down was clearly seductive for many.

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Successive states of emergency imposed by the government saw many students being imprisoned. This had the effect of throwing the student movement into disarray and curbing the insurrectionary climate to some extent. A return to classes by students posed new challenges to teachers. Students who had not been under any adult authority or supervision for many months were initially reluctant to forfeit their newfound freedom and return to the formal educational programme.

Nevertheless, once the school routine was re-established, and the demands of examinations loomed large, I was amazed at the speed with which students reverted to the old educational ethos and power relations which established teachers as authority figures and "experts" and students as the mostly passive recipients of teacher knowledge. Whatever vestiges of a critical consciousness there remained from their experience of taking responsibility for their own learning outside the classroom quickly dissipated. This may point to the oppressiveness of the system or the inexorable power of their conditioning in that system, or a combination of both.

The matter did not quite end with a return to classes for teachers at my school. Then began a witch hunt by the educational authorities, who had the perception that many teachers at the school had aided and abetted the student protests. Consequently they tried to put pressure on teachers to play a policing role in relation to students. This, of course, was untenable for teachers. The moral imperative was to support the struggle of students. The end result of this was that 21 of my colleagues and myself were either fired from our jobs or sent on punitive transfer for our "non- cooperative" stance.

After taking our case to court, 11 of us were reinstated at Rylands High School. The other eleven, who were on probation at the time of their

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dismissal, were not reinstated. The court (semi) victory was followed by persistent if subtle victimisation by the education authorities. After being turned down in my application for leave to take up a scholarship in the United kingdom, I resigned in September 1987.

The frustrations which I experienced in being unable to articulate lucid explanations of the educational conditions and events I faced as a teacher were alleviated considerably in the B Ed classes I took with Prof Wally Morrow in Metatheory and Philosophy of Education. The nett effect of the courses was to bring home to me the paltriness of my knowledge and the vast expanse which had yet to be traversed.

The scholarship was therefore an important breakthrough. It helped me to confront the parochialism of my experience, my world view, and my knowledge. I met and interacted with people from many different countries and had to learn to be tolerant and socially skilled. It was not always very easy, acculturated as I was as a South African to make quick judgements and label. The Applied Linguistics Masters which I did, opened a whole new vista of possibilities in my intellectual development and work prospects.

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Upon my return from a year's sojourn in the UK, I got a job as a junior lecturer on the Academic Support Programme at the University of Cape Town from the beginning of 1989. By the end of that year, a number of black townships were no-go areas for the security forces, and were to all intents and purposes ungovernable. Armed with a plethora of repressive laws, the government banned all forms of protest and resolved to use live ammunition to quell any further demonstrations. In the face of this, the liberation movement launched the Defiance Campaign in late 1989 which in effect threw down the gauntlet to the state.

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Nevertheless, in spite of the rebellious spirit, the mood among activists was subdued. We prepared ourselves mentally for the long haul in the struggle. When president De Klerk made his announcement over the evening news on 2 February 1990 that he was going to unban all political organisations and release political prisoners, thereby setting us on the path to democracy, we were incredulous, and literally caught unawares.

After staggering around in a near stupor for many months, with little direction coming from the political structures I was involved in, I felt I needed to take stock of where I was at. I had spent two frustrating years at the Academic Support Programme at the University of Cape Town on one year contracts in a junior lecturer position.

Initially I was one among only three non-white persons in a large department. I felt I did not fit, and received little support in assimilating into the Unit. My attempts (often naive and unsophisticated because of my being a newcomer to both Academic Support as well as academia) to be critical of the discourses and assumptions underscoring the Academic Support programme did not endear me to my colleagues. As I discovered the tacit ground rules of the liberal ethos in which I found myself, I was able to relate more amicably with my counterparts.

However, I did not see a future for myself at the University of Cape Town. It was plainly and unapologetically a university for whites first, under a veil of jargon like "standards" and "excellence". It also had a strongly Eurocentric culture and ethos. The small coterie of black academics there felt isolated and alienated. In meetings of the Black Staff Association, severe criticisms were often levelled against the University, its ethos, and its imperviousness to change.

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Black students invariably had the same complaints. They were highly suspicious of the Academic Support Programme (ASP). Some had dubbed it "African Support Programme" for its exclusive focus on black students. During evaluations many drew attention to the alienating effect that being in a separate programme had on them, even though they acknowledged its academic value.

I was not happy at the institution either. As an executive member of the Academic Staff Association, I had first hand experience of the apathy and diffidence shown by the majority of staff at the University to the political situation in the country. It was difficult to muster up a dozen people for a meeting to discuss appropriate responses to the repressiveness of the state during the Defiance Campaign of late 1989. I felt that I was in the wrong place.

When positions were advertised at UWC in its newly formed ADC, I felt that the time had come to make a shift. I applied for one of the positions of Faculty AD Coordinator and was successful.

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It was against this backdrop that I came to take up my job in the ADC at UWC in the middle of 1991.

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4.5) First Insights into Expectations about AD

After the orientation of the newcomers to the ADC was over, we had several meetings over the next few weeks to discuss things as diverse as our own interests (in research and areas of specialisation); integrating skills development into the mainstream curriculum; administrative staffing needs; portfolios for each ADC staff member (eg. Teaching and Learning,

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Admissions, Language, Research); the language issue at UWC; meeting with the Student's Representative Council to explore areas for possible collaboration; responding to visitors from abroad (Missouri); and staff development (across the University).

During the latter half of 1991, UWC received a steady stream of visitors from universities abroad as South Africa came out of its cultural and academic isolation experienced under apartheid. During the months of July and August 1991, I attended workshops and presentations by visiting academics from Universities as diverse as Texas, Hawaai, Harvard and Missouri.

In between the ADC meetings and attending various seminars and meetings of the National Education Policy Investigation whose work was underway at the time, I began to contemplate how best I might make an entry into the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) Faculty. I was anxious not to damage any chances I had of working amicably on the long term in the Faculty.

I did not want to seem to be coming into the Faculty with preconceived ideas about what they had been doing or not doing. This was reinforced by several hints I had from informal chats, notably from the EMS AD Committee chairperson and more established members of the ADC, that many in the Faculty were apathetic if not indifferent to AD.

I felt that it was important to know this for it would help me prepare for the reception I would have in the Faculty. However, I felt that it was crucial to demonstrate an open-mindedness on the matter, and a sensitivity to the complexity of issues which influenced the AD project, difficult as it may be. (As time went on I became increasingly frustrated by the absence of many

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staff who purportedly only made an appearance to teach their classes, but were not there to offer support or to become involved in AD initiatives. Apparently a number of EMS Faculty members were involved in business enterprises - hence their scarcity).

After mulling over what to do for a few days and speaking to fellow new colleagues in the ADC, I decided that a useful first exercise would be to establish what the state of AD type work was in the Faculty on the one hand, and perceived needs on the other. The way I proposed to do this was to interview a number of colleagues in the EMS Faculty who were associated with the AD project.

Moreover, it occurred to me that the one-on-one contact that the interviews would provide would be a good way of getting to know Faculty members and establishing my own credentials. As it turned out, the encounters were very successful in achieving the aim of establishing trust.

In consultation with other colleagues in the ADC who were involved in a similar quest, I identified the following objectives for the exercise:

i) to develop sound interpersonal working relations with the academic staff in the Faculty

ii) to develop a common understanding of the strengths and problem areas with regard to teaching and learning activities in the different departments and faculties

iii) to devise strategies and a programme of engagement in the ADC arising from (I) and (ii)

iv) to generate a working paper on teaching and learning at UWC and a programme of action for AD

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Consequently, during August 1991 I interviewed twelve members of the EMS faculty, comprising one each in Public Administration, Accounting and Political Studies; and three each in Business Economics, Industrial Psychology and Economics. I produced a report on this in September 1991, based on the semi-structured interviews.

The interview was structured around six issues, viz:

-strengths in the department

-pressing problems

-methods

-tutorial schemes

-curriculum reform

-the role of EFAD (the Faculty Academic Development Committee) and priorities in AD work.

In the interviews, several claimed to have given attention to developing their skills in teaching and were well thought of in their departments as well as among students. In some instances, experiments had been tried out to enhance the teaching/learning experience of students. For example:

-integration of skills development in the first year tutorial programme (Public Administration, Business Economics)

-encouraging students to read widely through provision of readers with a variety of views (Business Economics)

-structured study guides (Economics)

The impression I gained was that while much enthusiasm and energy existed and that initiatives had been taken on a range of fronts, these were offset by

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incredible difficulties pertaining particularly to resources, and student numbers.

Some were categorical in their assumptions about the students they taught while not demonstrating that they themselves had given much thought to how student problems might be alleviated, as reflected in remarks such as:

> A major problem we have is a lack of commitment by students. (Economics Head of Department).
>
> There was a tutorial system but it failed through lack of participation. We couldn't get student cooperation. (Economics Head of Department).
>
> Students don't work nearly as hard as they should be doing - they want a certificate. They are not motivated, they need a push. (Economics Lecturer). We need to be fair to good students who are disadvantaged by disadvantaged students. (Economics Lecturer).
>
> It is a problem to get students to work regularly... regular study is seen as writing tests and assignments - They focus on these for exams. They are not fostering regular studying methods. (Economics Lecturer).
>
> There is a problem with student's ability to conceptualize - reading and understanding and interpreting concepts. (Political Studies Lecturer).

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By far the most widely perceived problem and one that left most teaching staff helpless was that of students' perceived inadequate language and numeracy proficiency. Every department indicated that they experienced this problem, particularly in relation to students from a Department of Education and Training (DET) school background, where poor quality teaching and rote-learning methods were rife as a result of apartheid education. In addition, the years of interrupted schooling brought about by student protest

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action had left their mark on students as well and done incalculable harm to their development.

The apparent double disadvantage of students (viz. inadequately developed language and numeracy skills, coupled with under-developed learning proficiency) manifested itself in poor critical reading ability, inability to analyse arguments effectively and to reconceptualize, ineffective note-taking, and difficulty with analysis of tables and graphs. This in turn led to dismal educational performance, diminishing self confidence, and redefinition of personal goals merely to pass courses with a view to obtaining a certificate.

The problem was exacerbated by inadequate tutorial support, or where this existed, tutors were not trained properly or did not perform as expected. The following observation by a Political Studies lecturer is illustrative:

> The tutorial system has deteriorated. Students (tutors) neglect their duties as exams draw nearer. There is also a problem with overload on Third year students (tutors). There is also no coordination on a Faculty level of assignments and the students suffer.

A further problem perceived by teaching staff was that of a lack of provision for training or support for lecturers. So it was often the case that there was little or no understanding of teaching and learning issues, especially with regard to students from a disadvantaged educational background. There was even less understanding of the learning context from which many students had come, and how disrupted schooling might have impacted upon their ability to develop their natural potential as learners.

A combination of these factors led to underdeveloped students in the third and Honours years where a sometimes superficial understanding of course content and undeveloped analytical, synthetical, writing and research skills

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were apparent. These shortcomings were more visible where students had to take external exams in certain professions.

Staff complained of workloads being too heavy to cope with these problems while the resources and infrastructure were not adequate to provide the kind of support and development required for a qualitative improvement in teaching and learning.

The general view was that a carefully orchestrated programme of development needed to be undertaken in the areas of tutorial support, language and numeracy skills, student counselling, and retraining of staff, to help students bridge the gap between an inadequate school background and university requirements. While this suggestion was very useful, a major obstacle to language development which we had identified in the ADC was the absence of a clear policy on language.

In the light of my experience in language teaching at the University of Cape Town, and my background in Applied Linguistics, in July 1991 I was drafted into a working group in the ADC whose brief was to explore possibilities for a clear language policy at UWC. The main obstacle, as it became apparent in the deliberations of the working group, was that the University was historically bilingual (Afrikaans and English) in its media of instruction.

However, the drastic changes in access patterns had led to a multilingual student body as speakers of African languages increased in numbers. This necessitated a gradual shift to English as a medium of instruction. However, the support structures and deployment of resources to facilitate language development had not materialised.

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Another area in which interviewees gave critical commentary was that of the continuous assessment programme. It was reported that the method was being used widely. Perceptions which emerged ranged from general satisfaction with the way the system worked (Public Admin and Economics) to grave misgivings (Political Studies). Some felt that the programme led to an overload on students, who often took short cuts because they had to hand in three or four assignments on a day.

Because of marking pressures, lecturers were often forced to resort to multiple choice type questions and this encouraged guessing. The feedback on my report from a Political Studies lecturer gives a further insight from the vantage point of lecturers within the EMS Faculty:

> Hi Narend!
>
> Thank you for the interim report on perceived academic development needs. I think that the report captures most of the fundamental problems experienced by both students and staff, not only in this Faculty, but campus-wide. The recommendations also seem useful, however, if they are to be effective as from next year, we should be attempting to address issues in this year, especially with regards to curricula reform and evaluation methodology...
>
> I believe that people in this Faculty have developed a number of escape routes to deal with the problems of being "over-loaded". For example, giving multiple choice questions or using Plato for testing purposes. More worrying is the fact that staff have devised a number of constraints making re-evaluation very inaccessible for students. This leads one to question the whole system of re-evaluation. (Cheryl Hendricks; Personal correspondence 25/09/91).

The above is illustrative of some of the dismay which conscientious lecturers experienced as a result of attempts by some colleagues to respond in labour-economical ways to the perceived overload in work - ways which invariably were detrimental to students' interests.

In addition, feedback given to students in assignments and tests was

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essentially inadequate to facilitate learning in a meaningful way. It was also noted that students often carried onerous burdens because of the lack of a faculty-wide synchronization of tests and/or assignments to prevent overload on students.

It emerged that where tutorial schemes existed, there were mixed feelings about their effectiveness, ranging from positive comments (Public Administration and Accounting) to doubt (Political Studies and Economics). The most pressing problem experienced was that tutors were untrained or inadequately trained to make the tutorial a quality learning experience for students. Additional problems were: cost-effectiveness (lack of sufficient resources to make them viable); a limited pool of competent people, forcing a situation where Honours students were tutoring third years for example; and neglect of duties by tutors as examinations approached.

There was a realization that the schemes needed to be reappraised, especially with regard to the selection of tutors; integration of content with skills development; making the tutorial more attractive to students; and evaluation procedures.

There was no doubt as to the relevance and potential of tutorials to enhance students' learning experience. It was felt by one department at least (Business Economics) that there might be a general underrating of students' ability to learn from each other and therefore peer group learning methodology should be developed as a matter of priority.

The declaration in 1982 by the University of its mission to make itself accessible to the historically disadvantaged through a progressive admissions policy and through increasing its intake had inspired some reappraisal of curricula. It was not possible for me to assess the extent to

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which this had been undertaken and its consequent impact, for no systematic documentation or evaluation had taken place.

Although curricula were redeveloped as far as content went, there was a perceived need to re-examine them from an AD perspective. In some departments (eg Business Economics) the process was well under way, while others were in various stages of restructuring. What I could surmise in the light of the survey was that even if these efforts had been in-depth and extensive when they occurred, the impact was not tangible at the time of my intervention.

From the survey, and from the discussion which flowed from the presentation of my report, it became plain that my work was cut out for me for the next few years. There was clearly too much to do, and too few people to undertake the immense development project. Furthermore, the situation demanded rapid change, but my received wisdom about change was that it was slow and incremental. Whereas a cloud of despair should ordinarily have dampened my ardour, I was still fortified by the enthusiasm and idealism which I experienced initially. I began to ponder my next move.

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A First Glimpse at Tutorial Programmes in the EMS Faculty

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After reflecting upon the findings of the survey, and from consulting with the Chairperson of the FADC, Philip Hirschsohn, it appeared to me that the next sensible thing to do would be to assess the state of tutorial programmes in the Faculty. In the ADC, a workshop held on 15 March 1991 had identified tutorial programme development as on of the central objectives for 1991, as

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reflected in the following excerpt from the documentary record:

> 8. Objectives for 1991.
>
> 8.1. Establish functional system of 'tutorials' in all classes
>
> -propagate 'learning to learn' methodology
>
> -assist with tutor training
>
> -assist with evaluation and reporting
>
> -streamline application and budgeting procedure
> (Workshop Minutes 15/03/1991)

In the EMS Faculty, several departments had longstanding tutorial programmes. Their *raison d'etre* for tutorials was that they offered the best possible avenue for mediating the learning of disadvantaged students. From my own perspective, it seemed sensible that if there be any doubt about their efficacy, they could not be discounted until they were working well and *then* found to be making no impact on student learning.

Consequently, with the help of a small working committee, I organised a workshop aimed at evaluating the state of the art of tutorial provision in the EMS Faculty, from the perspective of tutors and students. I was conscious that there were no easy answers to the problems we confronted. Existing theories of learning in higher education, while helpful in some respects, were hopelessly inadequate in giving us a purchase on how to respond to the problems of disadvantaged students.

The workshop took place on 24 October 1991. Its objective was represented as follows in the workshop report:

> The workshop was held with the intention of appraising the present tutor programmes in the Faculty, and to share insights and ideas in the light of the various experiences. (Baijnath 1991:1)

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The workshop was structured according to three sessions. The first looked at tutor selection: the methods used, and the efficacy of these methods. The second looked at tutor training: the nature of training, the adequacy of the training and lessons for the future. The third session looked at the role of the tutorial scheme in relation to teaching and learning.

The workshop was based on a participatory/reflective approach, with much small group discussion. The aim was to derive a comprehensive picture of the state of tutorial programmes in the Faculty, problem areas from the perspective of tutors and teaching staff, and perceptions about what needed to be done to enhance the quality of the programmes.

Although I made copious notes throughout the workshop, I realize from looking at them now that they are mostly in summary form and capture the essence of what members of the group said. It would have been useful to reflect more authentic voices as well. However, it was not practically possible to write down everything that was said while simultaneously facilitating the exercise. Nevertheless, the summary of the discussion is offered here as a window on tutors' perceptions of the problems confronted in tutorial programmes.

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On the subject of tutor selection, it emerged that a range of different methods was used to select tutors in the Faculty. In Department A for instance, a tutor reported:

> I was told that I mark well and would therefore make a good tutor.

Although it was acknowledged that an interview would have been desirable, no interview was conducted. From a tutor's perspective, he felt that this was a "bad approach", conveying the sense that he would have preferred being

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put through a more rigorous procedure at least for his own peace of mind. However, the insouciance demonstrated in the lecturers' selection procedures may be indicative either of the futility of selection in the absence of a pool to select from, or at worst, mere diffidence.

In Department B, the senior tutors reported that they were chosen because they were Honours students - signifying that academic merit might have been a consideration on the part of the department. However, the ultimate determiner was that the number of tutors needed happened to coincide with the number of Honours students that there were. So there was not any genuine selection in this case either.

For the second year programme, a selection process was possible. Prospective tutors were required to attend a structured interview. Third year students formed the pool for this programme. The interview was aimed at establishing whether the interviewee could handle the class situation and relate to students effectively in mediating in their learning.

In 1989 the University devised a Workstudy programme which gave students opportunities to earn some money towards their upkeep at University. The added advantage to the scheme was that it provided lecturers and departments with crucial support in tutorials, assessment and administrative work. The programme was funded by US AID through the Tutu Trust.

Financially needy students had come to rely upon this as a valuable avenue for access to the University. They were also in a position to pay their fees and thereby alleviate the debt burden of the University.

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In the first years of the Workstudy programme (1990/1) UWC received relatively generous funding. However, as other universities and technikons rose to the opportunity there began a clamber for the funds available through US AID. As a result, UWC began to get less and less. Eventually the reliance on this 'soft money' for the sustainability of the Workstudy programme became very problematic. Often the University was not sure until the very beginning of the year as to what its allocation was going to be. This caused immense frustration among those who had devoted time and energy to developing tutorial programmes, only to be told that they would have to be curtailed through lack of funding. An example of the frustration is visible in the EMS AD committee Chairperson's report for June 1991.

> In future, if tutorial schemes are to be implemented in a planned manner and the necessary post graduate students are to be recruited (ie. encouraged by the available funding to pursue their studies), then departments need to know their funding allocations by the beginning of the fourth quarter.
>
> Most reports indicate that departments had insufficient post graduate students to fill the tutoring posts. If departments do not have the funding commitment well in advance, then they are unable to encourage students to enrol for post graduate degrees.
>
> (SADSC 1991: 91/6/24)

Plainly there were considerable complexities which accompanied the funding of tutorial programmes. The major conundrum which needed to be confronted was that whereas the Workstudy programme was aimed primarily at financially needy students, it had become the mainstay of the tutorial programmes at UWC: on the one hand it affected merit as the basis of tutor selection; on the other it disadvantaged students who did not pass the means test.

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In the workshop, it was felt that use of financial criteria, which was quite influential overall, tended to disadvantage those who came from well-off homes who were not supported by their families. An added problem was that the information supplied on family income could not be taken as reliable because no effective checking mechanism was used (nor was possible, given the time and resource constraints).

In Department C, no selection criteria had been used in the past, particularly because there were insufficient candidates. A problem experienced was that there were people tutoring who clearly did not have the ability to do so. This situation arose especially when financial need was used as an important criterion.

However, because the pool was much larger for 1992, a selection process was planned. Also, tutors from 1991 would be on the selection panel as well because of the insights they could offer into issues on the ground. My report on this part of the workshop was later to provoke some objections. While there was agreement with the general text of my report, one member of the Business Economics (now Management) Department resisted my characterization of her Department in the following way:

> I acknowledge that the document is a reflection of the tutor workshop but would like to make the following comments:
>
> Tutor Selection
>
> Business Economics ran a selection process focusing on primarily financial needs and then academic performance. The process did have some inconsistency; namely:
>
> i) lecturers did not have a (sic) set criteria
>
> ii) This led to value judgements like the comment made to a tutor

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iii) However, Honours students were selected for 2nd year programmes which also reflected different criteria for different levels of students. (Personal Correspondence: 07/02/1992)

The question of how things are represented was to play a recurrently controversial role in the future because of its association with funding implications.

After the general discussion, the group was divided into four smaller groups and each asked to identify the key issues which they felt should be addressed, deriving from their own experience of tutoring, or being involved in tutorial programmes as staff members.

The groundswell of feeling in the discussion that followed was that there should be clearly defined criteria for selection of tutors, using some or all of the following criteria:

- ability to relate to others
- language proficiency
- experience in the past
- own academic record
- articulateness
- insight into the discipline
- personal motivation
- understanding of own learning
- openness to learn

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It was noted that if the financial criterion remained important, particularly in view of the affirmative action objective of the Work study programme, then means by which more reliable information about family disposable income could be collected, had to be devised.

It was apparent, with the exception of Political Studies, that there was insufficient training or no training of tutors. All tutors expressed an urgent need for training.

Upon being asked what areas of development needed to be focused on in the training, the following were mentioned by tutors:

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- facilitation skills

- assertiveness training

- group dynamics

- assessment (assignments and tuts)

- academic training (conceptualizing, synthesizing and identifying important knowledge)

- use of training aids (computers, overheads, videos, charts)

- time management (preparation and presentation)

- developing sensitivity to student problems and realizing one's own limitations

- administration

- invigilating tests

- sexual and political harassment

- planning, structuring and executing lessons

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- dealing with criticism

- grievance procedures

- evaluation of tutorials by students

- fostering a culture of learning

- racial awareness

- how to motivate people

- how to phrase questions

It was apparent from the list that a comprehensive training programme was needed, for tutors as well as lecturers were acutely aware of their inadequacies in designing and mounting effective tutorial programmes.

Apart from the training, tutors felt that there were other factors which influenced the success of tutorial programmes. A major consideration was the provision of competent administrative support. Lack of this support often led to frustration and a breakdown in the running of the programme. A report elsewhere, at Steering Committee level, echoed the problem:

> The administration and assessment demands of continuous evaluation are beyond the capacity of permanent departmental staff. The future of this system is totally dependent on the continued employment of tutors through Work study programmes. It is perhaps not appreciated by the University hierarchy that however welcome the additional 'hands on deck' in departments are, the introduction of the Work study programme once again places additional administrative loads on academics.
>
> The administrative requirements placed on departments are unreasonable, particularly as the University has failed to make posts available to administer the funds provided. The Faculty AD Committee has requested that the necessary staff be appointed to ensure that the programme does not place unnecessary administrative burdens on academic staff as an important reason for the programme was to

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provide relief. (SADSC 91/6:25).

It was suggested that there should also be regular evaluative sessions with teaching staff so that problems could be isolated and the collective experience and knowledge used to resolve them. More importantly perhaps, such reflective sessions were a great morale-booster. According to tutors, it would be reassuring to know that what they were doing was on the right track and was valued.

From the lecturing staff's viewpoint, it was felt that tutors would benefit from sustained training. Furthermore, they should have a thorough knowledge of themselves as learners so that they could guide the students in effective learning strategies. In their (lecturers') view, they needed to be disciplined, committed and empathetic, with a sensitivity to learners' religious and political beliefs.

Another important need expressed by lecturers was for tutors to be self-critical of their classroom practice. In addition, they proposed that tutors needed to have the larger picture of the discipline and be in a position to locate learners within the larger picture. Another suggestion by lecturers was that tutors needed to be given clearly defined job descriptions to alleviate drift and uncertainty.

There was consensus that a once-off training session at the beginning of the year was inadequate. Training needed to be sustained throughout the year, with teaching staff centrally involved. In any event, regular meetings needed to be held with staff so that consistency could be attained as far as objectives and skills/content focus were concerned.

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At the time, most tutorial programmes were integrated into the continuous assessment system and weighed quite heavily in the allocation of marks. The continuous assessment system was geared primarily towards keeping students learning throughout the year rather than in a spurt just prior to the semester or year-end examination.

Because students were pressed to produce written work, the emphasis seemed to be on quantity. Consequently, the perceived and actual needs of students were not being addressed adequately.

Some tutors for instance felt that the tutorial should be used to address the language needs of students, while others felt that the development of academic skills should be focused upon. Yet others felt that discipline specific skills should be developed. There was consensus however that the tutorial provided an important opportunity for students to examine their assumptions about what constituted effective knowledge and learning.

Several crucial observations were made in the workshop. Firstly, tutors and lecturers could not teach effectively nor promote effective learning without understanding who we were teaching - we needed to examine our assumptions about the students we taught. For the tutor, constant self-critique had the potential to foster self-understanding and develop insight into the wider problems and possibilities of the educational enterprise. This had the potential to precipitate a shift of focus from content and exams. As it was, skills development in most courses was geared towards the passing of exams and therefore perpetuated the dependency learning students were accustomed to at school.

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Secondly, if we wished to develop critical, autonomous learners, an essential need was to effect transformation of students' learning practices. The tutorial undoubtedly had a crucial role to play in this respect for it provided a safe environment in which students could experiment with new ways of learning and making meaning. Active involvement in the learning process, commitment to the group, more personal dynamics between learners and between learners and tutors provided the right ingredients for effecting this transformation.

Thirdly, it was observed that developing the potential of students should not be the responsibility of just a few people in a department (tutors and co-ordinator) to whom the responsibility had been palmed off. Plainly it was the responsibility of every member of a department to promote effective learning by putting effective teaching first on the agenda.

Where some Department members had been absolved of the responsibility or detached themselves in pursuance of their own research and other interests, poor teaching was allowed to continue in detriment to the interests of students and the university.

I left the workshop with a revised, and more realistic sense of the state of tutorial programmes in the Faculty. Whereas the earlier survey had conveyed an upbeat sense of what was happening, the workshop provided a far more candid appraisal. My role in the workshop was facilitator rather than interviewer. This plainly impacted upon the preparedness of the participants to provide candid insights.

Moreover, it occurred to me that lecturers were far more sensitive to the politics of representation than students were. And for good reason too. The

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representations we give are always political, for how our practice is perceived ultimately impacts on issues of resourcing, career interests, and images, all of which are important in the complex and competitive world of academia.

It was clear to me though that tutorial programmes and tutor training in the EMS Faculty needed considerable attention in the short to medium term. I began to apply my mind to how to give practical effect to this realisation.

4.6) An Initial Encounter at Training Tutors

Early in 1992 I constituted a working group consisting of Fatima Abrahams from the Industrial Psychology Department, Damian Ruth (Management) and Philip Hirschsohn (EFAD Chairperson) with the object of designing a programme and taking care of the liaison and logistical issues. We met on several occasions to devise a suitable workshop that could cater for the facilitation skills and understanding of group dynamics needs of tutors in the Faculty. In the evaluation workshop described above, these emerged as the major capacities required for tutors to acquire in order to effect any meaningful mediation of student learning.

Because the workshop was to be a general skills one, it was felt that tutors from the Department of Political Studies should not be expected to attend since an aspect of the weekend training workshop the Department had convened the previous week was the development of general skills. Since I, as EMS Faculty AD Coordinator was quite extensively involved in the planning and presentation of that workshop too, there was likely to be repetition.

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The planning was done with the anticipation that most of the tutors in the Faculty would attend ie. in excess of 100. Eventually about 110 tutors attended the programme: a fantastic turnout which suggested the felt need for such training. Because of the large number of tutors to be catered for, it was resolved by the working group that we would begin in a plenary but split into smaller groups, each of which would have a facilitator. A problem which arose immediately was that we did not have a sufficient number of facilitators in the working group.

This was compounded by a further development. One of the working group had to undergo an operation and was away on leave in the planning stages. The absence of a cohort of skilled facilitators and trainers at a departmental level was to be a problem that would dog our efforts in the Faculty to make departments the centres of change. As a consequence, it became increasingly difficult to wean departments off a dependence on ADC personnel to assist in the conceptualisation, development and implementation of programmes aimed at enhancing the learning experiences of students.

The final pre-workshop meeting discussed the materials that various members of the working group produced. Each facilitator was given a collection of the materials produced for the workshop - these were mostly exercises in group dynamics and group facilitation which in the experience of the facilitators had worked well in the past. Because of the range of talent and styles present among the facilitators, it was resolved that we would not adhere to a rigid workshop curriculum. This would create room for flexibility and creativity, according to the particular preferences of each facilitator.

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As it turned out, those facilitators who were brought in late (due to two having dropped out) experienced some difficulty in adjusting, especially because they had not been party to the discussion and development of the programme. Again, apart from assuming the role of facilitator, I also made copious field notes from which this account is constructed. I attempted to capture the warp and weft of the discussion and nuances of meaning.

The plenary ice-breaking exercise with which we began was calculated to do more than merely ease participants into the programme. By deliberately setting up a strange environment - incense, taking off shoes before entering the room, Buddhist meditation practice to focus within and become self-aware - it was hoped that the jarring of this setup with the participants' expectations and assumptions about what was "normal" practice would help jolt them into realizing how powerfully one's experiences, mindset and frame of reference influence the way one perceives strange and new activities. This was how I explained it in the post - workshop evaluation on 19/03/1992:

> For me the concern was to draw attention to the fact that we bring a mindset to the University. I also wanted to raise the issues of difference and change (shaped by our experience and conditioning). By getting the participants to do something unusual and unexpected, I wanted them to confront their mindsets and conditioning. My logic is that this is what successful study at University entails on an ongoing basis. (Personal notes 19/03/1992; Notebook 4, 19/11/91-01/04/92)

The underlying objective was to impel participants to examine the assumptions about teaching and learning they brought with them, and to assess their level of openness to new ideas and ways of doing things. This would be an important means of giving them a sense of the deep-rooted learning practices and attitudes that many students would bring to the tutorial room - and suggest the magnitude of the challenge they faced to change their students' beliefs and practices about teaching and learning.

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Some of the participants were wary of the setup. Others immediately became suspicious of the motives behind the programme, particularly because a programme outline was not handed out in advance. Others obviously relished the new experience. A small segment of the participants felt that their religious sensibilities had been offended, claiming that they were forced to engage in a quasi-religious practice (the meditation).

The controversy surrounding this part of the programme continued for the next week. It was obvious that we had agitated some of the participants. In the facilitators' evaluation, we eventually resolved that in future, if we persisted with such practice as might offend the religious sensibilities of anybody, participants should be warned in advance and given the chance to opt out.

In end of programme feedback, the majority of the participants had found the experience stimulating and challenging, albeit a bit unusual. There were some strong criticisms as well. However, the general feeling of the facilitators was that we had achieved our objective for this part of the programme. Nevertheless, I was led to reconsider my taken-for-granted assumptions about the intrinsic value and acceptability of ice-breaking exercises. The comment of one of my supervisors in response to this account drove the point home for me. He remarked:

> I hate this sort of thing! I would rather just get on with the job! Some people like it, I suppose!

I informally interviewed some of my colleagues in the ADC and inquired firstly about whether many of them used ice-breaking exercises of this nature; and secondly, about whether they enjoyed being subjected to such exercises themselves. The general outcome was that while many used the

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(ice-breakers) not all liked to be on the receiving side. There was a general disdain towards "touchy, feely stuff". It led me to muse that the exercises which were legion among training gurus, and which I drew upon quite unquestioningly, were so presumptuous about what participants would enjoy and respond positively to. I felt chastened by the experience.

After the initial exercise, we launched into a consideration of "What is AD?" The discussion which emerged was generally interesting and yielded many rich insights from a tutor's perspective that were illuminating for the facilitators. Many tutors indicated in their evaluations that the session helped them understand the wider implications of the University's mission statement, the challenges facing the University in transition, and their roles in the transformative process. It also helped dispel the misconceptions they held about what constituted tutoring in a University context, particularly because their own experiences in tutorials were not all that edifying.

However, it was pointed out that where each small group was required to engage with all of the three questions that were used to focus the discussion, it did not work as well as one question per group. This is because the time allocated to this section was adequate for each group to engage with one question and report back in a plenary, but inadequate for each group to discuss all three questions as well as report back.

A further point that emerged was that facilitators should guard against making assumptions that tutors know very little about what AD is and what the learning priorities for disadvantaged students are. Where one facilitator worked from this assumption, he was lured into a "teacher-tell" mode. When he eventually got to the small group discussion, time allocated for this section was depleted and there was very little left over for discussion by

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tutors. We were also confronted with the challenge of examining our own assumptions about disadvantaged students, and the need to guard against pathologising them.

It was observed that students coming from a disadvantaged educational milieu brought with them a host of experiences and strengths through involvement in community and student organizations amongst other things. It was agreed by the facilitators that these needed to be recognized and tapped. The tutors seemed to have a good understanding of this too. A cautionary note which was struck though, was that it should not be assumed that students coming from such backgrounds had a homogeneous experience. This would be equally delusory and counter-productive.

Group dynamics and facilitation exercises seemed to work well, judging by the positive feedback from tutors in their written evaluations. They commented specifically on the potential of the exercises to foster positive interpersonal dynamics through the focus on working in a collaborative spirit, giving value to what they had to say, allowing openness and freedom to express ideas, peer support in the group situation, and analysis and debate.

Some tutors felt that they did not get the skills to deal with different types of students.

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The general feedback from tutors indicated a need for more actual hands-on experience or practice in facilitation of groups and leading tutorials. This would entail an extension of the training period. The value of the reflective approach to learning about teaching which we used in the training sessions was reiterated for me. But the experience also brought home the inadequacy

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and impracticality of the limited training which tutors generally could receive in spite of all good intentions.

Comments of a more general nature from tutors revolved mostly around the ethos of the training context. To use the tutors' own words:

> There was an atmosphere of tolerance.
>
> I felt a sense of belonging.
>
> The small groups helped us interact on a personal level.
>
> We were given a voice and were heard.
>
> The activities gave me insight.
>
> We were compelled to reassess ourselves more critically.
>
> Facilitators were peers rather than experts handing down the truth.
>
> The experience helped me develop confidence.

There were criticisms as well which were well founded. A complaint from some tutors was that there was no overall programme or outline and this made them feel a bit uneasy, especially in the light of the unusual opening gambit. Although it was an objective of the training programme to try in as many ways as possible to emulate an authentic tutorial situation, (in this case using the assumption that when tutors enter the tutorial, they come with very little knowledge or control of the content and process), we should rethink this. Ultimately, having a programme outline might have made possible benefits which would outweigh those of our intended objective.

A further criticism was that the workshop was a one-off initiative. Although we had conveyed to departments the idea that this workshop was to be a general skills one, and that they would need to sustain the training of their

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tutors, it emerged later that because of the pressures of the lecturing programme, follow-up training was not possible. Apart from the departmental pressures, there was also a lack of adequate expertise in the departments to design and run credible training programmes of the nature required.

This had implications for the practicalities of the Infusion model of AD. Dependence on outside expertise for such low level training raised questions about whether the departments could muster the expertise required for curriculum development and staff training from within their own ranks. A further observation in this regard was that Departmental staff needed to be more involved in the actual training of tutors. Our ultimate goal should be to build training capacity at a departmental level, for they are best placed to address specific needs and have a sustained programme of training.

On another point, it appeared to me that there were some tutors who clearly did not reflect the depth of potential required to take charge of the learning of other students. It raised the question of selection procedures and how we might make sure that the students selected to fulfil this important teaching function have the necessary insight into learning, or at least an openness to learn about how learning takes place in a university context.

In spite of my misgivings, I came out of the exercise feeling that it was a very auspicious start. I felt satisfied that we were beginning, albeit modestly, to systematically address the need to develop adequate tutorial programmes. The starting point, indubitably, had to be with the training of tutors.

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4.7) Rethinking Tutorial Programme Development

To reiterate in broad brushstrokes the case I have made thus far, the problems of disadvantaged students as they manifested themselves lay in inadequate schooling, impoverished socio-economic backgrounds, and low academic proficiency in the medium of instruction (English) used at the university. So a crucial challenge we faced was how to provide students with opportunities to develop academic proficiency in English and the confidence to express themselves in that medium of instruction.

Following close behind was the challenge to help students develop foundational knowledge in the normally abstract disciplines which they encountered for the first time at university. Large numbers of students, coupled with resource constraints, limited the number of alternatives available for organising learning at the University in ways which helped them overcome their disadvantage.

In this regard, the challenges confronted by UWC in its AD programme were no different to those confronted at other universities, including the HWUs. By the middle of 1992, when I was one year into my job in the ADC, I had found my feet in the EMS Faculty and in the ADC. It became clear that the Faculty Coordinators would be left to their own devices by and large to find the spaces they could to work in their respective faculties.

By the end of 1992, there were other AD initiatives such as language development programmes, materials development, and mentoring programmes geared towards this project. However, as a strategy, tutorial programme development remained the mainstay of student development, and continued to reflect the most widespread attempt to address the learning support needs of students. In the EMS Faculty, some key assumptions

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(which were distilled out of years of practice) underpinned the development of tutorial programmes. These were:

- even where there are large lecture groups of many hundreds, they may be broken into smaller tutorial groups (approx. 20) for an enhanced learning experience

- small group learning contexts enhance learning

- tutorials would complement lectures

- students learn from and with each other

- tutorials could be harnessed not only to develop students' disciplinary knowledge, but also the basic academic proficiency necessary for success

- the mediation of student learning can be done by senior undergraduate and graduate students, given sufficient training

- students' language proficiency is enhanced through interaction in small groups

- in spite of having been disadvantaged by apartheid education, students still have positive experiences which may be built upon and these needed to be identified

In relation to the last point, a significant dimension to the allure of small group methodology, was the opportunity it presented for the fostering of a democratic ethos in learning. The culture of student activism from the mid 1970s and the involvement of many in student organisations, civic structures, educational crisis committees, etc. gave many students experience on democratic fora.

Consequently, a logical assumption flowing from this was that it would be useful to begin building on capacities which students already possessed. However, my experience of training tutors, and observation of tutorials at

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work left me in some doubt about the validity of this assumption. In the next chapter I shall go into the issue in greater depth.

An issue that was of concern to me and others in the ADC was that of the role of "skills" in the undergraduate curriculum. The notion of "transferable" skills (Perkins 1986) and abilities had become increasingly popular in policy making circles as pressures mounted for university education to produce graduates with a wider range of skills and abilities which are "useful" to society.

A concern with skills and abilities within the University was beginning to be understood as a concern to enhance both the quality of academic work, and increase the employability of students. A dialogue on the subject, fuelled by Perkins's ideas, was well in progress at several university seminars, but took us no nearer to a resolution of the debate.

I want to turn next to an examination of the tutorial programme in the Political Studies Department in finer detail and to explore the dynamics of its development. The story of this programme is very instructive about the limits and possibilities of AD at a departmental level. I was extensively involved in its development over a period of more than three years (from 1991 to 1994) and kept detailed notes, questionnaire and interview data, and reports, from which I have derived this account.

In my end of year report in 1991, this is how I characterised the curriculum development effort in Political Studies:

> Political Studies is involved in a redesign of the first year course. There has been much keenness to integrate skills development with conceptual development. I have been working jointly with the course

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> designer to structure the course in such a way that there is clear conceptual development. We are presently engaged in devising a programme of tutorial support aimed at systematically developing the ability of students to engage with the subject-specific demands, focusing on the following areas:
>
> - key concepts needed for building basic knowledge in the discipline
>
> -building and maintaining 'the larger' picture - the relationships between concepts and the development of theories in the discipline
>
> -the conventions for written discourse (how arguments are constructed through synthesis of different views with the students' own for instance)
>
> This will entail a regular tutor training programme to develop the skills and insight necessary for the project. (Baijnath 1991:1)

The Department of Political Studies had a tutorial programme in place prior to the inception of the AD programme in 1990. However, as the AD discourse gathered momentum at UWC, a more informed and systematic attempt was made to restructure the tutorial programme. At an evaluation workshop run by the Department at the beginning of 1991, tutors and lecturers tried together to determine the root of problems they were experiencing.

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An attempt was made to develop a clearer idea of what the learning problems of students were and how they could best be addressed. The need for thorough training of the tutors, especially because they were undergraduate students in their third year of study engaged in crucial supportive teaching, was identified as a major area needing attention. An attempt was also made to define the goals of the tutorial programme more clearly.

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A further positive development was that tutors were firmly established in contributing to discussions about student needs and learning problems and provided the lecturing staff with valuable feedback. The Department had innovated a committee system consisting of staff and student representatives, attending to organisational and logistical issues, and pedagogical challenges which confronted the Department.

The Committee produced a statement which spelled out the training goals for the tutor training programme. The starting point was felt to be as follows:

> In clarifying the training goals for this department, one has to assess:
>
> - What type of student we would like to produce after they have successfully completed three years of study in the field;
>
> - At what level our students are when they reach us; the difference between the two would provide us with a fair assessment of where our priority areas for training should be;
>
> - Once the above has been ascertained, we would be in a position to determine the type of training tutors will require in order to impart the necessary skills. (Untitled memo: December 1991)

In the deliberations of the Committee, we thrashed out a vision of what the graduate of the Political Studies degree should know and be able to do, as follows:

> - How political knowledge and/or arguments are constructed
>
> - How the discipline is assembled ie. where it originates; its main concepts, ideologies and theories, how ideologies relate to the concepts; how our belief and value systems affect the way we view society and the changes we wish to bring to our societies; how individual societies' political economies function; how societies relate to each other; etc

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- They must be able to conceptualise (consider, reflect, remember and envision/invent) problems and solutions

- They need to be able to summarise, analyse, criticise and synthesise information

- They need to be able to construct their own arguments, substantiate them and articulate them both verbally and in writing

- They need to have an understanding of what research entails and how to proceed to find the data

- The ability to read critically, write in an academic manner with original arguments and the use of existing literature to substantiate those arguments, articulate themselves in a coherent mode within both small and large class settings (Untitled Memo: December 1991).

The workshop was conceived with these objectives in mind and held at a resort a few hours away from Cape Town. The Department was fortunate to have a head as resourceful and well-connected as Prof Vincent Maphai, who was able to secure the quite substantial funds for this workshop from private donor funding.

To begin with, the workshop yielded many useful insights (for lecturers as well as tutors) into student (tutor) perspectives on learning problems, and tutors were given training in facilitation skills. Perhaps the most important outcome was that lecturers and tutors developed a common understanding of the needs of disadvantaged students, and the possible uses of the tutorial in enhancing student learning.

The main thrust of the training programme was to establish greater coherence between the first year lectures and tutorials. The curriculum had recently been redesigned so that there was clear development of concepts from concrete to abstract, and from common-sense understandings to more complex ones. In March 1992, D.N. Perkins of the Harvard School of

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Education paid a visit to UWC and led a seminar on "Teaching and Learning for Understanding and Transfer".

He drew a distinction between *understanding* and *transfer*. Understanding, he argued, did not lead automatically to transfer. Transfer was facilitated by the invocation of visual and tactile images used to make connections and carry over understanding. It demanded active thinking and seeking of connections. Instruction, he urged, needed to simulate this. Plainly the predominant focus on content in our context did not facilitate transfer.

Perkins's advocacy of understanding and transfer had influenced an entire cohort of AD practitioners from UWC and UCT. Later I tried to facilitate an integrated skills tutorial programme in the Political Studies Department in a practical exercise aimed at transfer and skills development.

Perkins's (1986) advocacy of mental models which students could employ to enhance their understanding and transfer, resonated strongly with our attempts to make the relationships between the various building blocks of the discipline - concepts, theories, theoretical frameworks, ideological positions, etc - more explicit. This experience caused me to rethink my own assumptions about disadvantaged students'. Looking now in my reports and memos to the Department on the subject, it strikes me how much my understandings were influenced and informed by Perkins's ideas. One source in particular is worth quoting at length:

> We often pronounce that the students who come to UWC come from a distinctively disadvantaged background, economically, socially and educationally. We state that they have received gutter/inferior/bantu education, but what disabilities does this entail?

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> Without being an expert in this field, but extracting from my experiences in teaching first year students over the past few years, the most glaring inadequacies of our students are:
>
> 1) They do not read - we need to understand why this phenomenon occurs:
>
> -they have seldom been exposed to a culture of reading
>
> -they do not know how to search for literature (partly because we spoon-feed them by giving them course readers, but also because they have a language difficulty and so struggle with texts. Most texts are not user-friendly and cater for people who are proficient in English) - this usually leads to an aversion for academic texts.
>
> 2) Those who do attempt to read often have little idea of what they are supposed to be looking for in a text (eg. when doing an assignment they extract irrelevant material and fail to cite the most important arguments of the texts). They are unable to synthesise material from a number of sources and to critically evaluate the material or to use the material effectively to substantiate their own arguments.
>
> 3) Because reading, writing and articulation are essentially interlinked, students find it difficult to produce academically acceptable essays - they need to be taught how to structure an essay, to use texts to substantiate their arguments and to acknowledge their sources. There is usually a lack of confidence as a result of apartheid oppression.
>
> 4) Most matriculants, whether black or white in South Africa, are not provided with any theoretical tools (Brief to tutors 03/12/91).

What the above brief reflects is a quite elaborate construct of the 'disadvantaged' student and the difficulties which she would encounter at the academic rock-face. The conceptual understandings of academic tasks and skills required for success in university study though are quite Perkinsian in character. Ultimately, it characterises the central dilemmas of transforming student learning in student development programmes such as the one we were engaged in.

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Flowing from this, our central objective was to demystify the Political Studies curriculum for students and to give them a frame of reference to peg their learning on through the year. For lecturers and tutors, this framework was also a useful reference point for the development of students' knowledge structures and to reinforce the basics of the discipline in a systematic way.

The overall result was a more focused and purposeful teaching programme in 1991.

The Department had through a strong reflective ethos in its engagement with issues of teaching and learning, come a long way in its AD programme. From tentative experiments before 1991, it reached a position where systematic reflection on the needs of students, the expectations of lecturers, demands of courses, responsibilities of tutors, etc, established a clearer relationship between teaching and learning in the first year programme.

The Department had also been able throughout 1991 and 1992 to harness the available resources (material as well as personnel) and use these positively to develop a tutorial programme attuned to the teaching and learning realities we faced in the EMS Faculty and the University.

By the end of year evaluation in 1992, it had become clear that good intentions and understandings did not necessarily translate into appropriate actions. There was some dissatisfaction among Departmental members from its self-critique that a gap between their desired outcomes and practice remained. I was drawn in by the Departmental head to conduct interviews with tutors and staff and to analyse questionnaires which they had completed, as a first step towards remedying the gap. In trying to get to the bottom of why the good ideals of the tutorial programme, and the apparently

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good training of tutors was not impacting positively upon the learning of students, I asked tutors how their teaching was different after the tutor training experience. Thabo Kobokoane, a tutor, had the following to say which is illustrative of the experience of several others:

> Well it's been a general problem - The culture of learning that students are used to means that some are left behind - others cannot keep up. So in these situations we actually have to give a lecture... What never came out (in the workshop) is what you do in the situation where people haven't read. How do you get the message across that they have to read? How do you create the culture of learning within students themselves? I am not sure how the other tutors handle it but I find it quite a problem.

This frank admission revealed one of the key challenges facing the tutorial programme: No matter how well the tutor was prepared or how good the materials, if students did not cooperate, or prepare in advance as required, or were just diffident, the tutorial could not be successful. Interestingly, the view of the Head of Department differed sharply form these observations. He maintained (not in response to the above observations, but quite spontaneously in response to a question about what he considered important in our thinking about student development):

> ...we need to drop stereotypes of believing that students are not serious. I think students are serious, capable of judicious judgement, and they can make as many faults as we can all make. I think if we trust our students, we are going to discover some of the best resources that we have here. And (another) thing is that I think because of the profile of our students we have built a certain expertise here - in teaching - and we need to consolidate that because that can make us a leading institution in this area (Interview with Prof. Vincent Maphai)

However, from the other interviews and questionnaire analysis (of student feedback on tutorials) the following picture emerged: (for the sake of brevity the key points emerging from my evaluation are summarised here):

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- Tutors were still inadequately trained for the task of mediating in students' learning effectively and ended up dominating the tutorials (by more or less simulating lectures)

- Although tutors were required to mark the work of students regularly, they were not trained to do this properly, and because there were many different markers, the criteria being used by each were inconsistent with each other

- Although it was intended that the tutorials were to be used to develop the discipline specific skills of students, no one within the department was in a position to undertake this project

- The concern with skills shifted away the focus from curriculum review and reform, which was an important objective of the AD project overall

- Because students were not being equipped with the necessary academic tools, their engagement with content in the first year was superficial, rhetorical, and lacking in the argumentative thrust that is crucial for Political Studies

- Students were not developing the autonomy and critical ability that was considered crucial for success in the second year

Once the analysis was complete, the Department met for a reflective session where I presented my findings. A clear realisation which emerged in the process of reflection was that lectures and tutorials needed to complement each other more and that effective mediation in student learning needed to be conducted in both.

However, there also needed to be coherence between their experiences in the lectures, with tutorials and with materials. I had identified this as a significant stumbling block in my evaluation of the student development programme.

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A crucial realisation was that the breakdown in coherence between lectures and tutorials often occurred when the synchronicity striven for was interrupted: through political activism by students, and other disruptions of the academic programme. The curriculum was organised so tightly that such disruptions could not easily be adapted to.

Coherence in course materials presented a particular problem. Because of the lack of adequate textbooks, it was necessary to use course-readers. These were normally a collection of articles from various sources, difficult to arrange in any specific order, with the coherence and development of ideas implicit in a textbook being impossible.

Nevertheless, it was apparent to me that it was important to staff that the content be relevant and contemporary - something that the students could relate to or that was within the realm of their experience. Consequently, coherence was sacrificed.

Clearly, lecturers and tutors needed to give careful attention to the interconnectedness between ideas, concepts and theories in the subject, the disciplinary conventions for discourse in the field, and how these might be illuminated for students.

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Another dimension was that because of the emphasis on conceptual development, tutors interpreted their job as being primarily concerned with content, as emerged in interviews conducted with tutors and staff on the previous (1991) year's programme. In other words, it would appear that in spite of the training, tutors could not make the conceptual and pedagogical leap necessary between the content and the discourse conventions which led to its constitution.

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It was also revealed that although many of the tutors were able to facilitate effective classroom discussion, there were still serious inadequacies. Many tutors reverted to a lecturing-mode when a stalemate in the discussion was reached, or when they could not facilitate participation.

Uncertainty about the purpose of each tutorial emerged when the academic and language skills side was focused on. This was aggravated by irregular ongoing training, insufficient time for tutors and lecturers to discuss the possibilities and options in each tutorial in sufficient depth, and insufficient reflection on the problems and possibilities of each tutorial.

We tried to take most of these issues into account in developing the programme for the next year.

The key realisation in the reflective process was that despite our efforts and intentions, the tutorial still focused on content, rather than the much needed "skills" development. Nevertheless, through strong advocacy on my part, my impression was that lecturers and tutors were convinced that a focus on content was not enough. Attempts had to be made to develop discipline-specific and language skills too.

Fortuitously, the arrival of two exchange students in the Department in 1992 made it possible to give attention to academic skills development. Mostly at their own initiative, and that of the Department, a broad academic skills programme was developed by them and students attended on a voluntary basis. Together with this, another initiative focused on the development of critical thinking skills and what may be defined as discipline specific skills. A

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special period was set aside for this. Among the questions which were addressed were:

-What is an argument?

-What is the difference between facts and values?

-What is the role of evidence in argument - ie. the difference between argument as supportive evidence and argument as justification of a value judgement.

-How is language used/manipulated, to give values to the character of facts for instance?

The initiative was timely in addressing one of the most glaring problems confronted by students ie. how to construct proper arguments. In the wake of these efforts, upon further reflection, and in our discussions on how to consolidate the gains of the past and develop a forward-looking programme, we realised that rather than the quite fragmented programme of skills development that was going on, we ought to look at how an integrated skills development approach might best be evolved.

Although the Department had identified and recognised the need for development of skills in a holistic manner, insufficient resources and time, as became apparent during 1991, did not make it possible for Departmental members to be involved in what was going to be an intensive process. It was accepted nonetheless that a way had to be found to integrate such skills development into the teaching programme.

It seemed most useful, in the light of several years experience, that this should be done through tutorials, in a small group context, so that they could complement the development already taking place. Moreover, it would be a very useful pilot project from an AD perspective.

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So a collaboration between the Department, myself as AD Coordinator, and members of the ADC Language project who indicated an interest was begun, with the central objective of developing an integrated skills course for Political Studies. It was clear from the outset that we were going to rely heavily on tutors under the auspices of UWC's Work study Programme to sustain the enterprise.

One of the main challenges we would face would be to equip tutors adequately to fulfil their function in developing students' skills effectively. They first needed to understand the inter-relationship between academic skills, discipline specific skills and language skills. I developed a brief for the training programme which spelled out our most important goals:

> 1) We need to develop a coherent, feasible method of how to integrate both skills and content.
>
> 2) Our tutors are to be key components in the process of developing both skills and content. They therefore need to receive training in:
>
> -How to coordinate a tutorial
>
> -Understanding course content and developing innovative means for presenting the content
>
> -Confidence and articulation
>
> -Group facilitation skills
>
> -How to teach others reading and writing skills
>
> -Familiarisation with access to resources
>
> -Marking
>
> -Gender sensitivity
>
> (Untitled memo:12/92)

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It was with this brief in mind that I sought modest funding from the ADC and commissioned Amy Waldman (one of the exchange students) to develop a set of training materials which would clarify for tutors their crucial role, and give them some sense of the possibilities. Once these were developed, they were used as a basis for devising a training programme for the following year's tutors.

Amy interviewed members of the Department and several others working in the area of AD at UWC to get a sense of what worked and what did not. From these, she re-conceptualised the tutor training programme in collaboration with the tutor coordinators - Fadl Nacerodien and Nazli Effendi. Through their efforts, a manual was produced for students, another for tutors, and a programme for training was devised. An observation which Amy made before the next training session should have alerted us to some of the pitfalls of the ambitious project we were embarked upon:

> If this programme is considered to be three-tiered, focusing on critical thinking skills, academic skills and language skills, it seems it is most successful at addressing the first and fairly successful on the second, although only time will tell. The third remains the most difficult area to tackle. Language is a problem not just in writing, which the programme addresses, but in reading and particularly classroom comprehension and participation (Waldman 1993:8).

The validity of the observation about the language difficulties of students was indexed on an earlier occasion by a lecturer in the Department in an interview:

> What I have tried to do with language is to speak in the simplest form possible. For instance I would take in a lecture on Marxism this concept which students do not understand - and break it down. For Afrikaans students they are allowed to write for me in their own language and they usually fare better if they write in their own

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> language than in English. But for those students with African languages it becomes difficult (Interview with Cheryl Hendricks).

In my enthusiasm to wean of the Department's dependence on outside expertise, I tried to keep a distance from the conceptualisation and development of the programme. It was also a welcome relief as demands for my services from other departments and committee work in the ADC swallowed up my time with *pac-man* like voraciousness.

At the training retreat in the idyllic setting of the resort at Montague Springs, we began the training programme for the following year with a candid reflection on the previous year's experience (1992). Important points were made by both tutors and lecturers. I present the summary which was captured on newsprint as the discussion progressed, for it provides a sense of some of the achievements and challenges which continued to vex us.

4.7.1 Pluses

-the Department is courageous and consistent in supporting innovation; this makes improvements based on the experiences of the previous year more likely

-the strong self-critical orientation of the Department makes honest appraisal of what is working and what is not, easier.

-weekly discussion meetings between the lecturers and tutors are a key to success

-the training workshop held at the beginning of the year helped build the confidence of tutors

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4.7.2 *Minuses*

-weekly meetings focused too much on problems and did not provide adequate training

-faced with non-participation, tutors resort to lecturing

-part-time tutors were neglected

-getting tutors to mark essays leads to inconsistencies and ineffectual feedback; there is a critical need for either better training or to get lecturers to mark the essays

-there is insufficient communication between lecturers, markers, and tutors

-working committees did not work

-there is a need for greater coherence between lectures and tutorials

-students did not get the readings in time; even when they did, they were doing insufficient reading

-insufficient language proficiency of students in English still poses a crucial barrier to student learning

What struck me most about these observations was the regularity with which these points came up year after year in the training programmes I was involved in. It raised for me serious questions about whether any progress could be made in developing depth in tutorial programmes when there was such a high turnover of tutors and lecturing staff.

I had proposed that the major part of the training be done by Amy Waldman and the tutor Coordinator, Nazli Effendi. There were important reasons for allowing this. Firstly, as I mentioned earlier, a fundamental objective of the Infusion Model of AD was that departments should become "centres of change" (Walker and Badsha, in Walker, ed. 1993) and take direct responsibility for AD initiatives. My feeling was that if the Department was to

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become self-sufficient in tutor-training and in developing its tutorial programme, it was necessary for me to play less of an instrumental role.

Secondly, because Amy Waldman had spent a lot of time in conceptualising the integrated skills programme, and had given most thought to it, she was in a better position to inform the development of the training programme than anyone else.

Thirdly, one of the very positive things about the Departmental ethos was its concern to give students a strong voice in AD and other initiatives. This meant in effect that lecturers took a backseat, and allowed tutors to develop their self-confidence, facilitation and management skills, and interpersonal skills through engagement in most initiatives.

Finally, due to the pressing beginning of year demands on the time of Departmental lecturers and myself, it was not possible to continue the intensive planning sessions we had the previous year.

It seemed to me that the programme that was put together by the coordinating team (Amy and Nazli) was quite sound. The Department concurred. It built on the previous year's experiences and insights in a thoughtful way and introduced some vital new elements. It also maintained the strong student influence by giving various participants opportunities to chair and facilitate sessions. In particular, it addressed the problem of an imbalance between content and skills which was identified as a shortcoming in previous tutorial programmes. Amy Waldman had characterised the the solution in the following way:

> It is very difficult to balance content and skills. Possible remedies for this would seem to be clarifying for tutors each week what the content

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> objectives are, and how what is being done in tutorials relates to lectures. The clearer tutors are on this, the more they can show it to their students.
>
> With cohesive planning from the beginning of the quarter, lecturers, academic planners, etc can make sure that exam and essay questions are structured in relation to material covered in tutorials, so that the content is not just peripherally tied to lectures but can actually prepare students for exams. Lecturers should spell out clearer content objectives for each week, focusing on one specific aspect of the weeks's material that they want students to come to grips with (Waldman 1993:8).

The training programme produced by Amy Waldman and Nazli Effendi was as good a programme as any of us who were more experienced might have produced. However, we had learned to be quite self-critical and in Departmental discussions we raised aspects of the programme we were still not happy with.

In our zeal to have a democratic ethos, we gave the job of describing the workshop programme to a tutor. While he had impressed us as a very devoted and able tutor, and made an extremely useful contribution to the planning, with hindsight, we did not believe that he, nor many others for that matter, was adequately equipped for the task.

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In view of the reconceptualisation of the role of tutors for the integrated skills programme, we realised that the description of the programme and outlining its conceptual bases would have been more usefully accomplished by Amy Waldman, Nazli Effendi, or perhaps myself.

The problem was compounded by tutors not being given a clear idea of what the desired outcomes of each session were. Obvious frustration set in among tutors on the afternoon of the first day of training. This had as much

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to do with the lack of a clear sense of the objectives, as it had to do with fatigue brought on by lack of sleep, hours of travelling and an intensive day of training.

We found it necessary to weigh up the gains we made by allowing tutors to facilitate sessions against the losses. The losses were particularly acute in this training programme. While we tried to give ownership of the programme to the tutors, the major loss was that the degree of facilitation in terms of the central objectives of the programme became constrained. At times we struggled to get things back on track. Tutors ended up with a feeling that they were being kept in the dark and were visibly annoyed by this - some even expressed their annoyance.

Another important point to be made is about the expectations of tutors. The previous year, there was a sense among tutors that the training programme had not given them the solutions they were seeking. However, since they had at least their mastery over the content to fall back on, their insecurities did not come to the fore as they did in 1992.

My impression was that when tutors got an indication of the level of responsibility for skills development they were being entrusted with, many panicked. Again, rather more pronounced in 1992 than in the previous year, was a perceptible dissatisfaction with the programme for not providing "blueprints" they could use in the classroom.

With (post workshop) hindsight, a critical realisation on my part was that it was not possible to transform the frames of reference that are the product of a lifetime of conditioning and reinforcement, within the space of a weekend of training.

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Where did this leave us in terms of our project then? I believed that it had become even more vital to sustain an ongoing programme of training. It would be easier to focus on small discrete bits of the programme and deal with these in depth than to try to give tutors the large picture in one go.

I was not convinced that it was utterly necessary for tutors to understand the university terrain in all its ramifications before they could make sense of their job as tutors or be effective change agents. (We tried to give students a clear picture of the context of the university, an understanding of disadvantage, and the politics of the situation they were dealing with). The section on personal experience and perspectives on learning and coping at university could suffice as a meaningful starting point.

The realisation we had to come to was that while rapid and radical transformation was desirable and necessary, in practice, it is much harder to accomplish. We could however gradually enrich the work that tutors did by persevering with ongoing training and reflection.

I think that the workshop helped to shake the beliefs and expectations of many tutors. Where many were looking for the answers, we helped raise questions. When the answers were not forthcoming in ways they expected, the legitimate and easy scapegoat was the programme.

However, it became apparent to tutors as the year progressed, the materials began to fall into place, and a larger picture developed, that the training gave much more than they had initially credited it with. This was verified in subsequent evaluations of training.

Interestingly, in the later evaluations of ongoing training initiatives, attention

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was drawn by many of the tutors to the beginning of year training programme and the impact it had on their understanding of teaching and learning issues.

Amidst the criticism that emerged, we considered it important not to lose sight of the groundbreaking experiment we embarked on. We tried, in the light of our experiences, and a developing sense of the needs of disadvantaged students, to develop a programme focused on the learner. The experiment helped us enrich our understanding of the following questions:

- Is it possible to integrate academic, discipline-specific, and language skills in a coherent way for students?

- Is it feasible to expect tutors to bear the main responsibility for this very important teaching function?

- Does a training package for tutors equip them effectively for their function?

- Do the resource constraints, historical conditions at the University, and pressures we face (eg. increasing access) allow any other options?

- In spite of adverse conditions, is it possible to make a tangible impact on the quality of student learning?

- How do we transform the way in which lecturers and tutors perceive their respective functions?

The questions above are what I would consider a distillation of the main issues which emerged from the training initiative. In this, they constitute a crucial set of questions which might be applicable to any tutorial programme in a context such as ours.

I do not think we can claim to have found any convincing answers; however, we can claim that we generated a rich process of action and reflection which

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feeds into the bigger conversation on how best to enhance the learning experience of "disadvantaged" students at university. In the next chapter I shall go into these issues in greater detail for they are fundamental in understanding the limits and possibilities of the AD programme within the context of UWC.

What the experience reinforced, was the need for a more critical look at how we organise student learning at the university; ie. through lectures and tutorials. The idea that student learning should depend on the ability of either a lecturer or tutor to provide a meaningful learning experience for students to facilitate their access to knowledge raised for me considerable scepticism.

In the Political Studies initiative, we arrived at an important realisation: that part of our efforts should be going into developing materials which stand on their own in facilitating learning, rather than continuing to rely on effective tutoring and lecturing alone. Moreover, if we continued to rely on tutors to provide the mediation of learning necessary for addressing the disadvantage of students, then we needed materials for tutors as well. The start we made in the Political Studies initiative was a valuable one, and is captured best in an external evaluator's (commissioned to evaluate the training programme and materials) comments on the tutor's manual which was produced as an aid to tutors' practice:

> The guidelines and content given to tutors in the manual combine well an emancipatory andragogics, materials design and course content. A strength of the document is the recognition that reading and writing need to be integral processes if students are to develop language and conceptual competency. The sequencing of tutorials takes into account the importance of graduating the range of skills to be elicited from students (Hartman 1993:1).

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Relatively satisfied with the way in which tutorial programme development was working, I felt urged to turn my mind to other areas of concern. From my initial foray into the EMS Faculty, I was beginning to develop the sense that we could not engage in the AD project in a piecemeal manner. The problems confronted by disadvantaged students did indeed pose the most significant challenge to the AD programme. But, it was not the only one.

The deeper my understanding and breadth of experience developed in AD work in the EMS Faculty, the plainer it became to me that curricula had not enjoyed any serious scrutiny or systematic overhaul for a considerable time. In addition, in our discussions in the ADC on how to establish and sustain the AD project, it was becoming plainer too that it was necessary to appraise all aspects of the curriculum - not only those which pertained to student learning.

There was a patent danger that in our preoccupation with the overwhelming problems of students in learning, we might lose sight of the broader curriculum, and with it a focus on other areas of crucial need for development. Consequently, it is to an account on my practice in curriculum review and reform which I turn my attention next.

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4.8) Expanding Horizons - First Interventions in Curriculum Development

In May 1992, I was requested by the Industrial Psychology Department to facilitate a curriculum development workshop. The previous year, (September 1991) I had mediated in a process of organisational review in the Department in the wake of certain crises in management experienced there. We resolved at the end of the (1991) process to have a follow-up workshop to assess the developments that had taken place and identify other issues that needed to be addressed.

We accepted then that the major impact of the first exercise would be lost if it was not followed by sustained reflection, growth and development. For various reasons, the intended follow-up did not materialize. Chief among these was that a time to suit everyone could not be found.

Nevertheless, it had become clear from informal conversations I held with some Departmental members that there were certain positive energies at work in the Department which needed to be harnessed. Whereas previously members found it difficult to reach consensus on particular issues, they were now working together in a conciliatory manner. Members attributed this to the airing of grievances and difficulties which the September 1991 workshop had made possible.

I had to quickly adapt to the new developments. Therefore, I proposed that in order to take us forward, I would conduct a series of short interviews with all teaching staff in the Department, based on issues which had arisen from the first workshop. Thereafter, we would have a further workshop to address the concerns raised.

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In the interviews, I focused on two sets of issues which had arisen in the first workshop. The first set had to do with course development. In the first workshop, a picture emerged about the values, objectives, teaching methods, assessment procedures and evaluation used in the courses from first year to Honours level.

From an AD perspective, I was interested in possible areas for intervention which would make a qualitative impact on the teaching and learning interface in all the courses. It became apparent to me that potential existed to make some intervention in various areas.

The second set of issues related to the immediate crises facing the Department, especially in terms of leadership, lack of a consultative process, and an ostensible breakdown in coordination of the Department's ordinary functions. We resolved after the first workshop to pursue this second set of problems as a matter of urgency.

My proposal was that a crisis management structure be devised, with an equitable distribution of all the main functions of the Department. The Department also found it opportune to have one person (Fatima Abrahams) as the Coordinator in lieu of a chairperson.

The frustration and demoralization which were ostensibly the underlying forces earlier seemed to have dissipated. The interviews I conducted were therefore aimed at establishing the root of the positive dynamics, to identify what the present concerns were, and to look at impediments which remained.

Although it would have been very illuminating for us to probe the processes that led to the change from the dire situation of the previous year to the more

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positive outlook the following year, it seemed to me to be less of a priority in 1992. My main concern was to identify the crucial issues which confronted the Department on the short to medium term, towards facilitating a productive workshop when we met.

In response to the question: What do you think are the immediate priorities in the Department that need urgent or critical attention? - a number of crucial points were raised. The essence of responses is summarised here:

> i) The question of what educational values the Department was trying to inculcate in its students needed to be re-examined. Allied with this, there was a perceived need for a systematic evaluation of the courses and the programme (1st Yr to Hons) as a whole. Greater opportunities for student feedback needed to be created. Questions were raised for instance about whether the programme of tests, assignments and project work from first to third year was sufficiently rigorous to ensure the quality of Honours candidates.
>
> ii) Questions were raised about the curriculum: what claims could the Department justifiably make about the quality of the developmental process students underwent? Furthermore, what special provisions were there in place to address the needs of disadvantaged students? For instance, in what ways were the reading, writing, critical and analytical skills of first year students being developed?
>
> iii) The need to appraise the community the Department was serving, the future needs of the country, and developments on the human resources scene, were identified as priorities. It was felt that the overall impetus should be towards proactiveness in these areas.
>
> iv) It was proposed that more creative avenues for staff development should be sought. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the compulsion to teach undergraduates year in and year out. It was suggested that career paths should be clearly mapped out for junior staff.

At the workshop, a question opening the discussion was whether the Industrial Psychology lecturer's job was to teach English too? Various

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contributions were made in response, touching on the pressures that were put on lecturers to avoid longish questions in tests and assignments; having to structure things more; etc.

However, it was also pointed out that although it was not possible for the lecturer to easily assume the role of English teacher, there were certain basic obligations on the part of the lecturer to engage with who the students were, where they were coming from, what their strengths and weaknesses were, and what their learning and developmental needs were.

This did not mean that the lecturer was expected to teach the student English grammar. It was accepted as important however that the lecturer had an obligation to develop the students' capacity to write clearly and logically, reason critically, analyze, and synthesise in the subject, for all of these were central capacities which constituted academic literacy in the subject.

Teaching the subject without a focus on these would invariably mean a focus on the content only. A description of the Political Studies initiative in integrating course content, conceptual understanding and discipline specific skills, and the training of tutors to facilitate this development in close cooperation with the lecturer was provided as an example. (An account of this initiative was alluded to earlier, but will be elaborated upon in the next section).

There was a recognition that many of the problems persisted into second year and beyond - students could neither read nor write effectively in the discipline. Nonetheless, clear expression and communication remained imperatives and became even more critical as students progressed into final year, graduate study, and the workplace.

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The consensus was that the Faculty needed to do something. I pointed out that the ADC English for Educational Development initiative was geared towards addressing the problems of students with English in the academic sphere, but was constrained by inadequate resources and limited personnel. Until a more favourable situation developed, more of the burden for student development would fall on the shoulders of departments and lecturers. For this reason, thoughtful use of tutorials was essential.

We eventually resolved that the Department would make time to get together to talk about curriculum appraisal, curriculum reform and development, establishing consistency in assessment, and establishing consensus on what each year's course objectives should be. Individual members would give thought to what the Department's mission was and what skills it wanted to cultivate in its students.

Consideration would be given to what values beyond the discipline knowledge should be striven for, and what discipline specific skills needed to be cultivated. Also, the texts needed to be re-examined to establish the educational values implicit in them, and see how these might be addressed. Thereafter, we resolved, a meeting would be held to discuss the issues which arose. I would again be called in as facilitator.

Through this engagement in Industrial Psychology, I began to grapple with the conceptual issues which underlay curriculum development, and my own understanding gradually developed. Meanwhile, my involvement in the Political Studies curriculum development project was also gathering momentum and yielding positive results, and contributing in equal measure to the development of my sense of the possibilities in this area of AD work. I shall elaborate an account of this initiative next.

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4.9) Curriculum Development in Political Studies

By the time I took stock of my practice in writing my end of year report as AD Coordinator in the EMS faculty at the end of 1992, I had become convinced that a coherent curriculum at a course as well as a programme level formed an important frame of reference for the development of student learning and for improving teaching. The impetus for this came from two sources. The first was an emerging discourse in the ADC about the best avenues for developing our AD practice. The second was from my foray into departments in the Faculty.

It had become apparent in my efforts at supporting tutorial development in both the Industrial Psychology and Political Studies Departments that where the curriculum did not exhibit coherence, student learning easily became confused and fragmented, leading to greater dependence on the lecturer to provide the links and point out significances and signposts in the subject. For students operating in a second language, the problem of making sense of a discipline was aggravated by having to manoeuvre through difficult concepts, vocabulary and abstractions in an unfamiliar language. Perkins (1986) presented earlier in this chapter, illuminated how I came to understand these dilemmas.

It was apparent from the insights into curricula I had derived through involvement in tutorial programme development during 1991 and 1992 that a preoccupation with content dominated, and as a consequence, had a strong organising influence on the curriculum. For instance, where a history of events was being covered, the organisation was invariably chronological. Where the subject lent itself to thematic study, themes or topics were selected as the overall organising structure. Key concepts, operations,

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methods, theoretical standpoints, issues or controversies in the discipline were also visible organisers.

Often, what topics and themes were chosen depended on the lecturer's particular research interests at a given time. So the curriculum viewed as a whole (at a programme level) invariably appeared stitched together in no apparent pattern, let alone a clear conceptual development beginning with the basic concepts, principles and theories of the discipline and moving to complex and abstract understandings in the third year and graduate levels.

I had come to the realisation that if lectures and tutorials continued to reinforce a view of knowledge as static facts to be rote-learned and not to be questioned, we merely helped to ossify the learning practice that many students brought with them from their school experiences. The ultimate intellectual impairment resulting from this would consequently be felt not only at graduate level but also far beyond the university.

Clearly the challenge was to assist students to break out of this mould and to effect ongoing transformation to critical and creative ways of learning.

How was this to be achieved? My hunch was that students should get clearer signals, especially in the first year, that the curriculum is coherent, flexible, and open - to challenge, questioning, and reform.

To achieve this purpose, it seemed that a useful way would be to get lecturers to articulate their basic assumptions about student learning, and the role of content and skills in the curriculum. This process would encourage a fresh perspective on the teaching and learning context that ultimately would serve the best interests of both lecturers and learners.

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With this in mind, I approached the convenor of the first year course, Cheryl Hendricks, to discuss a collaborative initiative in curriculum reform in the first year to test the assumptions I was working with. Thus began a long and fruitful collaborative project which has been reported upon in greater detail elsewhere (Baijnath and Hendricks 1993, in Walker, ed.).

The change process in Political Studies 1, begun in 1990 and eventually concretised in 1992, was a response to pressures and conditions at the University and in the Department. As reported in Chapter Three, the nature of the university had changed significantly by the mid to late 1980s. The newly conceived open admissions policy of the university, resulting in the enrolment of vastly increased numbers of African students from a disadvantaged socio-economic milieu, impacted upon the administration and teaching of Political Studies, (indeed as it did with all other departments as well).

The Department, until the mid 1980s was relatively small, consisting of two permanent members of staff, approximately 60 students and no administrative infrastructure. The Departmental head, Vincent Maphai, gave a vivid description of the conditions he encountered when he arrived in 1988:

> We were in prefab buildings - freezing in winter and hot in summer. We had no typewriter. There was only one filing cabinet, no secretary, only two full-time members at the time and about 800 students...Political tensions were very hard [to deal with]. Students wouldn't listen to any other view. When you walked into class, it was full of tension. I remember in my first lecture a student telling me my reading list was too long and for that reason reactionary because he took time away from the revolution. Ja, that was really the state of the art.

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By 1990 there were approximately 1000 students in a Department consisting of three permanent staff members. The sudden increase in the number of students (as a result of the open admissions policy reported upon earlier in Chapter Three) brought with it a number of structural and academic problems as reported by departmental members in the interviews:

> - The Department lacked the infrastructure to cope adequately with the influx of students. Staff members were continuously besieged by students, and had to cope with a huge administrative load.
>
> - Lectures virtually became "mass meetings" as students filled the lecture-halls to overflowing. The first year lecture had to be delivered three times (including a part-time class) to accommodate all the students.
>
> - Marking and administration of student records consumed a substantial amount of lecturers' time leaving virtually no time for research and curriculum development.
>
> - Many students did not have the financial means to buy the course materials and books.
>
> - Because most students were used to rote learning, they were by and large underprepared for the demands of university study. This factor was aggravated by the fact that most students had to study through a medium of instruction which was a second language for them.
>
> - Levels of frustration increased among both lecturers and students. Lecturers could not see the fruits of their labour in successful outcomes in learning and improved pass rates. Students for their part were frustrated because of the rigorous demands placed on them, administrative inefficiencies, and lack of success in the courses.

These conditions were not peculiar to the Political Studies Department. Others would have been experiencing problems at the same time. As argued earlier, general conditions of adversity developed as a result of increased numbers without a concomitant increase in resources.

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Some of the structural problems were resolved by employing temporary staff members, making possible a manageable spread of the teaching and administrative load. However, the problems associated with student learning remained and lecturers experienced the dissonance and uneasiness which demanded a critical look at how the teaching and learning context could be adjusted to meet the needs of students in the first year.

An established assumption on which the curriculum was based was that students entering the university possessed the required conceptual, analytical, language, and other academic skills necessary for success. Yet it quickly became apparent that students needed additional tuition in order to cope with the demands of Political Studies.

As reported in an earlier section, the initial attempt to develop a tutorial programme was not as successful as desired. Because of the large numbers of students, lack of tutor training skills, lack of clarity about how best to utilise the tutorials, and inadequate resources, no systematic programme of tutorials was developed. Where tutorials were attempted, they quickly became a mere reworking of the lecture.

By 1990, the Department began in earnest to question its methods of teaching, accepting that there was a need to supplement lectures with small group teaching. Faced with similar setbacks, many departments had given up in despair.

What sustained the Political Studies Department's efforts was its commitment to its students, and the conviction that it was possible, despite the difficulties faced, to provide students with a relevant and empowering

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learning experience. However, this positive ethos could not be exploited for a lack of resources.

Compounding the problem, was the absence of a cohort of post graduate students who could assist in the teaching. The Department was therefore forced to rely on second and third year students.

An added problem was that the Department did not have the pedagogical expertise to effect a critical review of the curriculum. Although small group tutorials were set up, effective use of the forum for the development of student learning did not begin. A primary factor militating against the success of the small group tutorials was the fact that tutors were untrained. Again the tutorials deteriorated into mere repetition of the lectures. The warp and weft of these programmes were narrated earlier.

In 1991, a more informed and systematic attempt was made to restructure the tutorial programme. This initiative and subsequent ones have been reported upon earlier in this chapter.

I have gone into the background in some detail with a view to illustrating the complexity of the context and the range of factors which impinged upon the development process, as well as to locate the curriculum development process in relation to the student development one.

The course convenor had experimented with different methods in her lecture room and was keen to explore how review and reform of the curriculum might contribute to enhanced student learning. I on the other hand, was keen to develop new areas of endeavour in AD work, in particular in the area of curriculum development. I was also interested in exploring to what extent

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it was possible to facilitate curriculum change as an outsider, to establish the types of questions which needed to be asked, and to determine the level of support that was needed by the lecturer.

These underlying objectives were not articulated in the beginning, but emerged in subsequent discussions. However, they did provide the initial impetus and enthusiasm for the collaboration. Another factor which influenced the success of the collaboration was that we had shared values about teaching, learning, and the emancipatory interests of students. Finally, we enjoyed working with each other, and exchanging views. This had an important sustaining influence on the project.

During the latter part of 1991 and in early 1992, we had numerous discussions to explore the possibilities for reform in the first year curriculum. We raised questions about the assumptions implicit in the curriculum - educational aims, understanding of disadvantage, understanding of the language needs of students, discipline conventions, articulation between teaching methods and assessment, and organisation of content. This added a fresh perspective to the curriculum development process.

A further positive development was that tutors were now firmly established in contributing to discussions about student needs and learning problems and provided the lecturing staff with valuable feedback.

We looked at the first year curriculum in its entirety to address certain key concerns:

- The content had to be organised in such a way that it facilitated learning and understanding. Moreover, the course outline had to be

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an effective benchmark for both lecturer and student; teaching and learning.

- Teaching methods had to be re-examined to see how they could facilitate or impede learning.

- Tutorials had to be critically evaluated to determine how they could be used more effectively to enhance students' learning.

To address the first concern, we reorganised the content in a more student-friendly manner. To achieve this, we looked at the inherent structure, development, relationships, and organising precepts by continuing to return to the content, in the light of Perkins (1986). After considerable deliberation, we decided to begin with the key concepts of power, race, class and the state. These would develop from common-sense notions that students already had and gradually build to more complex understandings.

We realised that it could not be assumed that the basic knowledge structures that students had were adequate for abstract understandings to follow easily. Thereafter, we explored the relationship between basic concepts and theories, with a focus on the role of ideology in determining political standpoints. We envisaged that major theoretical frameworks, with key theorists and topics in the area would then follow.

To address the second concern - how lectures could be enhanced to facilitate learning - a critical re-appraisal of lecture-room practice led to an improved use of audio-visual material, small group discussion within the large group, and clearer explanation of tasks. The most important development was to the overall framework of the course as the reference point, again and again, to reinforce the interconnectedness of the discipline, the levels of knowledge or different knowledge structures, and the key areas of development.

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The third concern - tutorials - was addressed by interviewing tutors to establish the problems they were experiencing. It emerged that many more factors beyond our ambit affected the teaching and learning process. For instance, into the second week of the semester, more than half the students had still not acquired their course-readers, either through ignorance about the importance of the materials for learning, or through not being able to afford it immediately.

In other areas, tutors felt inadequately equipped to deal with the demands of the class, necessitating further training. It became clear also that the tutorial was to be the main context in which conceptualising the discipline, and developing personal skills, was to happen.

What, then, changed, and how successful were these changes? There were clear beneficiaries from the learning exchange in the Department. This was attested to by tutors in evaluation interviews. One, Thabo, had the following to say in response to a question on how he felt he had grown from the experience of tutoring:

> I think the tutoring programme itself is quite an enriching experience. You get a chance to interact with students from a different level, so to speak. You learn to be patient and learn to listen to people who've got problems expressing themselves on a particular point. You learn to accept other people's opinions. There's quite a diversity of opinions, especially in this course. So in that sense it has been an enriching experience. And I don't think it has only been enriching in a sense that I've only benefited from the students. I hope also that it has been of mutual benefit for them.

In addition, the curriculum change exercise set in motion some very positive processes in the Department. At one level, the collaborative venture between the course convenor and myself was of ultimate use not only to the Department, but also the Faculty and wider curriculum change interests at the university.

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It also helped me to understand and engage with some of the complexities of my role as an interventionist, a facilitator, and outside agent of change, and to define for myself a sense of the boundaries around these various roles. All of us derived a deeper understanding of how attitudes, values, assumptions about learning, and notions about the purposes of higher education, impact upon our practice.

The process also made it apparent how crucial conducive conditions are for curriculum review and change to be successful. It confirmed my hunch that where the Departmental culture is non-reflective, uncritical, and orientated to maintenance of the status-quo, an effective review and reform process would be difficult to set in motion. It also reinforced the view that the power to change the curriculum resides with the department and lecturers concerned. If there was commitment to the review and change process, it seemed, valuable outcomes were possible.

If, on the other hand, there was diffidence or resistance, the nett effect was that uncritical ideas, outdated values, and less than relevant content and skills, amongst others, had the potential to become entrenched in the curriculum, to the detriment of students, and ultimately the educational project.

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After involvement in several curriculum planning exercises, it appeared to me that many tended to be paper exercises and mere "window dressing". Very few in my experience acquired the character of ongoing development and improvement in a cyclical manner. The main reason for this was that lecturers baulked at the degree of organisation, commitment and effort necessary to engage in effective curriculum development from one year to the next. An exacerbating factor was that such efforts were rarely acknowledged or rewarded by the university.

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Another important observation was that there was really no point in using coercive methods, for apart from inspiring deeper resistance and resentment, the degree of autonomy and low level of accountability enjoyed by lecturers and departments rendered such methods ineffective anyway.

In the Political Studies Department however, the process which we set in motion encouraged a critical engagement with the issues of teaching and learning, and led to a critical consideration of how the curriculum impacted on classroom practice.

More importantly, it led to various modifications and restructuring of what the lecturer did in class, how skills were to be integrated into the curriculum, what the training needs of tutors were, and how the success of the teaching and learning process was to be evaluated.

It also provoked the lecturers and tutors to articulate their assumptions about learning, how to empower students, the aim of the subject, the needs of students, the purpose of the course, and the value of programmatic coherence. In the process, they learned more about themselves and developed a broader sense of the possibilities in teaching and learning. Some of the insights which emerged were expressed in the following way by one lecturer:

> I think one of the issues that must be looked at is how you create a culture of academic vibrancy, where people publish, read, learn, debate... One of the gaps in this Department is the need to address how people use the university and its tools for academic purposes...(Bettina von Lieres).

The experience also provided some very useful broad pointers for curriculum change. To begin with, it was critical that an ethos of self-evaluation be

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developed in a department for it plays an important role in helping staff unpack the influences on their curriculum and how these either facilitate or impede student learning. It showed also that the change process is a continuing one and does not begin and stop with the end of year course planning exercise.

I was fortunate in that the Departmental culture of Political Studies was such that my efforts were appreciated and encouraged. Through ongoing involvement I had cultivated close working relationships with most Departmental members. The support and encouragement of the Head of Department, Vincent Maphai, was instrumental not only in gaining me access, but also keeping AD and a commitment to students high on the Department's agenda.

Importantly, the experience in Political Studies suggested that even in the face of adverse constraints such as low staff complement, stringent resourcing, and heavy marking commitments, it was still possible to give serious, ongoing attention to curriculum review and change. Perhaps the most important outcome of the project was that it reinforced the importance of the curriculum review process as an essential bulwark for AD in departments.

Finally, it gave me a good idea of where my efforts should logically be deployed next. I had begun with a focus on tutors and the tutorial programme, and then moved onto the curriculum. It was time to focus the lens on what was happening in the lecture room, and what could be done about staff development in this area.

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4.10) Staff Development - A Window on Lecture-room Practice

In Departmental discussions on improvement of teaching and learning in Political Studies, it became apparent that the critical gaze needed to be shifted to other areas which had a bearing on educational quality in the Department. The first move in this regard was to systematise the collection of feedback from students on the courses they had completed. A questionnaire was drawn up by the Teaching and Learning Committee in the Department and administered in all classes at the end of 1992.

I was requested by the Departmental head to analyse the questionnaires. After the analysis was completed, I was to present the findings at a staff retreat that was planned for March 1993. However, when the time approached for the workshop, it was found to be inopportune for various reasons.

Firstly, in discussions I held with the Departmental head and the Departmental AD representative (Cheryl Hendricks), we agreed that the meeting should consist of more than a mere presentation of the results of the analysis.

Secondly, it was suggested by the Department that since more evaluation forms were available from another evaluation conducted earlier in 1993, these should be analysed as well and the findings jointly presented. But, we agreed that in the interests of gaining a different perspective, this analysis should be conducted by Fadl Nacerodien, a staff member and also member of the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee.

Thirdly, after meeting with the Department, it was agreed that if our purpose was to couple the presentation of the results with a staff development

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agenda, it would perhaps be more useful if we focused on an aspect of the evaluations for in-depth appraisal and discussion.

We resolved that the focus should be on teaching, seeing that it was an aspect which appeared to be of central relevance for both staff and students, and constituted a useful focus for development purposes. From my perspective as a facilitator, I was particularly interested in developing a method for evaluating teaching, which was as unobtrusive and non-judgemental as possible, yet insightful both for individual staff as well as myself as AD practitioner.

An evaluation seminar I was attending in the ADC led by an experienced evaluator from outside the university (Angela Schaffer), would help me work through some of the theoretical and methodological issues involved. It would also provide peer support and feedback.

At a staff meeting of the Political Studies Department, I presented a proposal for the evaluation project, suggesting that it be accomplished in various phases, beginning with an initial workshop focusing on the student evaluations (questionnaires) in June 1993, and then moving on to lecture-room observations coupled with one-on-one consultations with lecturers. This was to be followed by presentation of a draft report and recommendations to individual members of the Department for feedback and comment.

We resolved that student evaluations of lecturers should be supplemented by lecture-room observations to strengthen our perspective on teaching in the Department. Furthermore, because many of the points raised by students in the questionnaires pertained to individual lecturers, it appeared

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more useful as a staff development strategy if I worked directly with individual lecturers so that feedback could be given in a sensitive and constructive manner.

In deciding on methodology for this aspect, I had to take into account various issues. In the first place, the time available was short. I felt I had to undertake a round of observations and to feed back to the individual lecturers and the Department within a reasonable period of time, while the issues raised by the Departmental workshop and those emerging from the classroom observations were still fresh in the minds of everyone.

Secondly, I had to choose between various data gathering techniques. The popular option used by many staff development practitioners was the rating schedule. However, it was limited in its usefulness, for it did not yield much information. Rather, it yielded broad and general judgements of the lecturer's performance on a scale, say from one to five.

The complexities of the classroom and details about the nuances of classroom dynamics were consequently lost. My own feeling was that it did not yield any information that the lecturer could not glean by using the rating schedule for her/himself.

A further option would have been to videotape the lecturer in action and then use this as a basis for analysis and discussion. My sense was that this would be very useful and reliable in that it would provide less subjective visual evidence of the lecturer's action.

However, the down side was that it could miss out on the nuances and complexities as well - for what is picked up by the camera is still subject to

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what is perceived as significant by the camera-operators. The additional consideration was whether we had the capacity in terms of equipment, technical knowhow and skilled personnel to do this effectively. In the light of the experience of colleagues in the History department using video to capture lecture-room practice (Cornell 1993), the impression I gained was that UWC's equipment and technical capacity in this area was found wanting.

The evaluation seminar I was attending gave me an idea of some of the possibilities for studying classroom practice through engagement with the literature. The option I chose then was to generate a narrative text (Gitlin and Smyth, 1989) of the classroom discourse, interspersed with observations about the lecturer, classroom dynamics, and whatever else appeared significant.

The rationale provided by Gitlin and Smyth (1989:104) is actually based on the ideas of Goldhammer, who was concerned with "getting teachers to confront their teaching." He also stressed that it was the "ideals, practices, and heritage that are being confronted rather than the competence of individuals or their personalities."

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His purpose therefore was largely to help teachers unravel for themselves how they came to hold particular ideas about teaching and to help them transcend "the habitual, the unquestioned and the ritualistic in a way that enables them to see better the social and historical nature of their practices." This approach resonated closely with my assumptions about the importance of history, autobiography and context in examining practice.

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Nonetheless, such a technique had its own drawbacks. For instance, the text that is generated is a product of the observer's own physical vantage point in the room as well as unarticulated notions about what constitutes "good" educational practice.

Typing up the texts is quite labour-intensive, unless one's writing is decipherable by a typist. Also, at every stage of observation, as observer, I invariably continually made choices about what was significant and what was not. A final constraint was a physical one - I was limited by the speed at which I could observe and write.

In spite of these shortcomings, the ultimate text was of considerable value as a basis for staff development. The advantages of the written text were many. Very importantly, it helped locate me as AD practitioner within a relationship of collaborative inquiry rather than expert/non-expert or consultant/client. It provided "thick" descriptions which could be used as a basis for dialogue between myself and the lecturer during one-on-one consultations.

The text which was produced was descriptive of the whole lecture with some of its complex dynamics, rather than a judgement of the performance of the lecturer alone. Finally, in the dialogue that the text generated, it was not assumed that the lecturer came with a *tabula rasa* about teaching and learning. Value was given to the lecturer's point of view and explanations about why s/he was doing something in a particular way. The narrative text on the lecture-room practice was refutable and open to challenge by the lecturer.

The project would not have been possible had it not been for the genuine concern and commitment demonstrated by all the Departmental members to

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improve their teaching. It was this supportive ethos that led the Department and individual lecturers to create space for me to work alongside them. Despite the vulnerabilities and anxieties which such processes normally inspire, individual lecturers invited me into their domains and accepted feedback in a critical but open spirit. My task was made much easier for not having to spend a lot of energy and time negotiating entry.

The questionnaires consisted of various categories focusing on the lecturer, the lecture, the course reader, assignments, tutors, and tutorials. The questions under each category referred to presentation style, effectiveness, adequacy, etc. Each item was to be rated on a scale from 1 (excellent) to 5 (extremely poor). Space was also provided for students to write comments if they wished.

In my enthusiasm and zeal to be helpful and to show my appreciativeness (for being appreciated), I undertook to analyse all the questionnaires. The routine analysis was extremely time consuming. With hindsight, it would have been better to have each lecturer complete his or her own analysis according to agreed categories and feed in these to me for composite analysis.

Nevertheless, the questionnaires yielded useful information to the extent that they provided individual lecturers with indicators about (lecturer) performance in the lecture-room as perceived by students. The results were fed back to lecturers individually.

The information, however, as pointed out earlier, did not provide much depth of insight into effectiveness of teaching, or other factors which may affect teaching. One reason for this was that questionnaires in general do not lend

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themselves to accessing in-depth insights. Another was that even when space had been provided in questionnaires for students to qualify their responses, a significant number did not make use of it, or at best made comments ranging from the banal to non-insightful.

Furthermore, the context of the lecture-room, with its time constraints, added to the possibility that course evaluations had come to acquire a ritual character for many students (and staff too, no doubt). The questionnaire itself, having gone through numerous trimming down processes in the interests of consistency, organisation for speedy analysis, brevity, and economy, amongst others, devolved into an instrument that could not do more than test the likes and dislikes of students on the range of items. The qualitative data available from this source therefore was invariably sketchy.

However, from the information which had become available through analysis of the questionnaires, it seemed that overall, students found a supportive, student-friendly environment in the Department.

The questionnaires also raised a number of issues, from which we could make certain inferences about teaching. It must be stressed that these did not suggest dominant trends amongst lecturers - often the points raised referred to either one or two lecturers. They were not by any means comments raised by large numbers of students. Attention was drawn to them as a set of concerns which students seemed to hold, and which I believed were important because they pointed to the need for improving teaching quality.

The comments themselves, coupled with the rating patterns (on the scale from 1 to 5), provided sufficient grounds on which to make these inferences.

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The categories used were derived from clusters of responses which emerged. They were offered as a basis for discussion and possibly a framework through which all lecturers in the Department could view their own practice. The following summary reflects the main points:

Departmental and lecture-room ethos:

Students especially liked the student-friendly atmosphere in the Department, the motivation and inspiration provided by lecturers, and the generally good tutorials.

i) A number seemed to appreciate punctuality (of lecturers and tutors).

iii) Some indicated that they appreciated humility in lecturers.

iv) Many commented that they liked lecturers who treated them with respect, and who exhibited an approachable demeanour.

Issues about knowledge:

i) Students at second and third year levels appeared to appreciate demonstrated mastery of knowledge by the lecturer. Various inferences were possible from this. For instance, it may have been that many were still captive to a view of teaching where the lecturer is the "expert". Or it may have been that they appreciated breadth, depth, contemporary relevance, and versatility, coupled with a lively presentation style, etc.

ii) Students were unhappy with tutors marking their assignments. Complaints frequently referred to poor and inadequate feedback, inconsistent marks and not having their assignments returned to them within a reasonable time. The reaction of students was understandable if we took the view that they were also in the business of knowledge production. Their assignments were the products of their intellectual labour. The ways in which lecturers responded to these gave students clear messages about the value attached to them and their work.

iii) Some complained about the "big" and in parts "irrelevant" course-reader. A difficulty with course-readers (which we also encountered in our review of the first year curriculum), was that

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because they consisted largely of fragments from disparate sources, they lacked the structure, sequence, and coherence of a textbook. This had to be weighed up against the benefits - contemporary and relevant material, balance in terms of depth and breadth, etc.

I did not examine the course-reader as part of the project. My hunch nevertheless was that the problems persisted. The solution, it occurred to me, could lie in an accompanying guide (more than a course-outline) which spelt out clearly the *raison d'etre* for various inclusions, and how they hung together.

Issues of presentation:

i) Students in the first year particularly, seemed to like a lively, populist presentation style. This had much to do with the personality and charisma of the individual lecturer concerned, coupled with illustrations from the socio-political milieu they sprang from, humour, and easy rapport with students (good communication skills).

ii) They disliked bias and partisanship by lecturers - whether this manifested itself as a pro-west, or pro-ANC stance, etc.

iii) They were also against domination by the lecturer in class; they appreciated opportunities to present their own views. This had to be balanced against evidence emerging from most lecture-room observations - ie. when too much student talk occurred, students became easily distracted. My impression often was that very little value was given (by students) to the utterances of fellow students.

iv) A significant number had difficulties with the way in which the overhead projector and chalkboard were used.

Issues about the workload:

i) Students disliked being overloaded with assignments and tests.

ii) They complained about being penalised in their assignments for criteria which were not made clear - eg. bibliographic requirements.

My recommendations to the Department in the light of the analysis of the

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questionnaires rested on several key assumptions. I argued that it was essential that students' first encounter with the discipline should leave them with a favourable impression. For this reason I recommended that lecturers with the commensurate teaching abilities be allocated the first year.

The rationale for this recommendation was that a quite widespread practice at the University in view of the large numbers at first year level was to leave these for the youngest and invariably most inexperienced lecturers to teach at first year level. The more experienced, and quite likely senior staff tended to take softer and less demanding options in terms of teaching, administration, consultation, AD, and other functions. Plainly relations of power and authority played a role in perpetuating the practice.

In my observation of the lectures of the Departmental head, it became apparent to me how popularity, a lively presentation style, skill in explanation and illumination, and understanding of the learning milieu from which students came, created a highly dynamic lecture at the first year level. This experience lent credibility to my proposal to use the more dynamic lecturers at first year level.

From the second year and beyond, students tended to have matured considerably and were more attuned to the demands of university study, and perhaps more autonomous. Judging from many of the comments made in their evaluations, they were also interested in serious engagement with the subject.

However, as pointed out earlier, implicit in their appreciation of demonstrated mastery of the subject could be a set of underlying educational values inculcated in school ie. that the teacher was the "expert"

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and that the authority of teachers and texts was synonymous with the truth. My proposal to the Department was that it needed to consider how to help students unlearn these, and develop more progressive values.

I also suggested that it was particularly important that lecturers were seen to be unbiased and fair. The personal political standpoints of lecturers whether they were party-political, geo-political (west/east; south/north) or ideological (Marxist, Liberal, etc), should not be represented in lectures in ways which might influence students to take a particular standpoint. Even where the lecturer was pushed to make her/his position clear, it should be stressed that the lecturer's position is only one amongst many. The following excerpt from my transcript of one lecture room observation is illustrative:

> [Student 1 has bummed another cigarette from the student a few seats away to his right].
>
> 11h11 - The lecturer writes more notes on the board:
>
> *Relationship between Imperialism and National Bourgeoisie*
>
> Student 1 asks a question about the national bourgeoisie. It sounds quite astute to me. He follows this up with "What is your politics?" [Addressed to the lecturer]. The lecturer tries to deflect the question by saying that his own political standpoint is not relevant. The student persists. "I still want to know: What is your politics?" A short dialogue develops between the lecturer and student. The lecturer is eventually pressed to declare where he stands on the issue, and does so unequivocally.

A further assumption I stressed was that the written work of students ie. essays, assignments and briefings, provided some of the most important opportunities for mediating student learning. The logic behind this was that if the objective of giving students assignments was to help them engage with the abstractions of the discipline, develop insights into the debates and learn the conventions of the discipline-specific discourse, then the feedback given

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to students was crucial in providing them with indicators of where they were in their learning. Otherwise the exercises could easily become ritualistic and meaningless chores.

Clearly the use of tutors to mark student assignments presented specific problems. Large numbers balanced against inadequate staffing levels made this unavoidable if an adequate level of assignments and tests was to be given to students. It was nonetheless imperative that assignments fulfilled their objective, and that they should give students adequate feedback on their progress and insight into the discipline. I pointed out that the answer to this dilemma might lie in better (and ongoing) training of tutors to mark consistently and provide constructive feedback. This might be supplemented by a more effective supervision and moderation procedure.

Approachability of lecturers seemed to be an important concern for students. It did not emerge clearly from the evaluations whether this was only in terms of demeanour, or whether it also meant accessibility for out-of-class consultations. A recommendation in this regard was that lecturers engage in self-reflection to identify ways in which their stance, attitude, tone, mood, etc. may give students an impression that they were unapproachable. I posed the pointed question about whether students were sufficiently persuaded (and reminded) that the consultation times were *actually* for consultation?

I then moved on to a more in-depth consideration of the narrative texts. As I mentioned earlier, each of the texts generated was used to have a discussion with the lecturer concerned prior to the workshop. A primary concern was to examine teaching in the Department from the vantage point of the actual teaching/learning context and its specificities, and the practice of lecturers, rather than in terms of theoretical views to be found in the

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literature. In this regard, Goldhammer's construct of getting teachers "to confront their teaching" was a useful one for the consultation sessions.

The discussions in the workshop revolved around practical issues and tried to unpack some of the assumptions implicit in the practice. For instance, we looked at how introduction of the lecture ie. clarifying the purpose, recapping on the last lecture, giving an idea of the structure to be followed, etc. gave students an early grip on understanding.

By listening to the lecturer's explanations on particular incidents and development, I was able to clarify my own understandings of what the lecturer intended and to develop a less sketchy picture of the lecture.

In the light of these discussions, we were able to consider alternative ways in which presentations might be enhanced, lecture-room exchange be increased, questioning become more focused and inclusive of the whole class, and signposting made more obvious. I was able to give some feedback on how the lecture was being received by students - by commenting on audibility, lucidity, development, student notes, clarity and usefulness of the overhead projector and chalkboard.

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The points raised with each lecturer were very context-specific, and pertained to individual lecturers. Rather than dwell on the particularities and characteristics of each lecture, it seemed more positive to construct a composite picture, of how a "good" lecturing practice proceeded. I followed this up with some recommendations on areas for development. "Good" lectures had the following characteristics:

i) The lecture was introduced with an outline of the purpose and the broad structure. Signposts were given of the key conceptual shifts to

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be made. Attention was drawn to the discipline-specific skills to be developed. Links were made with the previous lecture - key points were summarised, or the overhead projector/chalkboard was used to provide a conceptual map of the broad structure.

ii) Explanation was lucid, examples and illustrations were from the students' own life experiences.

iii) The lecturer talked with students rather than at them - the lecture was an ongoing dialogue between students and lecturers. Questions and comments raised by students were posed back to the class so that all engaged. The lecturer offered praise and encouragement. Excerpts from one of the transcripts illustrate this point:

11h55 - A student in the front asks a question [Inaudible at the back]. Three students come in. The lecturer says: "Let me see... " He then repeats the question to the rest of the class. The student makes a few adjustments to the question that the lecturer has mirrored back to the class. After the student is satisfied, the lecturer comments: "Very intelligent question... " He then poses the question to the class.

12h18 - The lecturer asks a previous questioner if he is happy with the answer that was given by another student. The student nods his head. The lecturer responds: "I'm not!" Much laughter. He then proceeds to explain why, followed by: "Would you be happy with that answer?" A chorus from the class: "NO!"

iv) Links to earlier parts of the lecture and previous lectures were drawn so that linear cohesiveness (between parts of the lecture), and lateral coherence (between components of the course) developed. Periodic recaps, using adequate signposting, reinforced the basic building blocks of the lecture. The following excerpt gives an idea:

12h38 - The lecturer is saying "Again we will start as before with a big summary first." [This in introducing a new section in the second half of a double period lecture]. " The first thing... the second thing... was the father of liberalism... Main characteristic... emphasis on individualism... " He then explains both concepts.]

v) Difficult words, concepts, and jargon were put on the chalkboard/overhead projector and were clearly defined at the beginning of the lecture, or at appropriate moments during the lecture.

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vi) The lecture was rounded off with a recap of the main points, or reiteration of key concepts, or a quick outline of the structure that the presentation has followed - as appropriate. This was followed by a lead into the forthcoming lecture, or some direction about how students could prepare themselves for the next lecture.

I drew attention to two issues which appeared to recur as problems in all the lectures I visited.

i) The first pertained to use of the chalkboard and/or overhead projector. My impression was that use of these aids ranged from sketchiness, to lack of structure, and on occasion verged on pointlessness. It seemed that students had a tendency to copy anything that was presented on the board or the transparency, the assumption most probably being that if the lecturer had gone to the trouble of writing something down, it ought to be important.

ii) The second was the apparent difficulty that students had in taking notes during lectures. I had the constant impression that students were either trying to write all that the lecturer was saying or were not able to discern what was important from what was not. The problem was accentuated where the lecturer launched into the lecture without giving an idea of the overall course to be followed. The following excerpts from two different narrative texts give an idea of how this influenced what students took away from the lecture:

Excerpt A.

I copy the notes of the student next to me:

Egypt

Fast population explosion
Oldest surviving country

[The lecturer said university!!!]

[I get the idea that students are not sure about where and when to take notes. I note also that they haven't been given an idea of what the object of the lecture is (unless it has been done previously or is in

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their course-outlines). Structure is nonetheless not as clear as it needs to be.]

17h30 - The student next to me leans back (the one whose notes I have copied). I note that another student next to her has only written:

Egypt.

Nothing further.

The lecturer meanwhile is rattling off details about the geography - dates, trade unions, chamber of commerce, establishment of banks, etc.

The student's notes are as follows:

1908 - first trade unions formed

1913 - chamber of commerce [Wrong date!!!]

1924 - bank set up [Wrong date!!!]

Excerpt B

look at the notes that some students in front of me have made. Both are in highly shortened form.]

Student A

- fragments eg liberalisation (reversible - irreversible) people become institutionalised

[He has about four or five lines more of similar type of notes - a word or two - a dash and another word or two. No apparent connections, relationships, coherence.]

Student B

p32 - definition of democratisation. The political process. [This student also has a few words and phrases with no apparent coherence between them, nor any logical structure.]

I speculated that a complex of factors might be responsible for students'

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difficulties with notetaking in lectures. Most students would use English (the medium of instruction) as a second language (L2). This might give rise to the phenomenon known as "cognitive overload." (See Baijnath, 1992).

Having to concentrate on interpreting what is heard through the filters of an L2 language proficiency level, added to an unfamiliar specialist discourse, posed a self-evident problem for students in processing and synthesising what they heard. The need to select significant and relevant information from what was said by the lecturer at a pace which made processing difficult even for L1 speakers of the language, lecture-room distractions, etc - all posed tremendous challenges for students under ordinary circumstances.

The challenges were compounded by inadequate signposting and unclear logic or structure of the lecture; inaudibility in large venues; a fast pace of delivery; inadequate links with the broader picture; and lack of variety in student activity (eg. all students did throughout the lecture was hear the lecturer speak).

However, an additional problem appeared to be that students did not prepare adequately for the lectures. I got the distinct impression in some lectures that many students were reading relevant sections of their course-readers in the actual lecture on the section. As a consequence, they could not have developed the basic knowledge structures which would make the lecture more meaningful; let alone gain insight into what was significant and what was not on the particular topic.

My concluding observation was that teaching in the Department was quite disparate. A few lecturers, in terms of the criteria students applied (accessibility, popularity, lucidity, level of preparedness, depth of knowledge,

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liveliness of presentation, etc), and from my own impressions through observation, could be deemed highly competent.

Others, with some refinement and attention to details such as better use of lecture-room aids; more considered use of question time (eg. balance between lecturing, discussion, and question time); better signposting of the lecture; and greater sensitivity to the dynamics of the lecture-room; could improve the quality of their lectures considerably.

A major spin-off from the exercise was that I was able to make certain recommendations to the Department for improvement of teaching which was based on sound and in-depth research. They were as follows:

> i) Lecturers with the "best" teaching practice (defined, for instance, in terms of ability to stimulate interest in the discipline, ability to explain lucidly and use examples which resonate with the life experiences of students, and popularity, amongst others), should be allocated the first year.
>
> ii) Adequate opportunities, either in the lecture or during tutorials, ought to be provided for students to examine their underlying assumptions about teaching/learning. Students and lecturers should have a common understanding of the objectives of the course, the views about knowledge which underpin it, and the critical capacities that it wants to develop. Some way of monitoring this needed to be devised (a subject for one of the future staff development workshops).
>
> iii) Tutors who assess assignments should receive adequate training at the beginning of the year to mark consistently and to provide useful feedback. A systematic moderation procedure ought to be enforced.
>
> iv) Lecturers should be sensitive to the image they conveyed to students. It would be useful to reflect on, (or seek peer feedback on,) how their teaching practice, general demeanour, and interaction with students might discourage students from approaching them.
>
> v) Lecturers should give careful, ongoing attention to how the

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chalkboard and overhead projector might be used to aid students' understanding and assimilation of key concepts and structures in lectures. It would be very useful to have a workshop (or series) on effective use of lecture aids.

vi) Requirements from students in terms of preparation for forthcoming lectures should be clearly spelled out and reinforced, and adequate pointers be given to how best the preparation might be accomplished.

vii) Early in the first year, students needed to be tutored on how to take notes in lectures. Periodic reinforcement is necessary until the lecturer is satisfied that students are managing. Lecturers should routinely explain to students in advance what the appropriate method of notetaking might be in response to their particular styles of presentation. The help of ADC personnel skilled in the area should be sought.

The foregoing has been an attempt to give some representational insight into my practice as an AD practitioner. While the account is by no means comprehensive, it does capture some of the nuances and significant shifts in my practice and some of the complex issues which have influenced it. It attempts to provide an illuminating window on the conditions under which AD takes place; and some of the serious inadequacies in understandings of the possibilities and limitations of the AD enterprise.

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Of significant importance is that the account has deliberately not been rooted in theoretical discourses on the spectrum of issues which my account has brought into focus. The main reason for this has been to provide an account of my practice and how it developed, and was shaped and influenced. As such, the development of my practice did not proceed behind a linear pattern. Sometimes it was coincidental and *ad hoc*; at other times it was accidental and fortuitous.

In addition, the process was in most instances not rooted in theories of

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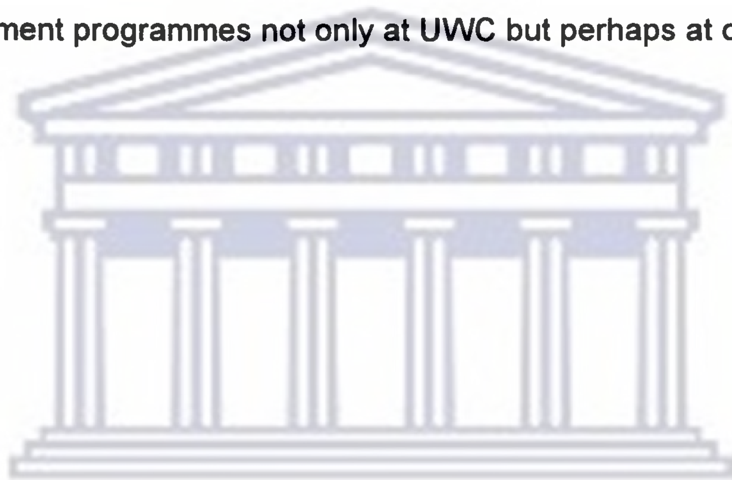
change, teaching or learning, amongst others, but driven by perceptions of what the problems were that lecturers, students and tutors encountered in their day to day reality.

My next project is to offer an interpretative account of the complex of issues which have had a bearing on my practice, and to explore and speculate about what they mean for a changed AD practice. In doing so, I shall attempt to build conceptual bridges between my AD practice and theory. However, I shall also comment on issues of policy and politics which have dogged my practice of AD and which might have a bearing on the future of academic development programmes not only at UWC but perhaps at other institutions as well.



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CHAPTER FIVE - REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE

In this chapter, my project is to tease out some of the key issues which influenced my AD practice (which I recounted in Chapter Four). I shall attempt to offer an interpretative perspective on them from my vantage point of a number of years experience in the AD field, and drawing on a depth of practice. In doing so, I shall attempt to build conceptual bridges with the literature relating to the issues raised.

5.1) Access, Disadvantage and Student Development

As I indicated previously in Chapter Three, during the 1980s, a critical challenge that universities in South Africa faced was to increase access by black students to university education in order to undo decades of discrimination. In spite of gains made in these endeavours, recent figures published of the ratio of black to white students in universities gives an idea of the disrepancies which continue to exist. According to the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE 1996) findings, in 1991, for every 1000 of the population, there were 51 whites, 35 Indians, 13 coloureds and 9 Africans attending university.

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Nevertheless, the trend towards change since 1988 has been quite consistent, and African enrolments have increased substantially. After 1988, enrolment rates of Africans at universities and technikons has averaged an annual growth rate of 24% while those of whites averaged 4%. In 1993, the enrolment of Africans equalled those of whites (NCHE 1996:11). While we may be some years away from realizing complete equity in access, present trends point to a rapidly changing student profile.

Against this backdrop of substantially increased numbers of African students

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at universities, it is inevitable that the problems associated with "disadvantage" manifest themselves in crucial ways which impact on the teaching and learning project at universities. As I have indicated in Chapter Three, these revolve around the issues of socio-economic disadvantagement, poor school experience, difficulties with the medium of instruction encountered at university, and proficiency at numeracy, amongst others.

UWC, in the light of its commitment to "disadvantaged" communities, took proactive steps in its access policies to increase the representation of African students in its student body since the mid 1980s. This is reflected in the question which was posed by the executive - "Is UWC honouring its commitment to the students that it is admitting?" which I contextualised in Chapter Four.

However, this concern was not limited to members of the University executive only. It has been tangible among staff as well. For instance, Badat and Lazarus in their account of innovative practice in tutorial programme development also show a deep sensitivity to the structural conditions which prompted their action:

> As a result of the black schooling system large numbers of students in South Africa have been denied opportunities to develop the cognitive competencies and academic skills required for optimal participation and performance in post-secondary education. Concomitantly, the situation has been exacerbated by the general lack of a culture of learning among many black students. This is related to the qualitative deficiencies of black schooling, the disruptions occasioned by opposition to apartheid education and the lack of employment opportunities. Finally, many students have been handicapped in that the language-medium of post-secondary institutions is not their mother tongue and often constitutes a second, and even third, language (1993:88).

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These conditions have been indexed elsewhere too. Kraak (1994) makes an observation in a similar vein:

> University students today (especially those in the historically black campuses, but also those in the historically white campuses) lack many skills which are essential pre-requisites for 'epistemological access' into academic disciplines. Epistemological access has to do with attaining academic literacy: acquiring an understanding of the rules and procedures intrinsic to each academic discipline, coping with the language demands of university study (most often in a language other than the mother tongue), and acquiring reading, writing and basic research skills. It also has to do with context-sensitive and critical analytical skills (1994:7).

In addition to these challenges which students confront, there are also the more obdurate and formidable, if not insuperable obstacles posed by the unarticulated codes, subcultures and practices of particular disciplines - what Gerholm has dubbed the 'tacit knowledge' of disciplines. The perspective provided by Gerholm (in Becher 1989), although pertaining to graduate students, is sharply pertinent to our understanding of the obstacles which undergraduate students face in our context as well. He observes:

> Any person entering a new group with the ambition of becoming a fully-fledged, competent member has to learn to comply with its fundamental cultural rules. This applies also to academic departments. To function smoothly within the group of teachers, fellow students and secretaries, the student needs a considerable amount of know-how. Most of it will be acquired slowly through the interaction with others and without anyone ever making a deliberate effort to teach the newcomer the rules of the game. Nonetheless, failure to comply with these implicit rules will undoubtedly affect the student's standing within the group (1989:26).

He goes on to elaborate two main categories of tacit knowledge:

> One of them is the knowledge that has grown out of long experience in the discipline. It is a practical, almost subconscious, knowledge or competence that the department elite fully masters. The most important ingredient is the knowledge and command of the repertoire

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> of scientific discourses. The other category of tacit knowledge is generated by the students themselves as they try to make sense of what they are experiencing in the graduate studies programme (in Becher 1989:26).

From the foregoing, it is clear that increased access to opportunities has constituted only one half of the battle to redress inequalities of the past in the higher education sector. The challenge once students enter the University is how to create learning opportunities for them which help them overcome their disadvantagement while also making it possible for them to fulfil the demands of university study - constituting a substantial academic development project. This concern has been as palpable at UWC since the institution embarked on a new admissions policy in the mid 1980s as it is at most universities today.

The material conditions which characterise UWC are plainly not entirely conducive for this project. This realisation is also evidenced in the work of Badat and Lazarus amongst others (Walker, ed. 1993; Leibowitz and Walker, eds. 1994). Badat and Lazarus state the problem crisply:

> The commitment to redress, however, incorporates the knowledge that equality of provision entails much more than simply greater equality of access. Equality of access (facilitating the entry of students from disadvantaged social groups) has to be distinguished from equality of opportunity and outcome (the creation of an institutional milieu which provides quality education and is conducive to student progress and success.) Given this, and in the context of financial constraints, the large sizes of classes, the under-preparedness, in respect of language and academic competencies, of large numbers of students, and the carry-over from secondary schooling of a particular learning culture, UWC has been confronted with a particular institutional challenge (1993:88).

The issues raised here are pertinent to any of the development programmes initiated at UWC. In the account of my practice in Chapter Four, where I

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described various initiatives in AD, all of these have been recurring issues. The question which arises then in the light of this is: "How efficacious are the attempts at UWC to mediate the learning of disadvantaged students?"

I pointed out in Chapter Four that tutorial programme development constituted the main strategy to enhance the learning experience of students to increase their chances of success in the university after they had attained access. There has plainly been a recognition at UWC that formal access represents only one of the many hurdles which students encounter in achieving access and success at university.

While the potential for making useful interventions in student learning through tutorials plainly exist, I want to interrogate my practice to arrive at a sense of the objective possibilities and thereby attempt to answer the question I posed above. I should reiterate that whatever claims I make are based upon my practice in the EMS Faculty. So, although they may be pertinent to the rest of the University, countervailing instances may very well be found.

In view of the myriad problems and approaches in responding to "disadvantage", it is possible sometimes to lose sight of fundamental goals of undergraduate education. Consequently, a useful starting point perhaps would be with an examination of what the goals of undergraduate education are and to see to what extent these are achievable, given the critical challenges and adverse conditions we confront at UWC.

Is the aim of higher education to promote wealth creation, social justice, and moral improvement? Plainly in our context, for a society emerging battered by the ravages of apartheid, we have serious concerns to improve the

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economic wellbeing of our nation, to restore social justice and to cultivate moral values which give our society a shared sense of purpose.

The National Commission on Higher Education Discussion Document (1996) is clear on what it perceives as the role of higher education in a society in transition. It declares unequivocally: "The development of higher education is bound up with a society's economic development" (NCHE 1996:27). In addition, it stresses not only the need to redress the inequities of the past but also the reality of the influence of the globalised economy:

> South Africa's incorporation into the international economy has led to the intensification of pressures for more highly skilled production workers. This development has direct consequences for the demand for higher education. The historical trend in skill distribution among the formally employed in South Africa indicates that the country is moving in the direction of global trends (1996:30).

and,

> If South Africa is to compete economically on the world stage, it will need increasing numbers of professionals and knowledge workers with world-class skills to strengthen its enterprises. If South Africa is to build the necessary skills base many thousands of new or retrained professionals in the next generation must come from the black community (1996:30-31).

Apart from these declarations, the NCHE spells out its guiding principles as equity, democratisation, development, quality, academic freedom/ institutional autonomy, and effectiveness/ efficiency. What these imply in their broad text and detail, is a view of education aimed largely at improving the economic wellbeing of our society and to restore social justice, amongst others. How acceptable is such a view of the purpose of higher education?

Ball, a luminary in British higher education (in Urwin, ed. 1985), advances the following view:

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> My own conviction is that we are misguided if we make wealth, or social justice, or moral improvement the *direct aim* of our education, or if we think that these desirable qualities will be the *inevitable result* of turning people into graduates. But they are very often the *indirect* consequence or the corollary of education, and I firmly believe that our society is (at least) a *little* richer, juster and better now than it would have been if we had not embarked on the great educational adventure of the last 100 years! (1985:18).

In the light of this, Ball proposes that the "proper purpose" of higher education is as follows:

> What we all have in common in higher education is the common pursuit of truth as our first principle: the second is the very British idea that scholarship and learning, though in essence solitary activities, are best carried forward in communities, in colleges and polytechnics and universities where social life may flourish among the libraries and laboratories and lecture halls. And building such communities and making them effective societies is not easy: we must never forget the need to communicate freely with each of the several parts of our academic societies, to avoid alienation, and to promote mutual understanding (in Urwin, ed. 1985:18).

Such a view of the purposes of higher education resonates strongly with views that have been expressed consistently by the Historically White English Universities, as would be apparent from a comparison of Ball's sentiments with those reflected in Chapter Three.

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However laudable such a view may appear, faced with the realities of our inequitous higher education system, the contradictions of such a view of the purpose of higher education are self-evident. The stark deficiencies in our economy brought about amongst other things by prolonged sanctions against the apartheid state, and the day to day difficulties experienced by students from a disadvantaged milieu gaining access to and succeeding in

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higher education, make it questionable whether such a conception of higher education is adequate or feasible for our context.

Plainly, (and appropriately, I would argue) the development project is at the centre of the NCHE proposals - developing the university system and its associated forms of governance to serve the broader society, harnessing higher education to help develop the economy, and reforming it in ways that enhance access, with a concomitant development in the quality of educational provision.

Driven primarily by a concern to facilitate access and enhance success, the student development project at UWC has foundered in some important ways. Resourcing has always been a critical issue. While it has been obvious that the main difficulties experienced by students from a disadvantaged educational milieu related to proficiency in the medium of instruction (English) it has not been possible to launch the University wide-programme of language development necessary to obviate this difficulty.

An allied obstacle has been the absence of a policy on language at the University. An initiative by the ADC to address this obstacle was launched in October 1991 with a view to devising such a policy. A discussion document was prepared under the leadership of Terry Volbrecht (Volbrecht *et al.* 1991) in order to open discussion by the various stakeholders at the University about a suitable policy.

A special day, called Language Day, was set aside by the University for this discussion to take place. The discussion document was accompanied by a number of questions revolving around the issues of medium of instruction, language problems of students, English proficiency tests, First-year English

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Language Development Courses and the proposal for an integrated language model.

As it turned out, although proposals were made to the University executive to implement policy recommendations which emanated from this process, such policy did not materialise. A key obstacle appeared to be the lack of the necessary resources which implementation would require. A further obstacle was the absence of a national language policy.

In the light of developments on the political front, with a transition to a democratic government imminent, the University was reluctant to pre-empt policy which might be developed at a national level as a result of the change in government.

Meanwhile the difficulties which students experienced at UWC continued to escalate. The AD project clearly could not be held captive to the policy impasse. Consequently, many of the efforts of language oriented AD personnel went into Language Across the Curriculum work (see Walker, ed. 1994; Leibowitz and Volbrecht, eds. 1995, for accounts of these initiatives).

Those of us working in broader areas of student development focused on the tutorial as an avenue for development not only of the discipline specific literacy and other academic capacities which students needed to acquire, but also the language proficiency of students.

Admittedly, some of the efforts were *ad hoc* and experimental. But the impetus behind my student development efforts in the EMS Faculty came from what the perceived needs and difficulties were of lecturers and students. While it would have been desirable to effect a Faculty-wide

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English for Educational Development course, this initiative foundered on the sandbank of the policy vacuum (in language) and lack of resources.

Consequently, much of my efforts, as would be apparent from the account of my practice in student development in Chapter Four, went into development of tutorial programmes which addressed the language needs, discipline specific literacy, and general academic skills required through an integrated strategy.

With *post hoc* insight emerging from years of practice, it is possible to deduce that such an approach is far from ideal. I want now, in the light of that experience, to address the key factors which militate against the success of current student development efforts through the avenue of tutorial programmes.

Firstly, the traditional purpose of tutorials has been to provide students with an avenue to develop their conceptual knowledege in the discipline. Tutors are normally graduate students in the specific discipline and at the very least, having been through the arduous process of gaining "epistemological access" (Morrow 1993:3; Fisher 1995:7)) to the discipline, are, as relative "insiders", able to facilitate the access of newcomers to the discipline.

Such should be their task anyway if we take seriously the picture painted by Gerholm (in Becher 1993:26) of the barriers confronted by newcomers to a discipline. Whether they understand it (or are led to understand it) adequately in such terms is another matter.

A number of factors would influence the success of tutorials conceived in this way. Where language poses a critical barrier to understanding, there

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would evidently be difficulties in achieving the desired outcomes of such an approach. Training of tutors also does not occur in the depth which is necessary.

To derive an adequate understanding of the possibilities of tutorials would require a continual process of reflection on practice. Apart from the practical difficulties entailed in this, the high turnover of tutors takes most departments back to first base every year with a largely new cohort of tutors.

This is often exacerbated by the limited pool of tutors with adequate potential as mediators of learning. Proficiency in a *discipline* does not necessarily equate to proficiency in *mediating learning*, as I discovered in one training programme after another.

Another influential factor is the realities confronted on a daily basis by tutors: students often have not read in adequate preparation, and significant numbers have not purchased the course readers and other materials in time. This has a domino effect on the learning process. Tutorials therefore consume inordinate amounts of time revisiting the lecture for those who have had difficulty in grasping the basic conceptual knowledge of the discipline for lack of adequate preparation for the lectures.

Secondly, efforts at facilitating language development through the avenue of tutorials are limited in some critical ways. The most important is that tutors invariably lack the specialised knowledge necessary to be effective mediators in language development. Even a substantial training programme is limited in its capacity to effect the depth of knowledge necessary to undertake this function competently.

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In my experience in the Political Studies Department, where an attempt was made in this regard, tutors baulked at the degree of responsibility that this task (language development) entailed. Notwithstanding the availability of extensive materials (for students as well as tutors) and regular reflective sessions, tutors reverted to what they were familiar with - the disciplinary knowledge.

Thirdly, resourcing plays a crucial role. For such programmes to be offered on the scale which is required, a considerable number of tutors have to be employed and trained, and paid for the work they do. The experience of numerous departments has been a curtailment of programmes because of ruthless slashing of budgets, precipitated by diminishing funding from donors virtually on a yearly basis. A reliance on 'soft' funding for functions which are central to the teaching and learning project at the University places most of these programmes in a highly precarious position. The necessity of sustained funding is a matter of priority.

Available evidence points to inadequate language proficiency constituting the first major barrier to 'epistemological access' (Morrow 1993). In the light of my experiences in facilitating student development, my position currently is that the various functions of student development need to be separated.

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Academic literacy (including general academic skills such as reading, writing and notetaking for academic purposes) and proficiency within the medium of instruction - English, needs to be undertaken by specialised staff along the lines of the English for Educational Development programme (Dyers 1995).

Left to the vagaries of inadequately trained tutors, and competing developmental demands confronted in tutorials, current efforts at integrating

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the various forms of development identified above can only be *ad hoc* and temporary. There is a clear need to arrest the current drift experienced in the role of tutorials.

An institutional aim should be to help restore tutorials to their primary function ie. facilitating access to the discipline. In addition, tutors, with their disciplinary knowledge, are in a far better position to undertake this kind of student development work successfully.

In conjunction with this, the structure of the degree programme should be reviewed to assess whether a foundation year is not the most viable strategy to follow in the light of the critical challenges confronting the University in student development. At the time of writing (May 1997), such efforts are underway.

But, will these attempts at student support and development eradicate the "disadvantage" of black students in the university? In Chapter Three, I explored the genesis of the AD project and its rootedness in "disadvantaged" schooling. What emerges is a need to re-examine how we understand and construct the notion of "disadvantage", for it fundamentally shapes our practice as teachers and AD practitioners in the university context.

The people who are the objects of such labelling ("disadvantaged") do not take kindly to it, no matter how sensitively or well-intended the label may be, as reflected in Ndebele (1995:4) quoted in Chapter Three. How then do we acknowledge the difficulties which black students experience in the university setting in ways which are not offensive, but at the same time not sanitised into political correctness? Ndebele (1995) offers us a possibility through his conception of "disadvantage" which I quoted earlier in Chapter

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Three (pp59-60). It is worth repeating for its pertinence to my line of argument here too:

> Now, it is true that blacks are 'disadvantaged'. But 'disadvantage' in the current South African context implies that there is an accepted, normal, advantaged, standard world outside of which is a minority of marginalised, disadvantaged people: the unfortunate victims of social progress. This concept of disadvantagement typifies the epistemology of the the illusory psychological majority just referred to. Seen in this way, the 'disadvantaged people' become a sociological phenomenon requiring a professional, humanitarian, and curative intervention. The method is to manipulate context by substituting sociology for politics. The notion of 'disadvantage' enables us to avoid such 'embarrassing' expressions as 'black students', 'the oppressed'. That way, the issue is depoliticised through a deft avoidance of race and all it implies in South Africa (1995:4).

The significance of what Ndebele argues cannot be overemphasised. It is quite clear that as teachers and AD practitioners, we operate with a range of assumptions about students, teaching and learning in the university, and what are necessary conditions for student success at university, amongst other things. These can create a set of self-limiting filters which restrict the way in which we view students emanating from a disadvantaged socio-economic and educational milieu.

"Disadvantage" perceived narrowly and apolitically limits what we perceive as the responsibility of the lecturer, the university and AD practitioners in creating an environment for learning which is deeply sensitive to the difficulties which considerable numbers of black students face. When the 'disadvantaged' student is viewed as the Other, it is easy to lay blame for his/her lack of success at their own door, and not to look critically at the barriers to success in University support structures, curriculum, and staff capacities, amongst others.

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Viewed from this perspective, overcoming the phenomenon of "disadvantage" demands an ongoing and critical appraisal of all the functions and activities at the University - not only those which relate to student development. In addition, such an appraisal would not yield much fruit if it should occur as an event: it needs to occur in an ongoing process of appraisal, development, and reappraisal.

The process would need to make the focus of its attention the question of how adequately the curriculum, student development efforts, and development of staff capacities are geared towards helping students overcome 'disadvantage'. It would look critically in particular at what assumptions are made by the department and by individual lecturers about the incoming student, the educational process the student undergoes, and what the profile of the outgoing graduate is. It is in this way that we would begin to cultivate a climate in which the needs and aspirations of 'disadvantaged' students are taken seriously.

5.2) Curriculum Development and the Role of Agency

Higher education does not respond favourably to change. The general condition which characterises it has been captured pithily by Farmer: "Inertia reigns, buttressing tradition and the status quo" (1990:8).

However, this view may be somewhat unkind. Being complex organisations, with decision-making power devolved in even more complex ways throughout the institution, any attempt at change necessarily has to go through a plethora of committees and proceses of scutiny before it may hold sway.

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Even then, experience has demonstrated frequently that where forces are railed against particular policies or programmes, cooperation cannot be coerced. To do so excites unnecessary tension and conflict. And herein lies a major contradiction: The situation we confront in South African education demands rapid and substantial change; but the reality of educational change is that it is arduous and slow.

Faced with such countervailing forces then, how does one facilitate change? The role of the change agent has been identified as crucial in a number of studies. Fullan (1991:56) for instance, in referring to the role of external facilitators, draws attention to studies which highlight the positive role which change agents can play in making people aware of new practices. Moreover, they are able to place options (for practice) before people and facilitate informed choices.

They are also able to arrange funding, assist in developing plans for implementation, conduct training, and provide ongoing support. This characterisation aptly captures my role in the Political Studies Department, which I described in Chapter Four.

Fullan (1991:56) also indicates that external facilitators are likely to be most influential in the early stages of change when they work with local leaders. In the Political Studies experience, the entire curriculum development enterprise turned on the support and active encouragement of the head of department, initially in gaining me access, and subsequently in endorsing and encouraging the shifts in emphases.

My experience was similar in a curriculum review process in the Management Department as well. In other departments, where support was

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not as enthusiastic or committed, development initiatives tended to founder or lose momentum. In the absence of institutional policy which rendered regular curriculum review and reform mandatory, a supportive departmental ethos was crucial for the success of my endeavours.

Another dimension to the value of an outside facilitator is that of building shared meaning in working towards and sustaining curriculum change. In this regard, Rudduck (1991: 31) suggests that if an initiative for change comes from outside, then local meaning needs to be generated (in this case within the department). She goes on to propose that:

> There must be opportunities for collaborative analysis of the need for change, of the strategies by which change is to be achieved, and of the criteria for judging what progress towards change teachers and their pupils are making. Teachers must feel as individuals and as members of a working group that they own and are in control of the problem of change (1991:31).

While Rudduck is referring to the school context, the problems and challenges of developing shared meaning in the university departmental context are no less acute.

The role of change agent is by no means simple. My own position was made difficult by the fact that the conceptualisation of the Infusion model of AD had some inherent contradictions. While the idea of "infusion" suggested that faculties, departments and individuals would take the initiative in curriculum change, the ADC maintained the expertise, sought most of the resources, and initiated a substantial proportion of AD projects. This was not initially apparent but became increasingly so as the AD programme became established and a breadth of practice developed.

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As outsiders, AD practitioners had a constant struggle with ownership of initiatives behind which their energy lay. While it was possible to allay this problem somewhat through collaborative initiatives between AD practitioners and departmental staff, tension sometimes reared its head. Under pressure to justify their presence in departments, AD practitioners found it increasingly difficult to maintain such engagements.

Departmental members on the other hand, faced with mounting pressures to increase research output, and in the absence of an institutional climate which acknowledged, supported and rewarded such initiatives, also found sustaining such initiatives difficult.

A less related but significant problem was that of the perceived role of AD Coordinators. While the Infusion model made provision for such personnel to act in a supportive, consultant capacity, and to primarily maintain a liaison role between the faculty AD committee and the ADC, in practice they were invariably drawn into a range of roles beyond the initial brief.

In my case, the position was quite invidious. While the impetus for AD projects sometimes came from the Faculty and departments and at other times from the FADC, I often found myself being pushed (albeit willingly) into assuming many of the responsibilities which would ordinarily have been that of the FADC Chairperson or the whole FADC. There were adequate reasons for this.

I have already mentioned the issue of the inadequate conceptualisation of the different roles of the FADC Chairperson and the AD Coordinator. Another had to do with the high turnover in FADC chairpersons and

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departmental AD representatives, making it difficult for most FADC members to maintain a sense of the larger picture in AD.

Furthermore, the vision for AD at the University, while assisted and contributed to by FADC chairpersons in some ways, was largely driven by the ADC. My location in the ADC and access to the discourses which undergirded the vision made it easier for me to provide the strategic impetus for the vision at the Faculty level.

On the other hand, my location within the ADC made it somewhat difficult to play a properly coordinative role. What I was in effect constantly being cajoled, coerced, or persuaded to do was assume the role of change agent. Some of the main reasons for this were that of my perceived expertise and the ability to translate problems and challenges into systematic projects. While I was grateful for the acknowledgement, I became dubious about the honour as pressures and demands on me began to mount.

When I examine the roles I played against a matrix of possibilities, I find that I was doing much more than I initially bargained for. Farmer (1990) provides a useful set of definitions of some of the key roles which a change agent may be called upon to play. I present them here in summary form to examine against my own practice:

catalyst

- helping others understand the need for change

- winning support for an innovation

- finding the opportune moment to introduce change

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solution giver

- elaborating a vision of the possible needs

- devising strategies for implementing change

- adapting strategies to specific contexts

process helper

- assisting others in conceptualising and devising a strategy for successful innovation

- introducing specific techniques for setting objectives, diagnosing problems, identifying possible solutions, and tailoring them to the particular culture

resource linker

- bringing people, ideas, and finances together

- using communication and relationship-building skills to secure resources confidence builder

- helping overcome fear and anxiety at the prospect of change

- nourishing the capacity for self-renewal

(Farmer 1990: 8-9).

Measured against these indicators, and those perceived for the FADCs, my practice invariably incorporated all of these roles at different times. Faced with a context which had not demonstrated much propensity towards change, and with a myriad of problems which related to the adequacy of the curriculum, and exacerbated by the condition of near inertia which characterised it, the role of *catalyst* was crucial.

As I have indicated above, it was often necessary to be the main initiator of change at the departmental level, for the impetus from within departments

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did not match the gravity of the problems confronted in the curriculum, nor did it show sufficient awareness of the possibilities for change.

My role as *solution giver* was invoked by my long experience in working with "disadvantaged" students, aided by my own experiences as a student in a "disadvantaged" milieu. By dint of circumstance, and commitment to being a resource to the Faculty (in the consultant sense), my own expertise developed as I responded to requests to facilitate reviews, assist in designing training programmes, help design evaluation instruments, conceptualise tutorial programmes, and the like.

In addition, my involvement in the education policy making process at a grassroots level allowed me to maintain a sense of the larger picture of the challenges, limits and possibilities for change in the higher education sector. It was also instructive in allowing me to take a larger view of the complex of issues which impacted on the AD enterprise.

As *process helper*, I was in a position to undertake research and give sustained thought to the problems confronted by departments in ways which, with the relentless pressures brought about by the teaching and learning development project, departments were not always in a position to do themselves. I was also able, as an outsider, to apply the subtle pressure that is possible through that role to help galvanise departmental members into action, deliver on undertakings, and keep projects on course.

The role of *resource linker* was a crucial one. Change costs money. While AD in its initial stages attracted preferential funding by donor agencies, it became more and more constrained as needs burgeoned and a small pool

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of available money was stretched across increasing numbers of institutions which initiated AD programmes themselves.

Nonetheless, the ADC had established links with donor agencies and pursued a vigorous fundraising campaign based on the urgency of the AD project at UWC. Consequently, the ADC was an important conduit for resources. The challenge was to generate feasible, cost-effective and sustainable projects and to provide adequate resourcing for them. The inability of the University as a result of its own financial constraints, to put more money into the AD progamme, had a deleterious effect on the AD project eventually.

Finally, with regard to the role of the change agent, in a climate of heightened competition for resources, and departments and individuals feeling increasingly beleaguered under the pressures to improve research output as well as teaching quality, attempts at introducing change may be fear and anxiety inducing.

The role of *confidence builder* was therefore crucial in my own practice in allaying these through offering practical advice, facilitating complex processes aimed at getting a purchase on the problems confronted by departments, and seeking the necessary resources, amongst others.

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5.3) Curriculum Development and the Issue of Quality

I want to shift now to a deeper examination of some of the obstacles and possibilities in curriculum change. Plainly where the impetus is required to be self generating (from within departments) either through perceived problems which need tackling or through a commitment to ongoing renewal and reform, efforts are likely to be fragmented and uneven. Equally plain, in

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the light of the history of UWC and the higher education system in general, is the need for systematic and institution wide reform of curricula. How might this be achieved?

As I indicated earlier, in the past two years, the higher education system in South Africa has come under considerable scrutiny as a result of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE).

What the report of the NCHE acknowledges is that in an age where burgeoning demands are made on the coffers of the state from competing and compelling interests, the pressure on universities the world over is to provide access to more students without costing taxpayers more.

In tandem with these expectations, is a call for greater accountability, more *effective* administration, and more relevant educational provision as competing stakeholders try to make their stamp on the sector.

Subject to these pressures - especially expansion of the system against a backdrop of a precipitous decline in resources - questions have inevitably arisen about the quality of educational provision at the institutions.

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In the new higher education policy climate, considerably more pressure can be expected to be brought to bear on universities to demonstrate that effective use is being made of taxpayer's money, and that the interests of the broader community, and the economy are being served equitably. The NCHE report (1996) was unequivocal on these matters. More recently, the Draft White Paper on Higher Education (1997) has spelled out what the practical implications of new policy are likely to be.

Consequently, the spectre of quality assessment and demands for quality

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improvement looms large in the not too distant future. The curriculum, constituting the philosophical, pedagogical, organisational and evaluative bases of the educational project in higher education, will attract a proportionately large focus of quality appraisal and improvement efforts.

Undoubtedly, it is in the national interest that the higher education system delivers on its purposes and functions. It is also in the interests of higher education institutions that they be able to demonstrate through the soundness of their curricula that they deliver education programmes of quality.

Nevertheless, while all this sounds fine in principle, the concept of quality demands deeper scrutiny, for it is ultimately a controversial one, and in our context fraught with political connotations. In the light of uneven and discriminatory resourcing of local institutions throughout the apartheid years, and the consequent disparateness in the quality of educational provision at local institutions, there is no doubt that the concept will be highly contested.

An illustration of the complexity in explaining quality is suggested by Ball in (in Urwin 1985:100). Even where sustained attempts have been made to define quality assessment and improvement there is no agreed definition. Perhaps the most coherent one is that proposed by Ball in terms of *fitness of purpose*.

At the centre of his proposal is that unless we are prepared to define and redefine the purposes of our courses, our research, our institutions, our phases and systems of education, we shall fail to find any secure basis for evaluating them. Self-evidently, these suggest the need for regular and programmatic review and reform of the curriculum. But he is suggesting

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more: that the curriculum should be reconcilable with the objectives and purposes of the institution.

Barnett (1992:51) amplifies this view. In doing so he proposes a developmental approach to quality which he elaborates in the following way:

> [It] is that of internal members of an institution (staff and students) reviewing what they are about for themselves. This is not to deny that, within those reviews, those people will often want to take into account external interests, such as those of employers or professional bodies. And they may well wish to engage the services of others outside their institution to assist them in that assessment. But those considerations are embraced and the external advisors are brought in as part of an overriding concern of the key actors themselves to improve the quality of their own activities. It is, in this sense, an internalist approach to quality in higher education.

The proposition I want to make then is that at the centre of the quality improvement enterprise, in so far as it relates to the educational project at university, is review of curricula. While the account of curriculum development efforts I gave in chapter four was from an AD perspective, with the impetus coming from the efforts of myself as AD practitioner and from the department itself, I think it is crucial to examine where the impetus is likely to come from in the future.

In pursuit of this objective, I shall angle my discussion to consider the curriculum development process from a perspective somewhat more detached from my own curriculum development practice. In doing this, I shall at once offer a purchase on some of the flaws in the current AD enterprise at UWC as well as give some indication of where future efforts may go in institutionalising curiculum development at UWC.

As a way in I want to draw attention to some proposals made in 1993 by UWC's Academic Planning Unit (APU) for a process of Academic Review

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(AR), which in essence translates into "Quality Audit". The APU amplified its role in AR specifically relating to curriculum in the following ways:

> 1) The review procedure [would involve] first, an understanding of the objectives and purpose of educational programmes ... and second, an assessment of the effectiveness with which the department performs its chosen role, and how it evaluates its own performance.
>
> 2) A review procedure sensitive to a notion of 'quality as value added' would concentrate on the progression of students and staff. In doing so, it could specify concrete steps necessary for improvement in the educational process and output of staff and students.
>
> 3) Academic review would facilitate staff development and promote a self-critical consciousness within departments (Barsby & Kraak 1993:4)

Two key foci emerge from these proposals - one is that the AR process involves assessment; the other is that it involves *development*. As far as the development role it envisages is concerned, it is indistinguishable from that of academic development, for implicit in AD efforts is a central concern to improve the quality of educational programmes.

It would seem then that both agencies - the APU as well as the ADC - have a common purpose in development as well as improvement in quality. Consequently, this is an area in which the relationship between AD and AR needs to be clarified, and I hope to do so here.

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If the impetus for curriculum development has to come primarily from the AR process, in spite of the monitoring and support mechanisms built into it, and the fact that the review is intended to recur every 3-5 years (Barsby and Kraak 1993), two factors would militate against its development role.

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The first is that because the AR process is primarily management driven, it would still largely be perceived as *inspection*, (regardless of the intentions underpinning it). Since image, reputation, and resources, amongst other things, are at stake, departments will naturally go on the defensive, and will be inclined to project the most positive impression possible.

In addition, defences coming from departments will in all likelihood attribute blame for any inadequacies in the curriculum to institutional conditions, or lack of resources, rather than to inertia in curriculum development. This might lead to the submergence of critical issues needing attention, thereby preventing meaningful development.

The second is that the nature of the curriculum development process is such that it needs frequent, ongoing attention to the details of design, philosophical underpinnings, pedagogical underpinnings, etc. in a dialectic minimally between lecturers, students, peers and AD practitioners, as a precursor to efforts in quality improvement.

Consideration therefore needs to be given to the potential ways in which the developmental thrust that the proposed 3-5 year reviews are likely to have may be harnessed and guided. Furthermore, curriculum development at a departmental level responds to shifting objectives arising from concerns with a changing student profile, staff development needs, pressures to research and publish, resourcing, and student development challenges, to name a few.

As experiences in AD suggest, these shifts occur frequently from year to year, if not within a year - suggesting again the need for a sustained and continuous curriculum development process.

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A proposition I want to make in the light of this then, arises from the work of Williams: that quality improvement comes not from *inspection* (assessment) but from *design* (Williams, G. 1993:231). Drawing on Deming, one of the most influential quality management gurus, he elaborates this argument in the following way:

> ...that inspection is essentially static: it can help to find faults and can identify areas for improvement, but it does not itself bring about improvement as part of a continuous process. For that to happen the individuals involved in a process need to be constantly seeking ways to improve it, they should have an open channel of communication to managers who are able to bring about the change, and they should be suitably recognised if they do so.

In my view, this captures the essence of the dilemma we confront in defining the different roles of AR and AD in curriculum development, to which I shall return later.

My next proposition also arises from the work of Williams: if our intention to institute educational programmes of quality are to take root and grow, then we should foster sustained and continuous curriculum development at the departmental level, for it is here that the capacities for reflection, problem-solving, and improvement lie. Williams is persuasive on this count too:

> Continuous improvement has always been at the heart of the research function of universities and the main justification of frequently made claims about the symbiotic relationship between research and teaching is that the problem solving epistemologies and methodologies of research, as well as its findings, are the engine which drives improvement in teaching (Williams, G. 1993:231).

The efforts of AD practitioners in curriculum development at UWC have begun from the premise that departments should be "centres of change" (Walker and Badsha 1993: 8-9). What this means in effect is that all the key indicators of quality in the curriculum - which I shall return to later - need to

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be constantly evaluated by the department itself with a view to improving quality.

My experience, and that of other AD practitioners, has been that where the departmental ethos is such that curriculum development is not continuously on the department's agenda, but is pursued rather by a few committed individuals, any innovation taking place is fragmentary, sparse and difficult to sustain - permitting only tinkering with the curriculum, rather than ongoing reflection upon its effectiveness, or sustainable reform.

Worse still, if there are major flaws in a curriculum, under such conditions, detection always comes too late, when the flaws have reached crisis proportions.

Moreover, such efforts consume huge amounts of AD practitioners' and individual lecturers' energies with little to show for it in tangible improvement. The point I am emphasising is that while there is critical value in outside or institutional pressure for curriculum appraisal and reform, and a valuable role for agents of curriculum change as I have elaborated upon earlier in this chapter, the impetus for curriculum development and improvement in quality must ultimately come from the department itself, for meaningful and continuous quality improvement. I have sought to illuminate this in the case of the Department of Political Studies in the previous chapter.

In the light of this, I would suggest that the approach used in the ADP to drive curricular improvement from the ADC was severely flawed. Any new attempts at fostering curriculum development must make departments the centre of curriculum appraisal, reform and development. The role of AD agents would therefore need to be rethought.

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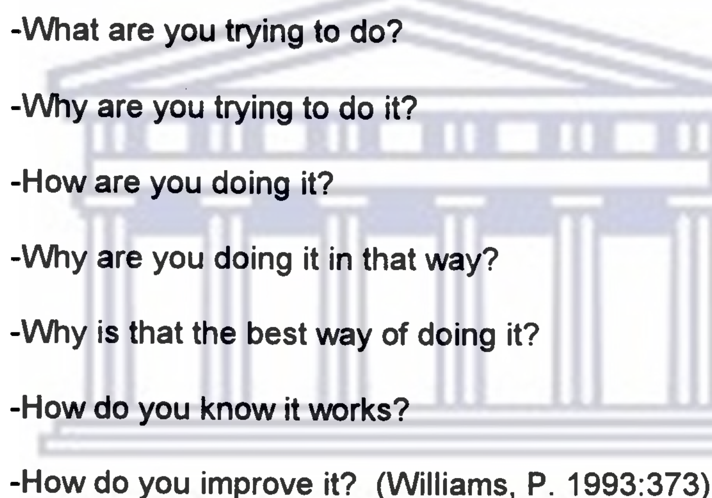
I want to turn now to a consideration of the role that an AD practitioner might play in curriculum development at a departmental level in the light of these propositions. But more importantly, what indicators may a department bent on taking the initiative in curriculum review and development consider for self-evaluation?

5.4) Departmental Self-review

The Division of Quality Audit of the HE Quality Council in the United Kingdom poses seven basic questions when it conducts a quality audit:



-What are you trying to do?

-Why are you trying to do it?

-How are you doing it?

-Why are you doing it in that way?

-Why is that the best way of doing it?

-How do you know it works?

-How do you improve it? (Williams, P. 1993:373)

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This simple yet comprehensive set of questions may be applied to any curriculum at a course or programme level and if adequate responses are articulated in respect of each, a department would in all probability derive a very good idea of the quality of its educational programme, without necessarily needing an outsider to articulate it.

In curriculum reviews which I facilitated, I attempted with each successive experience to develop and refine a review framework. A starting point in the review process in each case was to develop a profile of the curriculum at a

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course as well as a programme level focusing on the following key indicators of quality in the curriculum:

-programme aims (from first year to graduate levels)

-educational objectives (at a course as well as programme level

-profile of incoming students

-organisation of content

-teaching methods

procedures

-materials to support student learning

-evaluation methods

-initiatives in student development

-initiatives in staff development

-profile of the outgoing graduate

These were underscored by some broader questions relating to the curriculum at a programme level:

-is there lateral coherence (from one course to another?)

-is there vertical coherence (from the beginning of a course to the end?)

-are the department's personnel resources being utilised in the most cost-effective way, and in ways which maximize the benefit to students?

-what institutional and departmental barriers are there to development?

-how does the changing student profile influence educational

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provision (course design, teaching methods and support mechanisms) in the department?

Once the profile had been developed, I used the kinds of interrogative categories identified by Williams, P. above to help the department appraise the curriculum. Thereafter we generated and prioritised critical questions which the Department felt it needed to explore for curricular change and quality improvement within the parameters of what appeared immediately relevant, achievable, and sustainable within the constraints of available resources.

The role could be played by any facilitator with a grasp of these issues. Ultimately, it is important for the department to get a purchase on the problems and possibilities for curriculum renewal. No amount of agency expertise is likely to help in the absence of such an orientation from within the department.

To conclude, I think that the key characteristics of quality identified by Geddes gives us an idea of what we may aspire towards in our curriculum development and quality improvement efforts:

-initiative, creativity and innovation, balanced by reflection, not caution

-efficient, effective and economic use of academic, support and physical resources

access to higher education

-putting students first (1993:349).

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In addition, these efforts are likely to be assisted, encouraged, and where necessary, coerced by an institutional and national policy environment which makes accountability and quality its central planks. These would necessarily combine self-reviews and academic reviews. The Draft White Paper on Higher Education (1997) provide some clear signposts about what would be entailed practically.

In the kind of process I envisage, the assumptions undergirding it may be summed up as follows: Review fosters reflection. Reflection fosters the imagining of new possibilities. And newly imagined possibilities provide the catalysis for curriculum change.

5.5) Staff Development

As I have stated above, the way in which the AD enterprise was conceived envisaged incorporating everyone at the university in a programme of curriculum appraisal and reform, and other development initiatives. In the section above, I have set aside the curriculum appraisal and development project as a separate process. The main reason has been to draw attention to its programmatic form, issues of design and coherence, and a set of interconnecting factors which influence its success and quality.

However, curriculum conceived broadly also includes teaching practice and its effects. This points to a symbiotic relationship between curriculum development and staff development. Consequently, an important dimension of the AD enterprise has been teaching innovation to enhance the educational experiences of students.

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While the development of teaching is an obvious necessity, it competes with the needs to overhaul curricula, to institute organisational development at a departmental level, to develop management capacity, to increase capacity in research, to provide student support, and to attend to the problems which students experience in the medium of instruction, and other concerns related to academic literacy which I indexed earlier.

In spite of all these issues, the need to foster staff development on an ongoing basis remains critical. In my practice, my approach to staff development was necessarily multifaceted. My initial approach was to launch a faculty-wide training initiative. The first of these had a good turnout. By the second such initiative, it became apparent that such an approach was of dubious value.

The main reason for this was that development of the kind which impacts on the quality of educational provision does not occur in single event, nor a few training exercises. In this context, the notion of *training* is a problematic one, for it suggests an instrumentalist view of staff development.

While short courses and faculty wide training programmes may have some value in sparking off development, in drawing attention to the possibilities for development, or spreading information, ultimate and enduring development of staff requires a much deeper commitment of time and energy.

Development of this nature is advanced through a process of critical inquiry and a problem solving approach along the lines of the Political Studies experience. Ashcroft (1995) contends that this (critical inquiry and problem-solving approach) in turn depends upon the development of key qualities such as openmindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness (1995:4).

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She elaborates upon these qualities in the following way:

> Openmindedness refers to the ability to seek out and evaluate alternative viewpoints. This is seen as deliberate, and sometimes systematic inquiry into the behaviour and feelings of others which will yield data for the lecturer to assess...Responsibility involves the willingness to look at both the immediate and the long term consequences of action for all concerned. This implies that you wish to move beyond a consideration of 'what works' in order to ask essentially moral questions of worthwhileness... Wholeheartedness requires that you take openmindedness and responsibility as your aspiration for your 'life position'. This means that you are willing to eschew instrumental considerations of personal advantage; that you are willing to take the risks entailed in examining your practice in the light of your values and in examining what those values themselves imply... (1995:5).

The intention of the Infusion model of AD to foster sustained and continuous curriculum development at the departmental level was based on the assumption, as I have pointed out earlier, that it is here that the capacities for reflection, problem-solving and improvement are concentrated.

In addition, this is where students and the experiences they bring with them, lecturers and how they conceive the teaching enterprise, the ideology and design of curriculum, and the politics of resource distribution, amongst others, coalesce in the learning experience of students.

The need for a holistic approach therefore made the logic of fostering AD at the departmental level in the context of UWC self-evident. While these are *necessary* conditions, they are not *sufficient* ones if we take seriously the qualities which Ashcroft identifies above as necessary for the staff development project to succeed.

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In practice what the departmentally based approach entailed was a focus on the whole curriculum either at a course or programme level to engage department members in critical reflection on issues which impinged on the success of the curriculum. Evidence which was sought and which informed reflection consisted of evaluations by students; ethnographic data of lectures; evaluation of teaching by AD practitioners; course outlines, statements of aims and assumptions about teaching and learning; and teaching and learning materials.

These were used to develop a composite picture of the practice flowing from the curriculum and aimed at a shared understanding by all players. Once the picture was arrived at, the tensions, gaps and inconsistencies would be identified and developmental goals generated together with timeframes for implementing changes. Thereafter further retreats would be held to assess progress.

While this marked progress in most instances, my experience in some departments upon revisiting the curriculum development project some while after the initial plan of action was drawn up, left me in doubt about whether significant progress was made ultimately. My conjecture about the reasons for the momentum petering out points to the absence of the qualities identified above, coupled with general conditions of adversity under which most departments operated.

A significant development in the ADC since 1995 has been a shift away from the departmentally based model of AD. Some key factors have influenced this shift. The first is the costliness of the departmentally based model. Although UWC injects a significant amount of money into the AD project from

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its own coffers, the project has relied largely on `soft' money for its sustainability.

As 'soft' funding has steadily eroded over the past few years, consideration of a university-wide approach which was more economical became necessary. As would be obvious, the likely sacrifice in such an approach would be the intensive forms of engagement which characterised AD efforts in the first few years.

Flowing from this, a programme of short courses aimed at improving teaching and learning was piloted in 1995. In addition, a certificate and masters course in university teaching were initiated but petered out for lack of support.

Against this backcloth, departmentally based development and the infrastructure supporting it has not worked as well as was initially expected. A critical problem in this regard has been the quite uneven response of departments across the university.

While some have engaged in the development project with zeal, many have been diffident, others resistant or hostile. Negotiation for entry and space by ADC personnel in departments to advance AD goals consumes vast amounts of time and energy. Projects are sometimes not seen through. These and other factors relating in particular to internal institutional politics have made a negative impact.

Lecturers themselves, generally untrained in university teaching, and under pressure to teach larger numbers in the face of declining resources while expected to be more productive in research in their disciplines, lack the space and sometimes the inclination to consider alternatives. The more

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likely predisposition is towards seeking labour-saving approaches rather than ones which demand more effort and time.

Therefore, occasions for students to reflect on their learning or critically comment on teaching are sacrificed in favour of covering the course content and preparing students for examinations. The nett result is that the cycle of learning uncritical modes of learning begun at schools, is perpetuated at university. Changes in this state of affairs plainly needs to take place; but the prognosis is that these will be slow and longterm rather than immediate.

5.6) Towards a Reflective Practitioner Model of Staff Development

In spite of the difficulties experienced, my attempts and those of colleagues in the ADC have focused on fostering discussion amongst lecturers which seeks to understand the relationship between curriculum and the context of students lives and the wider society. My experience of curriculum development practice has reaffirmed the value of such discussion.

It is particularly important when the taken for granted assumptions of colleagues within a department are brought to the surface and it becomes apparent that quite disparate understandings of the aims, purposes and practice in different courses in a degree programme are held by individuals.

In such instances, articulation and coherence between first, second and third year courses breaks down, to the detriment of students. A more recent development, with the advent of the programme of short courses referred to earlier, is that opportunities are now being provided for staff from different disciplines to engage in dialogue over periods averaging a week.

Undoubtedly, there is a need to encourage lecturers to develop strategies for researching their own and each others' practices: this approach has met

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with a fair degree of success at UWC. One of the outcomes of departmentally based AD, as pointed out earlier has been a proliferation of collaborative initiatives between ADC and departmentally based personnel, and some individually initiated practitioner research with support from the ADC.

However, the conditions necessary for its sustainment are clearly not there. In a replication at UWC of a study conducted by Rowland at Sheffield (Rowland 1996) for instance, it emerged that a popular perception amongst academics at UWC is that in spite of the rhetoric of the university, teaching is actually valued less than research.

The perception is reinforced by the absence of the kind of incentives, rewards and opportunities available in recognition and support of research development at the university. The pressure to produce accredited publications is constant and tangible. This poses an obvious and serious obstacle to the success of the AD project. Plainly, if efforts at improving teaching go unacknowledged or unrewarded, there is little likelihood that efforts at cultivating practitioner research will entice more than the most dedicated lecturers.

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A positive development recently has been the initiation of a policy on teaching for UWC. The policy includes proposals which address the obstacles referred to above, and also incorporate a clear vision on staff development. The latter of these has the potential to impact positively on practitioner research. The idea of using portfolios to evaluate staff is gaining in popularity as it becomes clear that the traditional focus on research productivity as the main criterion causes a skewedness in efforts.

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The argument may convincingly be made that practitioner research is of equal value to other forms of research. However, some conservative views about what counts as research, and the culture of valuing discipline-based research above that of practitioner research would need to be dispelled first.

The idea of reflection presupposes protected space, and other conditions which facilitate reflection. While attempts to cultivate reflective practice at the departmental level have met with limited success, they have not effected change across the University to the extent that is necessary. Clearly the conclusion can be drawn that the teaching conditions confronted by most lecturers at UWC, coupled with the day to day stresses of working at an institution under pressure, militate against reflective practice.

The difficulty of implementing a reflective practitioner approach at UWC lie, in my view, in conditions which have been created historically and it is these which have to be addressed in order to create an environment in which reflective practice can flourish.

To effect an enduring and ongoing development of teaching along the lines I have argued, I believe that the reflective practitioner approach is the only feasible approach. What form would such an approach take? While I have identified some of the necessary conditions above in the light of Ashcroft's proposals, I wish to amplify the approach along more detailed lines.

The space we currently occupy in our intellectual endeavours has seen an abandonement of the pursuit of "ultimate foundations of knowledge" (Barnett 1992:27). How we are able to make sense of an increasingly complex and elusive world has been described lucidly by Barnett:

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> [From] modern learning theory (both in higher education and in professional settings) comes a single powerful unifying idea. In everyday language, it is that of critical reflection or, in more technical jargon, reflexivity. If there is no end point in the search for knowledge and sound practice, if even the criteria by which we think and act are impossible ultimately to establish, then one way out of the cul-de-sac lies in rigorously evaluating and, if necessary, reconstituting our own thoughts and actions. We claim to be rational, and our claims to know are always open to criticism, so - even if no secure redoubt is available - we have to be prepared to entertain criticism of our own claims to know. There is no end point in thought and action, only conversation (in which even the language and concepts of the participants may be different). And true conversation means taking seriously the critical viewpoints of others (Rorty 1989). That means being prepared to be self- aware and self-evaluative. We all have to become 'reflective practitioners' (1992:27).

In Chapter Two I indicated how the idea of reflexivity may be invoked in order to position oneself in the research enterprise to render it valid, illuminative and self critical. The necessity for such an orientation is no less crucial in the teaching enterprise. The object is to break out of limiting self-embodiments. Greene (1995) gives a glimpse of what this might entail by posing some pertinent questions:

> How do I break out of the circles I am likely to create? What do I do about what Gadamer calls my "prejudgements"? (1976:9). It is with that sort of unease and in the midst of interrogation that I find my freedom, it seems to me, because the initiatives I find myself required to take open spaces in which I must make choices and then act upon the choices I make. I recall Martin Buber speaking about teaching and about the importance of "keeping the pain awake" (1957:116); and I suggest that the pain he had in mind must be lived through by the teacher as well as the student, even as the life stories of both must be kept alive.

It is through such an orientation that we keep alive the quest to be better practitioners and secure qualitative improvement in educational provision.

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National higher education policy, coupled with adequate institutional policy, an adequate provision of resources, and committed leadership, will provide the environment and impetus in which a reflective practitioner approach can flourish.

5.7) Issues of Policy

By far the most important factor impacting on the development project at South African universities is the absence of coherent higher education policy at a national level. In the preceding discussion, the issue of (lack of) policy has come up repeatedly pertaining to the institution, as well as the entire higher education system.

In purely governance terms, the higher education system is under-regulated and badly managed - another legacy of the apartheid years. Crucially, there are no mechanisms to ensure public accountability. There is no audit of the quality of educational output, nor is there any systematic appraisal of teaching and research as is the case in the UK.

Even though I would accept that the approaches in this regard in the UK and elsewhere are not unproblematic, an adequate policy framework and instruments aimed at quality improvement do provide an environment in which the development of teaching is taken seriously.

Quite apart from the potential of national policy and quality assessment procedures making the system more accountable, an access policy which is coherent and strategic at a national level, needs to address the resource needs of HBUs which are currently bearing the brunt of the access challenge under nearly impossible conditions.

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While the draft proposals by the National Commission on Higher Education addressed these concerns in promising ways (NCHE 1996), the more recent policy proposals in the Draft White Paper on Higher Education (1997) set several preconditions (an institutional audit, a strategic plan, an academic development plan, a capital management plan, a performance improvement plan and an equity plan) before resources may become available. In addition, the government's macro economic policy suggests that less money will be available for development purposes. The prognosis for significant redress funds is therefore not good.

At an institutional level, there are implications for clarifying the mission and role of the university to situate it in the new socio-political and economic order. Practical developments in this regard are currently under way and will result in a clearer identity for the university. What is also encouraging are attempts to fill the policy vacuum, especially in the area of staff development.

Scott (1994) sums up the challenges confronting higher education in the immediate future:

> [I]f significant progress is to be made towards the goals of redress and equity in the medium term, the HE sector itself must be prepared to undertake rigorous review and appropriate development of all key aspects of its educational processes. This work should involve systematic identification of obstacles to equity and quality assurance, the development of strategies to address key problem areas, and the mobilisation of the human and material resources required for the necessary development. While the experience and cooperation of individual institutions will be vital in undertaking and implementing this development, the work needs to be directed and coordinated nationally, within an appropriate policy framework, as a central element of the Reconstruction and Development Programme in HE (1994:6).

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Imminent higher education policy is likely to give us the long awaited guidelines for reform of the higher education system. The implications for student development, curriculum reform, staff development and resource allocation for the future are as immense as they are tantalising.

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CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

I set out in this thesis project to examine AD as a project of possibility at UWC, mirrored against its basic premises and the consequences flowing from implementation of the AD programme. In elaboration of an account of my AD practice in the EMS Faculty, I provided a perspective on how educational change occurs in the University setting.

My object was not only to account for some of the difficulties in implementing the AD programme, but also to try to separate those issues which have to do with the conceptualisation of the programme, from those which relate to institutional conditions, and from policy factors which are beyond the ambit of the AD programme. Ultimately, I sought to develop my account along an avenue which would lead me to answer the question: What can be learned about educational change through this experience of facilitating AD?

I have argued that in order for practice to be purposive, meaningful, and improvement-orientated, and to understand the realm of possibilities open for an improved practice of AD as well as teaching and learning in the university context, it is essential that the practitioner develop a self-critical orientation and examine closely the assumptions, values, and precepts which underlie his/her practice.

This task is ordinarily a difficult one, demanding a high degree of self-awareness, openness, and commitment. It is rendered even more difficult when it is conducted against a socio-political and economic background such as the one we have experienced in South Africa.

I have asserted in the light of this, that the exercise is inevitably bound up with issues of identity - in the South African experience - racialised

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identity, which we have by and large steered away from engaging with candidly (Soudien 1996).

In trying to provide a deeper perspective on the moulding influence that our racialised identities have had on us in the higher education enterprise, I tried to accomplish three objectives. The first was to illuminate the racial bases of university education in South Africa through a candid appraisal of the discourses which have shaped its genesis and development in the past few decades.

Secondly, I have provided an account of the impact of racially based education on black schooling, and subsequently on university education for blacks. I have tried to illuminate how deliberate policies by the apartheid government over several generations served to restrain the ordinary development of blacks.

I have linked this directly to the genesis of academic development programmes at universities, arguing that they were conceived in an attempt to redress the "disadvantage" of students emanating from such a socio-political milieu.

Thirdly, I have tried to show how self-limiting mindsets emerging from a lack of resolution of our racialised past may continue to impede our progress towards an equitable situation. A patent danger in the ostensible era of political correctness in which we find ourselves, is that in pursuit of a language and practice which is politically neutral, we may submerge the lived realities of those oppressed under apartheid government.

Subjected to an ahistorical and apolitical interpretation, the way in which "disadvantage" is construed becomes divorced from the context within

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which it originated and developed, and from the intents and purposes which underpinned it. The pursuit of the goals of redress and equity within such a scenario is therefore inevitably quite conservative, characterised by lukewarmth if not lip-service; mere tinkering rather than transformation. As a consequence, existing inequities continue.

In the representational account of my AD practice, I attempted to show the evolutionary nature of its development, and some of the forces which shaped it. I drew attention to the almost perpetual state of beleaguerment that departments and individual lecturers confront. This is characterised by burgeoning numbers of students from a "disadvantaged" educational milieu, low staff to student ratios, large classes, and inadequate facilities and material resources, amongst others - constituting what may be called general conditions of adversity.

The conditions impact negatively on the quality of educational provision in some crucial ways. It would be logical to assume that students from a disadvantaged educational milieu require considerably more support than students who have had privileged schooling.

In my experience in the EMS Faculty, attempts to broaden the range of support provided for students were constrained primarily by the absence of adequate resourcing. What was perceived as a major need was to provide students with opportunities for language, academic and numeracy skills development.

In the absence of the necessary resources to implement the required programme of language development, our efforts in the Faculty went into reconceptualising tutorial programmes to effect language, academic skills and disciplinary skills development. I have argued that this experience

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threw into relief the importance of separating language development from that of access to a disciplinary culture.

My assertion in this regard is that tutorials should be restored to their traditional function of facilitating student access to the disciplinary culture. Tutors would have a limited and more manageable brief in this scenario. English proficiency and academic literacy development would be undertaken by specialists in the field.

In the area of curriculum development, I have sought to demonstrate the importance of letting the impetus for curriculum change come from the department itself. Dependence on outside agency (the ADC for instance) to provide the pressure or thrust for this important function is not ideal, and provokes considerable resistance, if not indifference or hostility. I have argued that processes of curriculum review and reform cannot be one-off events. They have to be regular, and recurrent.

In addition, I argued that in order to effect institution-wide review and reform in the ongoing manner desired, it is necessary to cultivate a national and institutional policy climate where a quality appraisal mechanism provides the impetus for curriculum review at a departmental level.

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Implementation of the mechanism will also obviate the difficulty that AD practitioners working in the area of curriculum development have in gaining access to departments. Currently the situation is that AD practitioners have to "sell" their services, and in many instances be the initiators of curriculum development. Departments can choose to collaborate or opt out. This leads to fragmented review and reform efforts across the University.

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Self-evidently, the AD practitioner cannot take on the responsibility of initiating and supporting curriculum development across the University. In the changed scenario I envisage, AD practitioners will be resources for the entire university.

A more ideal situation for AD practitioners would be that instead of having to go out and market their services as they currently do, lecturers would seek out their services. Departments and individual lecturers confronted with pressures to improve their teaching and develop their curricula, will in all likelihood beat a path to the door of AD practitioners. There is ample precedent for this approach to AD in the the UK at least.

I have advanced the view that staff development has a symbiotic relationship with curriculum development. I also suggested that while there is a space for strategies such as short courses, orientation workshops and Masters and Diploma courses, ultimately, enduring staff development which leads to qualitatively better teaching and learning practice, must come from a reflective practitioner approach.

In the UWC context, characterised by general conditions of adversity and diminishing funding (which constrains the capacity of the ADC to locate AD practitioners in departments), the cultivation of a reflective practitioner approach will no doubt be difficult.

I have contended that certain basic conditions will have to be met for a reflective practitioner approach to take root and flourish. The first of the necessary conditions is for fostering curriculum review at the departmental level. The second is to provide incentives and rewards which acknowledge and promote good teaching and innovative curriculum design, in the same way that we acknowledge and reward good research. Plainly the general perception among staff is that while

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the University accepts this need in principle, in practice it still favours research above teaching.

A shift in direction is more likely to arise from a shift in emphasis in government funding of universities. The Draft White Paper on Higher Education gives an idea of how funding of universities is likely to be done in the future (Ministry of Education 1997). The proposal is to shift an increased percentage (currently 15%) to non-formula funding. This will form what has been anticipated as the “earmarked funding” pool in the NCHE (1996) document. Funds from this pool will be made available for institutional redress purposes which would include staff development, academic development, curriculum development, and the development of institutional capacity, amongst others.

During 1995 and 1996 the ADC shifted its work to focus mainly on professional development. Previously, efforts in AD spanned a wide spectrum, including consultancy, research, policy development and course development, but although inclusive of staff development, they focused largely on curriculum and student development.

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The shift to a professional development strategy received its thrust from two crucial developments. Firstly, with our funding base diminishing rapidly, we have sought to make the most pragmatic use of our scarce resources.

Secondly, our years of experience in the AD programme at UWC have convinced us of the need to focus our efforts on the improvement of teaching as a corollary to enhancing the quality of students' educational experience at UWC. Initially, the impetus for the AD programme at UWC came from concerns with access and equity. On the long run these have

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limited the impact of the AD programme in critical ways, as I have attempted to show in the thesis.

In the absence of a supportive institutional as well as national policy environment, notably on professional development and coherent accountability measures such as regular departmental reviews, teaching quality assessment or audit of research output, most academics who see the primary objective of the AD programme as enhancing the opportunities for access and chances of success of "disadvantaged students," can opt out of it.

Legitimation of non-involvement in the AD programme has been by arguing that it is not their function to deal with the problems of "disadvantaged students." A strong perception exists among staff that it is the job of the ADC to deal with the problems of "disadvantaged students." In this context, coercive strategies driven by the ADC to engage staff in the AD programme are predestined to fail.

Our shift to a professional development strategy is consequently a significant step in the direction of making teaching improvement and quality enhancement the chief focus of our development work. Plainly an AD project undergirded by a *quality improvement* discourse on policy and practice is far more likely to be inclusive of the general teaching body than one driven by the *access and equity* discourse.

What this project would entail in the first instance is a clarification of the concept of AD, for the lack of clarity continues to frustrate efforts at infusing a University wide practice of AD. The inherent problems with the current conceptualisation of AD has been vividly described by Terry

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Volbrecht, the present ADC Chairperson:

> One of the reasons why "Academic Development" has failed to be a unifying concept at UWC is that AD has its historical roots in ASP (the academic support programmes at historically white universities). For this reason the "disadvantaged" or "underprepared" student is still at the centre of the blurred picture of AD. AD is therefore about the Other who has to be assimilated into the mainstream and about the Other (the ADC) who is appointed to bring about or facilitate the assimilation. This historically constituted "special" meaning of AD detaches the concept from the day-to-day academic practices of university lecturers (teaching and research) and their students and makes it difficult to see that academic development should be the consequence of *all* teaching, learning and research. It really makes no sense to detach something from academic programmes and practices and call it "academic development" so that you can "infuse" it. It's a bit like leeching vitamins out of mealies to make cornflakes, adding synthetic vitamins and then calling the product "vitamin-enriched" (Volbrecht 1996:3).

At the time of writing (May 1997), the ADC is undergoing a review which will hopefully define a new role for it and provide it with a clearer and more realistic brief. Ultimately, much will depend on what actual resources are made available for AD in the higher education budget. Developments thus far are not very encouraging. The years of hiatus while we waited for clearer policy guidelines and an allocation of funds has merely exacerbated the crisis. To date no funds have been forthcoming.

Nevertheless, the policy proposals emanating from the Ministry in 1997 offer some very encouraging signposts on how the new higher education system will be developed and managed. Its main imperative is to transform the system.

To induce the transformation of the system, the White Paper proposes several far reaching changes. To begin with, there will be considerably more

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coordination of higher education at a national level through the Education Ministry's Division of Higher education. Whereas previously all higher education institutions operated as quite autonomous units in a "non-system", they will now be part of "a single coordinated system". This would mean that the growth of the system (ultimate size and shape), and emphases on priority areas such as science and technology for instance will be influenced at a macro level.

It is also committed to making institutions more accountable for how they use public funds, and for how well they deliver on their purposes and goals. Greater public accountability will practically mean greater attention to planning, setting of goals, and allocating budgets on the basis of plans.

These plans will in due course come to be used as the basis for budgetary allocations by the Ministry. In the policy proposals, the implied consequence of a failure to plan adequately and timeously at the institutional level is that budgets may not be approved. Worse still, a failure to meet planning targets "will make an institution liable to forfeit equivalent funds by way of reductions to its operating grants". This is a palpably severe consequence; however, it underscores the Ministry's commitment to galvanising institutions into cost-effective, productive and efficient use of scarce resources.

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The positive outcome of the new policy climate is that it would give AD a clearer position as far as its funding and role are concerned. With departments coming under considerably more scrutiny, the much hoped for change in the relations between AD practitioners and departments are likely to be precipitated ie. Instead of AD practitioners needing to find spaces to work, departments will beat a path to their door to seek their services and expertise as quality appraisal processes begin to bite.

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The White Paper also proposes an expansion of the system to promote equity, redress and development. It envisages increased enrolments, and a greater diversity of the student body, including a far greater proportion of mature students pursuing "multi skilling and reskilling in the context of lifelong learning." While this would inevitably result in larger numbers of students entering university from disadvantaged backgrounds initially, it is likely that as socio-economic conditions of blacks improve, and the quality of schooling is enhanced, students will be less disadvantaged through their experience of school. This might mean that current efforts in AD would need to be refocused on the challenges of multiculturalism and other resultant issues.

The more accountable, coordinated, planned, and efficient system of higher education envisaged is likely to entail loss of certain entrenched freedoms (for instance, little accountability, virtually no external scrutiny, and almost *carte blanche* on how we utilized our budgets). There can be no however that the changes proposed are for the better, and in the broader societal interest on the long run.

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CHAPTER SEVEN - METHODOLOGY REVISITED

In Chapter Two, I laid out the methodological bases for my thesis and invoked several concepts which underscored my methodological position. In addition, I provided a justification for my use of qualitative methodology and suggested how my selection was valid. I also tried to couch my methodological concerns within some of the key debates taking place in the Social Sciences in this area, notably in relation to the challenges of representation.

My project in this *post hoc* analysis is to reflect on the process of writing the thesis and to determine what new insight may be shed upon the methodological challenges I confronted at the beginning of the thesis.

The main epistemological challenge I confronted was to build theory in the bottom-up sense which Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggested. In Chapter Two I suggested that the way in which I would proceed with this would be to construct my story from various fragments or vignettes of my practice.

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This has been a formidable task, to say the least. With *post hoc* insight, it is clear that there are few principled bases on which to construct such an account which might fall within the ambit of conventional Social Science. The main difficulty I confronted was to construct a narrative from a vast breadth and depth of practice. This was superimposed by several political, theoretical and historical factors which have influenced its development; including a sense of self.

Gallagher (in McCallister 1996:2), in describing the similarities between writing a poem and building a shelter, casts an oblique but illuminating beam on the challenges of constructing a narrative:

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> ...You take what you find, what comes naturally to the hand and mind. There was the sense with these shelters that they wouldn't last, but that they were exactly what could be done at the time. There were great gaps between the logs because we couldn't notch them into each other, but this allowed us to see the greater forest between them. It was a house that remembered its forest. And for me, the best poems, no matter how much order they make, have an undercurrent of forest, of the larger unknown.
>
> To spend one's earliest days in a forest with a minimum of supervision gave a lot of time for exploring. I also had some practice in being lost. Both exploring and being lost are, it seems now, the best training for a poet.

Like Gallagher, for me too, it seems now, that the narrative I have constructed has great gaps. However, like the gaps in her log shelter allowed her to see the great forest beyond, I would suggest that so too do the gaps in my narrative provide a window on the parts of the story which, for practical reasons, could not be told.

In constructing my narrative, my project was to search the depths of my experience and to tell the story; to make it unfamiliar so that I could look at it afresh and make it familiar again; by turning it over and telling it in ways which for me capture the essence of what I perceived to have happened, I am able to learn anew from the same experience. These are the substantial merits of constructing a narrative of practice.

McCallister (1996:2) develops the metaphor further in a manner which is more illuminating of the point I am attempting to make:

> Journeying through the unfamiliar woods of new theory and practice, exploring the larger unknown forest of experience, feeling completely lost before finding the way home again, these are the elements of a learning odyssey that render the once-familiar home a completely different place. New understandings develop through inquiry and stem from interludes with the larger unknown.

It would seem to me from an engagement with the literature that it is the feminist movement which has provided some of the most incisive and

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clear articulation of what is entailed in working "both within and against normalised disciplinary conventions" (Lather 1996:1), as narrative inquiry no doubt seeks to accomplish.

In telling my story, I have tried, like feminists conscious of their subaltern positions, to be sensitive to my positionality as a member of a subaltern community myself, trying to work in an area (AD) which advances the interests of other subaltern people ("disadvantaged" students), self-conscious about racial otherness, and attentive to the broader socio-political and historical context which formed the canvas for my practice.

However, there are limits to what can be represented within the confines of a methodology which seeks at once to employ tools of knowledge production which are not firmly ensconced in the realm of legitimate knowledge production, and to fulfil the demands of the PhD as academic genre.

The compromise which this inevitably entails is characterised best by Patti Lather (1996:4) as "double science", which "argues for a proliferation of eccentric kinds of science to address the question of practice in post-foundational discourse theory".

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In the compromises I have made, I hope that I have done sufficient justice to both aspects of the "double science" - that despite its nomadic character, I have produced a personal account of practice with sufficient vitality to be insightful about the complexities of AD practice; and that I have done so while maintaining sufficient methodological integrity.

A project which emerges from this thesis is to give sustained attention to how narrative and other personal accounts may be used by "disadvantaged" students and other subaltern people. How might it give

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fresh meaning to their experiences as students and as members of marginalised groups finding themselves in a freer space politically, which makes possible such inquiry?

As such, what is required is the elaboration of a qualitative methodology which seeks to be non-exploitative, which privileges personal accounts, which draws on autobiographical forays and which elaborates, after McCallister (1996), on such concepts as positionality, community, voice, representation, reflexivity and reciprocity into a methodology which specifically advances the interests of "disadvantaged" people.

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