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## ABSTRACT

A collection of papers on distance education is presented. "Distance Education: An Option for Social Welfare and Social Work Education in the 1990s" (Robert A. Bush and Chris J. Williams) discusses the implications for welfare education of changes in tertiary education and community services industry that are likely to pressure welfare educators to change their educational strategies. This paper also examines the potential for using distance educational technology in social work and social welfare education programs. "Educational Packages for External Students" (Peter A. Donnan) examines that constitutes a well written and designed package for external students. "Textbook Selection: Evaluative Criteria" (Brian Hemmings and David Battersby), presents a procedure that instructors might adopt to assist in decision making. An appendix provides an alphabetical list of textbooks assessed, including checklist scores. (SM)

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# DISTANCE EDUCATION PAPERS

Division of External Studies  
Charles Sturt University-Riverina  
Charles Sturt University-Murray

## OCCASIONAL PAPERS - NUMBER EIGHT

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# CONTENTS

Editorial Comment	1
Notes on Authors	2
Bush, R.A. and Williams, C.J.	3
Distance Education: An Option for Social Welfare and Social Work Education in the 1990s	

*A less extensive version will appear in Advances in Social Work Education in 1990.*

Donnan, P.A.	18
Educational Packages for External Students	
Hemmings, B. and Battersby, D.	24
Textbook Selection: Evaluative Criteria	

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Cumulative Index: Numbers 1-7	35
A Call for Papers ...	37

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Occasional Papers 8 is a transitional issue. It is the last Occasional Papers to be produced solely by staff of the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education and the first Occasional Papers to be published by the Charles Sturt University. It is planned that Occasional Papers 9 will include contributions from members of staff from the three locations that together make up the new University - Mitchell, Riverina and Murray.

Occasional Papers to date has been an in-house publication that has endeavoured to provide an opportunity for staff at RMIHE to publish papers in the distance education field. The readership has included nearly 300 staff at RMIHE with an outside mailing list of approximately 60 distance education institutions in Australia and overseas. An index of contributions to Occasional Papers 1-7 can be found at the end of this issue. Limited numbers of some back issues are available on request from:

The Editor, Occasional Papers  
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With the attainment of Distance Education Centre status it would seem appropriate to reconsider the purpose and future direction of Occasional Papers. Should the present format be maintained? How useful is this publication to staff who develop and deliver (teach) by the distance education mode? Should Occasional Papers be upgraded from an in-house publication? If so, why and how? I would welcome considered responses from the readership.

One decision has already been made. The next Occasional Papers will be under the co-editorship of David Meacham (Head of the Distance Education Resource Centre, Mitchell) and the current editor. In this way, Occasional Papers will be taking the first step towards becoming more representative of the Charles Sturt Distance Education Centre.

I look forward to hearing your views.

**David Roberts**  
Editor

## NOTES ON AUTHORS

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## DISTANCE EDUCATION: AN OPTION FOR SOCIAL WELFARE AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN THE 1990s

BUSH, R.A. and WILLIAMS, C.J.

### Aims

The aims of this paper are:

1. To examine the implications for welfare education of changes in tertiary education and community services industry that are likely to bring pressure to bear on welfare educators to change their educational strategies; and
2. To examine the potential for using distance educational technology in both social work and social welfare education programmes, particularly in subjects involving welfare practice skills and field education components.

### Distance Education and Welfare Education

To argue that distance education may offer new possibilities for welfare education raises immediate questions and issues of credibility and it is certainly this that will be of most immediate concern to welfare educators. This paper cannot and will not attempt to provide a watertight case for supporting the use of distance education technologies. The intention is to raise questions and possibilities that suggest themselves as being appropriate at a time of rapid change both within the community services industry and within tertiary education. These changes indicate that the current *status quo* of welfare education - including the traditional separation of its social work and social welfare components - cannot simply be taken for granted in the future. Whether such changes are regarded as *desirable* or not is of course another matter, and about which people will certainly disagree.

That there exists a need for the use of distance education in welfare is, at one level, undeniable. In many instances the welfare education needs of both students and communities are not being met and it is hard to see how they can be, unless there is some recourse to distance education. A not untypical profile for an external student enrolled in a social welfare degree, is a married woman already working in the welfare field, living in either a rural or an urban setting, who is seeking a welfare qualification to enhance her career opportunities. Such a student is quite unable to conceive of selling up and moving close to an urban university campus to study social work. She is also probably unwilling to give up her present welfare position to take on full-time study. She has a family to think of and there are clear restrictions on her ability to obtain a welfare qualification *unless* this can be done at a distance.

Whilst it might be argued that it is preferable not to teach such welfare students at all than enable them to obtain an 'inferior' qualification, it can be argued equally forcefully that in many communities, perhaps most particularly, though not exclusively, in isolated rural communities, any welfare education is better than none at all - especially if knowledge about welfare issues and skills is in short supply.

The technology offered by distance education readily suggests itself as a means for redressing welfare skills deficits in particular communities. Yet within the community of social work and social welfare educators, it would be widely held that the use of distance education techniques for teaching certain welfare practice subjects would be both undesirable and probably impossible. It would almost certainly be alleged that subjects such as Casework, Groupwork and Community Work, which involve a supervised field placement, cannot be taught properly to off-campus students. To teach these subjects effectively, it would be argued, a minimum requirement would be some optimum combination of direct classroom contact and supervised field placement.

The irony of this widely held view is that it gives no recognition to the fact that much of social welfare education, and in particular field education, already occurs at a distance, and in particular field education, already occurs at a distance. Indeed, distance education is already a major strategy in traditional models of social work and social welfare education. Field education is distance education. Moreover, the view that distance education is by its very nature ineffective or inappropriate in welfare education is frequently held without any empirical evidence to support such a claim. There are many 'sacred cows' in this field, and many myths. Here are some common beliefs and assumptions about both distance and on-campus teaching:

- . Distance education is solely correspondence teaching.
- . Distance education may involve no face-to-face teaching.
- . Student evaluation is at best tentative and inadequate.
- . Distance education is cheap.
- . Distance education is second best.
- . Phone or written contact is inherently unsatisfactory.
- . Distance education is expensive if trying to compete with on-campus standards.
- . Distance education is ineffective and inefficient in terms of expected student outcomes.

Here are some common beliefs and assumptions about on-campus teaching:

- . On-campus teaching is highly personal and responsive to individual needs.
- . On-campus teaching offers students access to the full resources of the institution
- . On-campus hours are more extensive than off-campus.
- . On-campus student evaluation is thorough and complete.
- . Successful learning requires constant face-to-face contact.
- . On-campus teaching methods are effective and efficient in terms of expected student outcomes.

Many of these assumptions are widely held amongst welfare educators in Australia. Few of them have ever been tested empirically. Yet a growing body of research suggests that not only are many of these assumption quite wrong but that, in some instances, the very rigour of distance teaching and learning has reversed some of these traditional stereotypes.

## The Appeal of Distance Education

For the purposes of this paper, distance education is defined as a learning system in which the learner is able to have immediate communication and interaction with a teacher and other learners not physically present (Rixon, 1986:14). Thus what we are talking about in this paper is an **interactive mode of learning**, not correspondence teaching.

What we are considering is whether modern educational technology is able successfully to replicate, duplicate or even improve upon traditional modes of teaching and learning.

In recent years in Australia, a number of factors have combined to reduce the marginalisation of distance education within the tertiary education sector. These are:

- the growth in student numbers studying externally;
- the political significance given to upgrading skills and qualifications through external mode study to ensure Australia's economic competitiveness;
- the arguments for using external study as a means of increasing access and equity in tertiary education;
- the development of an interactive technology enabling face-to-face teaching methods to be replicated. (Nunan, 1988:3).

Distance education is being increasingly heralded as a means for achieving a 'technologically advanced, educationally effective and nationally integrated higher education program'. (Liberal Party, 1987:14). There is also the question of cost. Distance education systems around the world have demonstrated their cost-effectiveness when compared to on-campus teaching programs, particularly if the external student remains a member of the workforce.

This, for very obvious reasons, is a very attractive feature of distance education for governments and, despite what many educators may wish to believe, it is governments that frame the parameters of educational debate and set the criteria upon which education is evaluated (Nunan, 1988:7).

As Nunan (1988:8-11) observes, with the pressure on government to reduce the budget deficit, the reduction and/or containment of public sector spending becomes a political priority. The use of new communication technology hints at economies of scale giving distance education the potential, at least in theory, of providing efficient and effective quality mass education.

In addition to these cost effectiveness criteria, there is also the question of **where** or **how** people are to be educated. Here the problem may be one of re-education where the people to be re-educated are already in employment. They may have to be 'upgraded' or converted **in situ** and the only way of doing it may be by means of distance education (Gregson, 1987:8-11).

This use of distance education is of particular relevance today in Australia's community services industry. If some communities are unable to obtain welfare personnel, their education will need to be 'unshackled' from traditional constraints.

Indeed, this is one of the greatest advantages of distance education, particularly when informed by the principles of 'open learning'. One exponent argues that what really needs to change in Australia is not the technology of distance education but attitudes towards it. We have now reached the point at which we can use technology to 'escape' from traditional models of learning, and can now embrace open learning - a learning environment that is as far as possible free of constraints such as what is learned, how it is learned, by whom it is learned and when it is learned. (Smith, P., 1987:34-36).

Of course, there do have to be constraints of **some** kind in any learning environment. The challenge to welfare educators is to ask which constraints are both necessary and appropriate.

Such questions are particularly pertinent today in view of the changes occurring in two major areas that impinge upon welfare education: changes in tertiary education itself and in the community services industry.

### **Changes in Tertiary Education**

In the recently published White Paper on Higher Education, there are a number of major points that have a direct and immediate relevance to welfare educators and to the possibilities for an increased use of distance technology.

Whilst it is too early to judge the effects of the White Paper on the pattern of higher education in Australia, we can be certain that the status quo will not be left intact, and social work/welfare education will not remain unaffected.

The unified national system will continue to blur the already blurred boundaries between universities and advanced education institutions. There will be fewer institutions and an increased pressure to rationalise what is provided through them. There will be pressure for more effective co-ordination between them on issues such as course provision, disciplinary specialisation and credit transfer. (White Paper, 1988:27). Institutions will be encouraged to develop cooperative arrangements with other providers and to discontinue uneconomic courses.

In its statement on directions for the future, the White Paper, 1988:10, states that:

- . the Commonwealth will identify the national goals and priorities for the higher education system and ensure that system-wide resources are allocated effectively in accordance with those priorities;
- . under the unified national system, institutions will be funded on the basis of merit and achievement rather than historical precedent and arbitrary classification;
- . measures will be implemented to encourage institutions to be efficient, flexible and responsive to changing national needs.

These statements are scarcely a blueprint for the maintenance of the **status quo** in social welfare education which, arguably, is currently failing to meet some important welfare education needs.

The White Paper's concern with issues of access and equity (White Paper, 1988:20) and with providing higher education for regional and rural Australia (White Paper, 1988:21) as well as for rationalizing the tertiary education sector and the relationship between its various components (i.e. TAFE, CAE and university) all suggest that distance education will assume greater significance as a means of fulfilling such goals. Indeed, the White Paper (1988:49) recommends an increase in the proportion of external over internal students nationally (p. 50). The creation of eight national Distance Education Centres also suggests a high degree of rationalization and streamlining of existing distance education arrangements. The implications for welfare education, though in many ways threatening, cannot be avoided. Amongst the questions that spring to mind are:

- . What pressures are going to be placed on schools or facilities to cut back, to borrow or to share?
- . How is the relationship between TAFE, CAE and university-based social work courses going to be rationalized?
- . How much autonomy will or should remain at the Institute level?
- . In the area of field education, what criteria are going to be used for giving credit for field experience or for not giving it?
- . What assumptions and conditions will or should underlie such decisions?
- . How might the use of distance education affect such issues?

### **Changes in the Community Services Industry**

A second major area of change of great significance for the future of welfare education is the community services industry (CSI).

The CSI (particularly the community-based part) is also a major user of volunteer labour. As Hardwick and Graycar reported in 1982, an estimated 1.1 million volunteers provided (at an average of four hours per week per volunteer), the approximate equivalent of 125,000 full-time jobs. (NCOSS, 1985:18).

As is well-known in Australia, we have been witnessing a retreat from the welfare state. Both ideological and pragmatic economic considerations have been influencing this retreat. Overall though, the trend shows a shift of resources out of public sector community services into community-based services.

Clearly this has profound implications for what kind of work will be performed within both the government sector and the non-government sectors and therefore about what kinds of workers will be needed in each.

At present much of the work performed in the community based part of the CSI is undertaken by a marginalised and secondary (largely female) labour force.

Yet there are increasing calls for this, the most rapidly growing sector, to become trained, educated and unionized. In many areas of this part of the industry, access to social work or social welfare courses is difficult if not impossible, especially if workers do not have the necessary choices or opportunities to receive a welfare qualification by means of distance education, whilst at the same time continuing their employment.

Having briefly examined some of the issues confronting welfare educators generally, let us now turn to a closer analysis of the potential for the use of distance education in welfare education programmes.

Since distance education has long been accepted as a legitimate mode of delivering subjects that have no practice or skills component, attention will be focussed on the use of distance education in the most controversial area - welfare practice and field education.

### **Field Education as Distance Education**

In Australia, there has been a growing body of distance education research and development over the past two decades (Dunnett, 1986; Proceedings of the International Council for Distance Education, 1985). In the main, this development has focussed upon the use of telecommunications technology in education (Dean et al, 1985). Elsewhere, research has also addressed some of the more fundamental psycho-social issues, such as how learning actually takes place at a distance (Williams et al, 1976; Rutter et al, 1981). In the Australian context, distance education development has been strongest in primary and secondary education in States where 'schools of the air' take on a more central role in education provision.

The use of distance education approaches in Australian tertiary education is also more than 20 years old. Despite this, descriptive accounts and competent research into its effectiveness are less accessible than the school based literature (Dean et al, 1985). It is hardly surprising then, that there has been little, if any recorded attempt in social work and social welfare education to adopt distance education theory and technology, particularly in field education. This is despite the fact that, in New South Wales alone, two degree courses in Social Welfare have graduated external study students for more than ten years. The failure to adopt distance education approaches seems a pity because, whilst field education may take many forms and have a variety of practice learning objectives, it is fundamentally 'learning at a distance'; that is, learning away from a tertiary campus.

One of the central points of this paper is to put a case for regarding field education as a form of distance education rather than an adjunct to on-campus teaching, albeit an important one. It is suggested that only when this is properly recognised will the often assumed incompatibility between on-campus study and distance education study disappear. Indeed, rather than regarding distance education as the poor cousin of on-campus education, it is further suggested that the inclusion of distance education theory and technology in on-campus study methods is likely to improve the quality of these programmes as well.

9

One advantage of adopting distance education theory is that it challenges some common assumptions about how learning takes place away from a campus setting. Distance education, like field education, requires a different teaching strategy to on-campus teaching methods, but while the former has been the subject of specialised research attention by educationalists, it would appear that the latter has been driven by traditions in social welfare education. Thus for example, distance educationalists might operationalize the precise links between field practice learning objectives and individual student learning needs through the imaginative use of communications technology. By contrast, these links in traditional social work and welfare education have remained largely haphazard and untested (Goodall et al., 1984; Coulshed, 1980). Arguably, the application of distance education technology has the potential not only to improve the quality of field education but to enhance the accountability of field teachers, students and agencies.

It has already been suggested that the adoption of distance education by social work and social welfare courses in the 1990s could improve access to social work and social welfare courses in line with the recommendations of the 'White Paper'. It also has the potential to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of these courses, particularly their field education. This will not happen, however, without a considerable shift in knowledge and attitude about distance education amongst social welfare educators and professional bodies. This will require welfare educators to accept the challenge of learning a quite different set of educational skills which distance education approaches demand.

With these points in mind, three aspects of distance education applied to social work and social welfare education will now be tentatively examined. These are:

- . Changes to course structure when distance education is applied.
- . The assessment of competence through distance education.
- . The psycho-social aspects of learning through telecommunications methods.

### Distance Education Applications to Course Structure

In typical campus based teaching programmes, individual student learning needs must fit into the prescribed order and pace of a set study programme. Such rigid learning structure is primarily designed for the efficient use of teaching resources with collective groups of students. Lectures, tutorials, workshops and other methods are time-tabled into semesters or terms with field practice occurring at pre-designated points over the full course.

By contrast, distance education by means of 'open learning' has the potential flexibility to meet individual learning needs and circumstances. The restrictions of on-campus collective teaching can be replaced to favour an individualized learning pace. This becomes particularly significant where mature age experienced welfare workers are undertaking study and may be able to reach levels of competence faster than inexperienced students, or where work and domestic commitments make regular attendance at a campus difficult.

Thus, for example, if an integrated theory and practice subject is taught in a sequential progression so that a theoretical component is completed prior to a practice component, distance education allows students to work through the theory component at a pace which meets their own learning needs and

circumstances rather than being tied to a collectively structured time table. It follows that the point at which the field practice begins will fit neatly the point at which each student is best prepared rather than at a designated point within the programme. When the theoretical component of a practice theory subject is taught **concurrently** so that field practice and theoretical input occur during the actual placement, the development of modularized distance study units can provide for further integration.

For example, students studying community work and on placement in a tenancy scheme might concurrently study a distance education unit on housing policy. Likewise, their fellow students in a child at risk agency could concurrently study a child welfare policy unit. Such an approach allows theorists to engage students in actual practice, enabling the opportunity for greater critical analysis in practice to become more realistic.

In both of these examples the introduction of distance education gets around the rigid structure of on-campus approaches and provides the potential to fit individual learning needs to field education practice objectives. Both allow courses to be completed in either less or more time than a standard on-campus programme prescribes. Such arrangements have clear appeal to both students and an industry in which much of the experienced workforce is unqualified and thus needs to be encouraged to work and study at the same time.

### **Distance Education and the Assessment of Practice Competence**

The question of what is competent practice and how it should be determined is a much wider issue than this paper has space to examine. It is specifically to the issue of the evaluation of practice competence by distance education methods that this section will restrict its comments. The assumption, arguably false, has been that the evaluation of competence cannot be achieved through distance education in social work and social welfare education because a majority of professional skills involve interpersonal communication. While there is little quarrel with the point that much of professional practice is a process of interpersonal communication, the notion that distance education is non-interactive and therefore inappropriate is far too narrow a view of the technological advances which have shaped contemporary distance education practice.

According to Roberts (1985), distance education technologies can be conveniently divided into non-interactive and interactive baskets. Common examples of non-interactive technologies include:

- reading correspondence packages
- watching and listening to audio and audio-visual tapes
- watching education programmes broadcast on national television.

Interactive technologies concern any method which allows students and educators to communicate in the immediate while residing in different geographical localities. Examples are:

- using computer networking
- using facsimile machines in conjunction with voice telephone hookup
- participating in audio-teleconferencing
- participating in television video conferencing (using satellite).

Currently the high cost of some interactive technologies makes access to them impracticable. However, adaptations to the standard use of the telephone are inexpensive and widely available. Whether immediate interactive technologies are necessarily more appropriate for the assessment of skill competence is another issue. A more justifiable use of technology comes from a thorough assessment of the task in hand and the application of a range of interactive and non-interactive technologies. Two examples of non-interactive and one example of interactive technologies will help to make this point.

Faced with the need to assess both the competence of field agencies as learning environments and students' performance within these agencies, Bush (1988) developed an evaluation format for use in an undergraduate social welfare field placement. With items supplied by a representative group of field workers and from previous work by Goodall et al (1984), a task based check list was developed. The items were graded by order of difficulty and trialled over a two year period by 57 and 64 student/supervisor pairs. It was concluded that the instrument, when used to train and set student and supervisor expectations of tasks and competencies could also be used to discriminate competent from less competent placement learning environments and student performance. It was not so much the evaluation instrument itself but its integration into the process of student and supervisor education that appears to account for its value.

A second development concerns the use of audio and video tapes of interviews made by students to demonstrate competency. The introduction of this approach in some external study courses has so increased the confidence in competency assessment of external study students that the introduction of this non-interactive technology into on-campus teaching programmes has occurred as a consequence.

However, an obvious drawback with such non-interactive methods lies in their inability to establish dialogue and immediate feedback. When these become essential elements in assessment of competence, or generally in the learning process, then interactive technologies are required. It is proposed to examine only one of these approaches here - audio-teleconferences.

Audio-teleconferencing occurs when a number of participants in different localities communicate through the same telephone network with each other at the same point in time. Usually Telecom establishes the links between the participants through the standard telephone system although more advanced systems using AUSSAT are becoming available (Dunnett, 1986). A variety of networked structures to audio-teleconferencing can be used. For example:

- Educator with student group

Example: Using a room equipped with multiple microphones in a study centre in north west Tasmania, five students on field placement hold a case conference with their campus educator based in New South Wales.

- Two student groups in two localities

Example: Four students coming to the end of a placement in an agency in a rural town hook up with three students commencing placement in an outlying town to discuss their field learning activities.

- Campus educator and field work supervisor networking

Example: Eight student supervisors scattered across New South Wales south coast towns are linked to the campus educator for a briefing session.

Roberts (1985) extends examples of audio-teleconferencing structure to list a range of interactive techniques which are possible within these structures:

- Brain storming
- Research project discussion
- Decision making
- Progress reporting and feedback
- Problem solving
- Question and answer sessions
- Role play
- Debating.

Despite the range of possibilities listed by Roberts (1985), there can be little doubt that the experience of participants in audio conferences is vastly different to those in face-to-face learning groups. But what becomes significant, there is not the assumption that such experiences must then be inferior, but rather questions of what happens to the learning process when such technologies are introduced.

### **Psycho-Social Aspects of Learning Through Tele-Communications Methods**

At least three psycho-social issues commonly arise when telecommunications technologies are introduced to aid distance learning. These are concerned with:

- overcoming resistance to new technologies;
- the appropriate use of technology; and
- the development of skills for effective use of the technology.

The first of these, overcoming resistance to new technologies, has been addressed by Lange (1984). He identifies fear, scepticism and anxiety as common initial responses to new technology. The belief that the message sent will not be the message received when the medium is a technological device undermines many inexperienced users. An exploration of the advantages as well as the limitations of these technologies is a rational approach to dispelling such common resistances.

In this respect, Dean et al. (1985) acknowledge that teleconferences present a number of limitations. The lack of non-verbal cues makes it difficult to act as if in a face-to-face meeting. Conrath et al. (1973) have demonstrated that when audio cues are the only communication medium, successful conferencing tends to be task specific. Surprisingly, however, the addition of visual cues does not necessarily improve the quality of a task centred meeting. The visual cues can act as distractions from the task (Grimwade, 1981). Rapid conversation between participants unfamiliar with each other can lead to confusion suggesting that preparation for teleconferencing needs to include participant familiarisation.

Another observation, directly pertinent to social work, is that short acknowledgements (minimal encouragers), common to basic face-to-face counselling, may actually have the opposite effect to their intention when only audio cues are available. These can create an impression of disinterest by the listener when only audio cues are available.

Research findings such as these suggest that pre-planning and in-conference skills will be quite different to those in face-to-face learning groups. Given the task centred nature of audio-teleconferences, participant preparation with written instructions, assignment of roles and tasks and other documentation becomes part and parcel of the conference learning process. In addition, Dean et al. (1985) suggest occasional face-to-face meetings or video familiarisation tapes are necessary in some on-going groups.

Within conferences, periods of structured and free interaction require planning and leader direction. Special emphasis needs to be placed on creating a personalised atmosphere while at the same time maintaining strong leader direction. Longer more complete explanations and sentences with longer pauses to cue participation responses are other common features.

When such modifications are made, Burge (1985) in Roberts (1985) lists typical evaluation statements of tertiary students involved in teleconferencing:

- "Forced me to come to terms with my communication skills."
- "The ability to feel and express my ideas..."
- "In the classroom I could get away with not contributing very much. In teleconferencing I can't back out and not contribute."
- "I depend a lot more on my pre audio-teleconferencing preparation and my concentration than on note taking in a conventional class."

Such evaluative statements suggest that audio-teleconferencing is not a complete communication medium. But this does not mean it is inferior to face-to-face interaction.

Rather, its value appears to come from precisely the limitations such communications methods impose. The sharpening of skills for task centred communication is the most obvious of these.

### **An Applied Distance Education Model for Field Practice**

In the previous section, changes in structure, assessment of competence and the processes of learning when telecommunications technology are employed were examined. Such an examination was necessarily brief and constitutes only a partial review of the possibilities. The intention was to open up discussion about distance education in social welfare and social work education by demonstrating some of the possibilities of applied telecommunications technology and distance education learning processes. In this final section, these concepts and technologies are applied to a prospective model of a practice theory subject which includes a field practice component. For comparative purposes a hypothetical on-campus model is examined along side a distance education study mode in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Comparison of Hypothetical On-Campus and Distance Education Modes for a Practice Theory Subject.**

<b>Essential Components</b>	<b>On Campus Mode</b>	<b>Distance Education Mode</b>
<b>THEORETICAL BASE</b>	class lectures and tutorials	<b>non-interactive:</b> correspondence package <b>interactive:</b> networked study cells
<b>PRE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT</b>	micro-skills workshops	micro-skills workshops at residential schools
<b>PRACTICE PLACEMENT</b>	under professional supervision in approved agency	under professional supervision in approved agency
<b>DEBRIEF: Theory/Practice Integration</b>	class sessions	<b>delayed interactive:</b> audiotape exchanges <b>interactive:</b> network study cell tele-conferences with educator
<b>EVALUATION of Student Competence</b>	essay. micro-skills observation. supervisor's report. personal interview.	essay. micro-skills observation. task-centred check list. structured telephone interview. audio-visual tape evaluation.

The hypothetical model assumes that practice theory is taught in a sequential programme so that theoretical components precede skills development, both of which occur prior to a practice placement. At placement both of these become integrated with practice. Debriefing and evaluation further act to integrate learning and follow practice. These components are taken as the essential aspects of a practice theory subject and, as such, field practice is not treated as an isolated aspect of learning. The subject, when taught by distance education, makes use of both interactive and non-interactive forms dependent upon the task to hand. Thus, for example, Figure 1 shows the theoretical components taught by traditional correspondence notes, a non-interactive method, as well as networked study cells, which are interactive. Pre-placement skills development takes place in residential schools; the number of hours usually attended across one 12 week semester by on campus students in a standard subject.

Administrative arrangements for the practice theory subject are outlined in Figure 2. The essential components are suggested as placement selection, supervisor briefing, student placement contracting, campus/placement links and debriefing. In the distance education mode, extensive use is made of teleconferencing so that the amount of time spent linking student, field supervisor and campus educator is actually greater than in the hypothetical on-campus mode.

The overall model described attempts to apply distance education theory and technology to a hypothetical practice theory subject. It is not suggested that the model is ideal, but rather that it represents a working example of the three aspects of distance education described earlier. The objective has been to set out just a few of the possibilities and perhaps to demystify the processes of distance education. The serious application of distance education to social work and social welfare has the potential to increase access to tertiary education in this field and to improve the delivery of education. While it has been strongly argued that distance education has a place in social work and social welfare education in the 1990s, the adoption of such approaches requires careful attention to policy development, planning and resource allocation, for as Conboy et al. (1988) wisely point out, such approaches can overcentralise educational resources rather than disperse them justly to areas worthy of their own tertiary campuses and social welfare programmes.

**Figure 2:** Comparison of Hypothetical On-Campus and Distance Education Administrative Arrangements for a Practice Theory Subject.

<b>Essential Components</b>	<b>On Campus</b>	<b>Distance Education</b>
<b>PLACEMENT SELECTION</b>	interview with student to match needs to placement	needs analysis questionnaire to match student to placement
<b>SUPERVISOR BRIEFING</b>	on campus meeting	<b>non interactive:</b> packaged instructions <b>interactive:</b> teleconference
<b>CONTRACT</b>	student and supervisor make learning contract	student and supervisor make learning contract
<b>CAMPUS LINKS DURING PLACEMENT</b>	educator's visit to placement	typical crisis points in placement are identified and teleconferences set up, e.g. week 1: gaining acceptance week 3: skills development week 6: termination
<b>DEBRIEF</b>	student: in class  supervisor: ?	student: <b>delayed interactive:</b> audio tape exchange <b>non interactive:</b> evaluation check list supervisor: <b>interactive:</b> teleconference <b>non interactive:</b> evaluation check list

## Conclusion

Nunan, 1988:6, has observed that the linking of technology and education in the form of distance education has generated interest and debate at three levels. First, at a methodological level, technology provides the means for carrying out teaching and learning in new and different ways; second, the influence of technology upon the way we structure knowledge and go about instructional design involves our theories about teaching and learning; third, the social, political and economic questions associated with the use of technologies in general now become applied to technology in education in the form of distance education (Nunan, 1988:6).

As has been shown, the debate at all three levels is of interest and relevance to welfare educators, who, in the light of changes occurring both in tertiary education and in the community services industry, as well as in educational technology itself, may have to review some of their traditional assumptions and beliefs about how learning takes place or what kinds of environment are suitable for learning.

Lange, 1986:61, observes that despite years of research showing that technologically-delivered education can be as good or better in terms of results, many academics persist in viewing distance education as inferior to traditional methods.

The basis of this belief is ignorance and fear and unless academics and administrators are themselves given education and training in the new educational technologies, they will remain a source of opposition and sabotage (Lange, 1986:62).

This paper has attempted to show that for a variety of reasons the current *status quo* in welfare education is unsatisfactory. The welfare education needs latent in the community require the adoption of new educational technologies. With appropriate modification, it is believed that they can be successfully used in social welfare practice and skills education.

The challenge to welfare educators is to re-examine their beliefs and assumptions, their educational goals and the methods used to achieve them.

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## EDUCATIONAL PACKAGES FOR EXTERNAL STUDENTS

DONNAN, P.A.

### Introduction

I am a Development Officer at Charles Sturt University-Riverina attached to the School of Agriculture where I assist academic staff as they prepare their distance education materials. In this paper I would like to focus on what constitutes a well written and designed package for external students and I propose to do this by simply considering in turn the subject outline, the notes and the readings, the essence of many CSU-R external offerings. Many of the ideas and approaches have been discussed in Development Officers' seminars at CSU-R in the Division of External Studies, especially in the seminar on Readings presented by Wendy Pearce, Development Officer for the School of Information Studies.

### The Subject Outline

This booklet, reprinted each year, generally contains the introductory, administrative and assignment material for subjects offered at CSU-R. The subject outline provides students with a whole range of important information which is subject to change: who the subject coordinator is; details concerning prescribed and recommended texts; residential school requirements; the actual assignments; perhaps a study schedule; and maybe even a past examination paper as a guide for revision. The subject outline is a slender booklet but it contains essential information for external students.

The aims and objectives of the subject, stated early and clearly in the subject outline, provide an academic sense of purpose, direction and destination. They serve as a mechanism for selecting and filtering relevant subject matter and types of assessment activities; they also provide a much tighter form and structure to the subject offered.

Many have testified that studying externally is a rigorous and often solitary discipline. In the subject outline there is scope to provide an introduction to the lecturer, perhaps a photograph; furthermore, one can convey a spirit of welcome and a preparedness to provide assistance when difficulties arise. In one's first lecture to full time students at the beginning of the year a brief personal introduction is a natural event and a similar courtesy extended to external students is certainly appreciated. Where the quality of the relationship between the academic supervisor and the external student incorporates this professional concern and spirit of assistance, a certain morale is generated which students often acknowledge in their subject evaluation questionnaires.

Clear, accurate information relating to residential schools, examinations, textbooks and assignments is required. If the subject provides scope for assignments to tap the professional/work background of external students, then this is worth considering. Once students have read the subject outline there should be no ambiguity in their minds regarding the subject coordinator's expectations.

Printed below is a checklist for subject outlines. Many variations are possible so the list of questions is intended as a guide not a prescription.

DIVISION OF EXTERNAL STUDIES

CHECKLIST FOR SUBJECT OUTLINES

The following checklist is offered as a guide for when you are writing or updating your Subject Outlines. We believe that use of this checklist will help you as the lecturer, as well as the development officer, the word processor operator and ultimately your students.

1. Are you updating the most recent Subject Outline?
2. Are you using red ink for changes?
3. Is the subject code and name correct? (i.e. Subject Availability List)
4. Is the semester(s) the subject is offered correct?
5. Are phone numbers and contact points correct?
6. Does "Mailing Information" include every item you want External Studies to send? (Items not listed here will be the responsibility of your school to send)
7. Have you provided an introduction to yourself as the lecturer? (We encourage you to include a photograph also)
8. Have you included a statement of aims that properly represents the subject's content?
9. Have you included a list of objectives/expected student outcomes expressed in terms of the learner?
10. Have you listed the topics/units/modules to be covered?
11. Have you made it clear which texts are prescribed (i.e. essential)? Do your texts correspond with your text book order form?
12. Have you checked your prescribed texts are still available? (e.g. new edition?)
13. Have you listed any recommended texts? (i.e. recommended but NOT essential)
14. Have you kept your list of recommended texts to a minimum? (Long lists of books/journals are very little help to students - they do appreciate your carefully considered recommendations)
15. Have you provided an assessment summary table that includes:
  - . item number
  - . due/post dates
  - . return dates
  - . value (and weighting)?

16. Do your assignments/exams comprehensively assess your objectives/expected student outcomes?
17. Have you given careful thought to:
  - . the number of assessment items
  - . the variety of assessment items
  - . the timing of assessment items
  - . the length of assessment items
  - . the value of assessment items?
18. Have you provided sufficient detail about your expectations regarding each assignment?
19. Have you provided sufficient information about final examinations?
  - . number of hours
  - . open/closed or other
  - . type of questions
  - . what exam is designed to test
  - . value
20. Have you included a clear statement about requirements to pass the subject?
21. Have you provided advice on late assignments?
22. Have you advised students whether there is a residential school?
23. If there is a residential school have you advised students about the following:
  - . voluntary or compulsory?
  - . is there a choice of schools? (If so, have you included the appropriate nomination form?)
  - . can students request a waiver? (If so, provide details)
  - . what is the purpose of the residential school?
  - . what do students need to bring?
  - . what will students be doing at the residential school?
24. Have you included a study schedule?
25. Is the information in the study schedule correct?
26. Do you wish to include a past examination paper? (provided the format is similar)

Thank you for using this checklist.

25 MAY 1989

## Notes

If there is a book of notes in an external mail package, this will generally encapsulate the lecturer's central energies and expertise in relation to the subject. Once again the use of objectives at the beginning of each topic or module is a particularly worthwhile practice for the same reasons presented in the subject outline section.

The use of self-assessment questions is another valuable instructional design practice. Their use is based on the rationale that an interactive learning strategy is preferable to passive reading. These activities may direct students to search for facts, concepts or arguments; they enable students to evaluate their understanding of a section; they provide immediate feedback; and they encourage students to review and summarise what they have studied.

Research indicates (Duchastel and Whitehead, 1980, p.42) that it is worthwhile inserting self-assessment questions in the body of the text, occurring at the relevant point rather than being left to the end of the unit. Short answer questions rather than multiple choice or true/false answer approaches have been identified as preferable. To provide immediate feedback correct answers may be included in the appendix to the notes. Some coordinators stipulate a selection of self-assessment questions as assessable items whereas others leave their completion on a purely voluntary basis. Generally, though, a set of notes which includes self-assessment questions has a text which is more varied and one which promotes a more interactive mode of learning.

## Readings

The book of readings gives isolated external students access to study materials which may be difficult for them to obtain. For copyright reasons the readings are printed separately from the notes. The readings help to achieve the subject aims and objectives and they are most effectively used when they are integrated with the book of notes. In fact, each time a reading is selected it is worthwhile posing the question: "Why am I including this reading?"

The chart below contrasts two models of the use of readings and clearly the second one is a preferred option because of the quality of learning it promotes.

<b>TWO MODELS FOR USE OF READINGS</b>	
<b>Readings not integrated into Notes - Features</b>	<b>Readings which have been integrated - Features</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. sometimes used as a 'filler'</li> <li>. may not be current, updated</li> <li>. emphasis may be on quantity</li> <li>. reading level of passage may not be appropriate for the students involved</li> <li>. readings perceived as a separate entity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. the reading is rooted in and grows naturally from the Notes</li> <li>. the reading involves and engages the student in <b>active learning</b></li> <li>. this active learning is promoted by a range of techniques:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an introduction to or commentary on the reading</li> <li>- outline of key themes or points</li> <li>- study questions ... focus activities</li> <li>- argument against the reading</li> <li>- comparison/contrast activities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Where readings have not been integrated well in the notes there is often a simple reading directive thus:

### Example 1

READ: Reading 1 - Brown in the book of Readings

The model which stresses integration promotes a more interactive response and engagement with the text. There are many techniques that can be used to achieve this. In example 2 (Henri et al, 1989, p. 74) the student's attention is drawn to the issue of censorship in two newspaper articles; key emotive words in the two articles are focused upon; and then the issue is broadened to touch upon personal and historical responses.

### Example 2

Turn to Reading 17, containing two newspaper articles on attempts to remove "filth" from the recommended reading lists in Western Australian schools, and on a Queensland campaign to "clean up" school libraries.

In both cases, "questionable", "dirty", "filthy", "degrading" books, including those chosen for teenagers which portray violence and sex, are the subject of the objections.

How do you feel about the charges made in these two articles? How would you react if your library was one of the libraries referred to in the articles?

Is this type of censorship different in any way from those nineteenth century attempts at moral censorship discussed earlier?

In example 3 (Loder, 1988, p. 5) the author, writing a book of notes for vineyard establishment, uses an interesting approach. He argues an opposing viewpoint to the one presented in the reading, establishing lines of controversy which certainly involves the student in a much fuller sense than a mere passive reading would accomplish.

### Example 3

In Reading 11, the author's views on **row spacing** (1e) are expressing the prevailing view at the time (1976). From the presentation of my treatment of the topic, you may conclude that the standard width of 3.60 m is not acceptable in many situations. Widths between 2 m and 3 m may achieve superior results depending on the natural influences on the respective habitat. Since tractors and implements for narrow spacings are today more easily available than in the past, the case against closer spacing is on shaky ground if other factors speak for it.

In the following, I present an argument against the author's opinion on **post planting treatment** (under paragraph c): "The young vines should be allowed to sprawl the first year, so that root development can be maximised". This statement is not proven by research and contradicts experience. P. May (1986) raises this question: "Should their trunk be formed during this (the first) season or should the vine be pruned back to two nodes at the end of the season, as is often done with the idea that this will produce plants with a strong root system?" This is unproven and against the generally weakening effect of pruning."

Another strong argument against the widespread practice is found in the German textbook on viticulture: "The shoot formed in the first year is the prerequisite for a trunk which will be efficient and free of wounds. (Vogt, 1977; my own translation from the German language).

Here are, then, a range of techniques for engaging external students more actively with the readings but the nature of the subject and the level of study being undertaken will also considerably affect decisions.

### Conclusion

There have been many developments occurring in distance education in the tertiary Australian scene during 1989. Now that CSU has designated DEC status, in conjunction with CSU-Mitchell, the challenge is to continue producing high quality learning materials for our students. Small refinements to basic learning materials, as presented in this article, are part of this ongoing process. There is also the prospect that some of our packages may be used by other institutions, and so there is a need for increasing professionalism in terms of the writing of external packages, using innovative instructional design practices and improved print technology.

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## TEXTBOOK SELECTION: EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

HEMMINGS, B and BATTERSBY, D.

### Abstract

As the task of selecting an appropriate textbook for a course is difficult this article presents a procedure (checklist) which instructors might adopt to assist in their decision making. The Textbook Selection Checklist is developed from a strong empirical base and has been trialled to assess the relative merits of introductory and educational psychology textbooks published since 1975. The results of this assessment are provided and the implications for students, instructors, and publishers are discussed.

### Introduction

Textbook authors must meet many demands. In particular authors must consider those instructors who teach more advanced classes and who demand that any introductory text prepares the student for higher level study. Moreover, the author must take into account the needs of the publisher who prints and distributes the text. In addition, writers must be masters to their own philosophies about what constitutes a well-written text. To attempt to satisfy all these demands is the responsibility of the author.

Not unlike the textbook authors, those responsible for selecting texts for a course face an equally daunting task. Quereshi (1981) reports that some instructors have been known to rely on word of mouth advertisements in periodicals and other haphazard techniques to fulfil their selection requirements. Such a situation is fraught with misadventure since, besides the instructor, the textbook is usually the single most pervasive influence in a course.

The aim of this paper is to develop a checklist which can be used to assess the suitability of a textbook. The checklist focusses attention on the instructional characteristics of textbooks. Accordingly, the checklist is probably most appropriate in combination with those commonly used criteria for textbook selection such as: Is the content of the book appropriate to the students' ability level? Does the book 'fit' the course content? Is the book realistically priced?

The basis of the checklist is a series of questions each of which is discussed below with examples drawn from textbooks used in psychology and educational psychology courses.

1. What provision is made for difficult concepts and/or terminology e.g. technical terms?

According to Reder and Anderson (1980) a typical college/university textbook contains approximately four hundred pages of text, tens of thousands of facts and one hundred and fifty thousand words. Not surprisingly, many students have difficulty learning effectively from texts overloaded with new technical terms and/or unfamiliar content. Learning from textbooks can be facilitated when authors explain concepts thoroughly and highlight accurately the salient ideas (Hartley, 1988). Bartley (1983)

suggests that a shortcoming of many textbooks in psychology is that they provide few definitions. According to Bartley some books rarely take their readers beyond the common everyday meanings of words. In order to assist the reader in understanding technical vocabulary and novel information, *italic*, **bold type** or underlining are sometimes employed when the terminology is first introduced into (and defined) the text (Hartley, 1981). As well, a 'running glossary' placed within the margin can benefit readers (McConnell, 1980). An orthodox glossary is also used to explain further the new words and phrases used in the text. Footnotes on the other hand, serve only to distract the readers.

2. What kinds of instructional aids are provided throughout each chapter?

- a. *Summaries*: According to Hartley (1981) summaries have at least three possible (interacting) roles: first, they **inform** about the content of the text so readers can decide whether or not they want to read particular chapters; second, summaries **orient** readers by telling them what the text is about and how it is organised; and third, summaries **help** with the recall and understanding of the text by presenting the main points or conclusions. Summaries provided at the start of a chapter may perform all three roles but evidence suggests that the summaries positioned at the end of a text are more effective. The post-text summaries not only serve as a means of information retrieval but also allow the reader to attach text details to the main ideas (Reder and Anderson, 1980).
- b. *Behavioural Objectives*: Textbook writers usually employ behavioural objectives to inform readers about what they should be able to do having read and studied the text. This instructional technique is especially useful when readers are presented with poorly-structured materials and when learners have to respond to the instructional material in different ways and at a different pace (Hartley, 1981; Winne, 1982).
- c. *Advance Organisers*: Advance organisers orient readers to new material and at the same time assist them to remember what they already know. They provide a 'mental scaffolding' on which to construct new ideas (Slavin, 1988). Advance organisers have been shown to have advantages when the reading material has been poorly organised and/or is unfamiliar, when readers are inexperienced with the subject matter and when the reading task has called for either detailed recall or more general gist abstraction (Mayer, 1979; Tyler, Delaney and Kinnucan, 1983).
- d. *Adjunct Questions*: Questions inserted in the text are beneficial when they are clear and simple. Spatial and typographic cueing are also utilised to highlight questions and to separate them from the text (Hartley, 1978). Factual questions posed before relevant content lead to a specific form of learning; whereas, similar kinds of questions given after the relevant content result in a different form of learning. Such questioning techniques often result in a more thorough processing of the text. More abstract-type questions appear to promote learning when they are placed near the relevant paragraphs (Hartley, 1981).
- e. *Pre-tests*: Some authors use pre-tests to cue readers to the sorts of concepts and issues they will probably be asked about at the conclusion of their reading and/or course. The evidence suggests that students are likely to do better in a post-test if these items appeared in the pre-test (Hartley, 1981).

### 3. How is each chapter structured typographically?

- a. *Headings/Subheadings*: According to Brooks, Dansereau, Spurlin and Holley (1983) headings influence cognitive processing in at least three ways: first, by acting as signals for prior knowledge relevant to a given topic; second, by accentuating the relationship among the facts and concepts in a specified reading; and third, by providing retrieval cues for future recognition and recall. Headings are usually placed in the text (embedded) or in the margin. Hartley (1981) suggests that it is sometimes easier to find marginal headings, and to locate material in text that use marginal headings. If an author uses a 'running glossary', then an embedded heading may be more satisfactory as a processing aid (Brooks et al., 1983).

Text printed in long strings of CAPITALS is more difficult to read when compared with the same text printed in lower-case letters (Hartley, 1981). It follows then, that both headings and subheadings would be of more value to a textbook chapter if printed in lower-case lettering (in bold face, if necessary) with initial capitals. In many situations, headings and subheadings are likely to be more effective if they are written in the form of questions rather than in the form of simple statements. Questions encourage readers to analyse what they are reading and to look for related facts and ideas. Less able and younger readers are more likely to benefit from headings/subheadings presented in a question form (Hartley and Trueman, 1983).

- b. *Other Cueing Procedures*: Generally instructional text includes many different parts viz., lists, tables, graphics, figures, flow charts, and number sequences. In order to enhance learning, the typography of the text should not interrupt or distract the reader. However, clarity in text is related to organisation (layout) and spacing (Hartley, 1988). For example, list-like materials are more easily perceived and learned if cued spatially. Spacing may represent the spaces between lines, words, paragraphs, and other sections. Moreover, both segmenting and indenting text significantly improves reading comprehension (Fraser and Schwartz, 1979). Interestingly, segmentation and spatial cues probably impinge upon different aspects of a reader's comprehension. That is, segmentation cues could affect the efficiency of input, whereas spatial cues might affect a reader's ability to relocate previously read material (Fraser and Schwartz, 1979).

### 4. What types of illustrative materials are used and are they presented effectively?

- a. *Illustrations*: Pictures and other forms of visual illustrations are capable of serving a variety of functions viz., to present new information, offer comparisons, motivate readers, change the pace of a text, gain attention and summarise materials (Brody, 1984). However, the effects of text illustrations depend on how they are used, both by learners and by those who design instructional texts (Levie and Lentz, 1982). Goldstein, Bailis and Chance (1983), for example, found that college level students seldom made serious use of the illustrations in psychology textbooks. They found that only 6% of the students surveyed 'repeatedly and consistently' used illustrations for study purposes. It does seem that illustrations that are neatly presented, simply and clearly captioned and placed appropriately in the text, do provide the reader with a very effective learning and/or study aid.

- b. *Tables, Graphs and Other Diagrammatic Forms.* Diagrams may attract, distract or even confuse a reader. Hartley's (1981) view is that, textbook diagrams, especially tables and graphs, are presented poorly, and as a result, provide the reader with a difficult learning task. An effective diagram should show and highlight trends and exceptions which are readily seen by the viewer (Ehrenberg, 1977). It needs noting, however, that reading tables, graphs, flow charts etc. is a skill that must be learned, preferably forming part of the reading, writing, and mathematics curricula (Hartley, 1978). A textbook writer should provide instructions on how to use and to understand the diagrams that occur throughout the book. One needs to consider the problems posed to learners, who are confronted with algorithms and information mapping for the first time.

5. **What provision is made for self-testing?**

Pre-tests, behavioural objectives and adjunct questions can have specific benefits for learners if worded and presented appropriately. The same applies to questions placed at the end of chapters which can encourage a cognitive review of the material, and as a consequence, inhibit forgetting of both quizzed and nonquizzed information (Benton, Glover and Monkowski, 1983; Whilite, 1982). However, processing aids such as post-test questions are more likely to enhance the performance of lower-ability readers (Whilite, 1982). Interestingly, learners who are taught or told to generate their own instructional adjuncts, recall more information following reading than students who merely read the text (Dee-Lucas and Di Vesta, 1980).

6. **What follow-up procedures can be used?**

With few exceptions, textbooks are properly referenced and indexed. However, not all textbook writers provide additional notes and/or suggestions for further reading. Those authors who consider these practices as important sometimes outline the reasons why a particular reference was selected and also suggest further material as recommended reading.

7. **Is there a clear and deliberate plan established by the author for the reader to follow?**

Effective textbooks invariably outline to potential users how best to read and/or to study the materials presented. For example, different instructions for first-year students and the more advanced readers often appear at the beginning of some texts. The sensible use of segmentation and spatial cueing is also an essential for authors striving to create textual clarity.

**Other Considerations**

*Information accuracy:* An effective textbook not only presents its content in a logical and purposeful manner but also provides information which is correct and properly referenced. There are, however, many instances of inaccuracies which have appeared within education and psychology texts e.g. the Milwaukee study, the Pygmalion effect, and the Burt twin studies (Sommer and Sommer, 1983).

*Inclusive text:* According to Bertilson, Springer and Fierke (1982) college/university students may be learning narrow and restricted views of female sex roles because many of the textbooks to which they are exposed contain very few female referents. For this reason gender representation is now an established criterion in selecting college textbooks. Apart from sexual prejudice, other biases (viz., nationalistic and racial) should be considered by those instructors choosing textbooks for various courses.

*Humour and colour:* Certain textbook writers attempt to utilise a 'learning can be fun' format by employing both humour and colour in their work. According to Klein, Bryant and Zillman (1982) humour is possibly related to reading enjoyment but has no association with interest, persuasibility and the capacity to initiate further reading. In fact, the use of humour in introductory textbooks appears to result in the loss of an author's credibility. Similarly, colour, if not used consistently and in limited amounts, can be of detriment to an author's writing if its purpose is not explained fully to the reader (Hartley, 1981).

### The Effective Textbook Checklist

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, the following checklist has been developed. It comprises 40 Yes/No questions, divided into seven sections.

#### The Textbook Selection Checklist

Please circle the appropriate response.

##### I. *Coping with difficult words/concepts*

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Is italic or bold type used?                            | Yes/No |
| 2. Are new concepts listed or defined?                     | Yes/No |
| 3. Does a glossary appear within the textbook?             | Yes/No |
| 4. If yes, is it a 'running glossary' found in the margin? | Yes/No |
| 5. Are footnotes avoided?                                  | Yes/No |

##### II. *The use of instructional aids*

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 6. Does an overview or summary precede each chapter?  | Yes/No |
| 7. Is there a summary at the end of each chapter?   | Yes/No |
| 8. Is there an advance organiser used at the beginning of the chapter?                                    | Yes/No |
| 9. If yes, does it provide a useful framework that helps clarify the ideas ahead?                         | Yes/No |
| 10. Are behavioural objectives available for use?   | Yes/No |
| 11. Are additional questions inserted into the text?  | Yes/No |
| 12. If yes, do they adequately alert readers as to what information follows?                              | Yes/No |
| 13. Does the author, by the use of instructional aids, indicate to the reader what material is important? | Yes/No |

### III. *Typographical organisation*

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 14. Are the heading levels coded clearly and do they appear consistently within the chapters? | Yes/No |
| 15. Do major headings appear in lower case?   | Yes/No |
| 16. Are subheadings written in the form of a question?  | Yes/No |
| 17. Are spatial cues effective for scanning?  | Yes/No |
| 18. Do chapters provide cues which are simple and clear to follow?                            | Yes/No |
| 19. Is the text 'chunked' to promote more efficient reading?                                  | Yes/No |

### IV. *Presentation and appropriateness of illustrative materials*

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 20. Are the illustrations used (i.e., pictures, diagrams, cartoons and photographs) relevant to the text?                     | Yes/No |
| 21. Do the illustrations help to explain the text?  | Yes/No |
| 22. Do the illustrations provide crucial information for understanding the text?  | Yes/No |
| 23. Does the illustrative material have captions that are clear and relatively self-explanatory?                              | Yes/No |
| 24. Is illustrative material positioned nearby to the text reference?   | Yes/No |
| 25. If yes, is it referenced clearly?   | Yes/No |
| 26. Does the author use a variety of materials (including, flow charts, algorithms & information mapping) to maintain appeal? | Yes/No |
| 27. If yes, are clear instructions given as to how to use these illustrative aids?  | Yes/No |

### V. *Provision for self-testing*

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 28. Are questions provided at the end of each chapter to test understanding?                               | Yes/No |
| 29. Is the questioning aimed at an appropriate level?  | Yes/No |
| 30. Are there answers available for the reader's use?  | Yes/No |
| 31. If yes, is information available which pinpoints the answers within the text e.g. paragraph 3 page 67? | Yes/No |

### VI. *Follow-up*

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 32. Does the author provide additional notes and/or suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter? | Yes/No |
| 33. If yes, does the author discuss the relevance of the reference?   | Yes/No |
| 34. Are the follow-up materials appropriate for introductory students?  | Yes/No |

### VII. *Clarity of the author's intent*

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 35. Does the author suggest to the reader how the textbook should be read?                                   | Yes/No |
| 36. If yes, does the author provide different instructions for beginning students and more advanced readers? | Yes/No |
| 37. Do the intentions of the author 'link together' well?  | Yes/No |
| 38. If yes, do the cues provided by headings/subheadings assist in making the text more cohesive?            | Yes/No |
| 39. Is there a logic and a consistency in the page and chapter design?                                       | Yes/No |
| 40. Would the majority of readers find the reading required easy?  | Yes/No |

Checklist Score - total the number of Yes responses.

Maximum Score = 40.

Twenty introductory Educational Psychology textbooks published since 1975 have been evaluated by the authors in accordance with the checklist (see Appendix A). The number of 'yes' responses recorded on the checklist is one measure of the suitability of the textbooks reviewed. Those textbooks receiving a checklist score greater than 21 are considered to be most satisfactory. Those with scores between 16 and 21 are adjudged as acceptable and below 16 are considered the least satisfactory. The checklist ratings, and the textbooks chosen for analysis, are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Checklist Rating and Textbook Name**

	Checklist Score	Author(s)/Year of Publication
Most Satisfactory	26	Woolfolk and Nicolich (1980)
	25	Du Bois, Alverson and Staley (1979)
		Gibson (1976)
		Travers (1979)
	24	* Magoon and Garrison (1976)
	22	* Biggs and Telfer (1987)
		* Cronbach (1977)
		Kagan and Lang (1978)
Acceptable	21	Goodwin and Klausmeier (1975)
		* Lefrancois (1988)
	20	* Gage and Berliner (1988)
		* Glover and Bruning (1987)
	19	Smith (1975)
	16	* Biehler (1978)
		Johnson (1979)
		Linskie (1977)
Least Satisfactory	14	* Blair, Jones and Simpson (1975)
	12	Bigge and Hunt (1980)
	11	* Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian (1978)
		* Charles (1976)

*Note:* Those textbooks marked with an asterisk \* are revised editions. Interestingly, the first edition textbooks tended to rate higher on the textbook checklist compared with the revised textbooks.

## Major Textbook Weaknesses

Instructional aids such as advance organisers, adjunct questions and summaries, in the textbooks surveyed, were either poorly designed or used too infrequently. As well, only 50% of the introductory textbooks reviewed indicated specifically to the reader, through the use of instructional aids, which material was important and demanded special attention. Furthermore, only 25% of the textbook authors offered any constructive advice to their readers as to how best to read their textbooks. For example, some authors suggested that readers either scan chapters to see how headings, subheadings, lists and inserts had been consistently used or read a particular chapter first which described in detail how best to utilise summaries, advance organisers, etc. Surprisingly, not one author suggested that a beginning student or a more advanced student needed to approach the text in a particular way. In fact, supplementary items such as study guides and accompanying exercises were very rarely available for even the instructor's use.

In 70% of the textbooks analysed, additional notes and/or suggestions for further reading were provided at the end of each chapter. Strikingly, only 45% of the textbooks provided readers with questions to test their understanding. Questions that were provided usually asked for simple, factual-type responses. Moreover, very few authors supplied answers to the questions given. Even more surprising, not one text was 'chunked' to facilitate more efficient reading. In actual fact, many of the words which ended individual lines were split/hyphenated to keep a straight right-hand-side margin.

Several of the textbooks contained headings and subheadings which were almost impossible to differentiate because they were printed in very similar type. As well, 70% of the major headings in the textbooks were printed in upper case which made reading quite difficult. Just on 35% of the textbooks assessed had chapters which provided no cues as to what was to follow.

Most illustrations did not offer any critical information for understanding the text but often served just as decorative space-fillers. Furthermore, in 45% of the textbooks examined no new word listing and/or glossary appeared. These observations probably contribute to the checklist finding that only 50% of the books were seen as being relatively easy to read and understand.

## Final Note

The Textbook Selection Checklist is a start or base for instructors and/or students wishing to judge the suitability of a textbook for practical use. Of the twenty introductory educational psychology and psychology textbooks surveyed and evaluated only four can be recommended as suitable instructional texts viz., Woolfolk and Nicolich (1980); Du Bois, Alverson and Staley (1979); Gibson (1976) and Travers (1979).

By the beginning of the next decade more 'quality' introductory educational psychology and psychology textbooks should be available in the marketplace. If textbook users voice their protest strongly enough, healthy competition between authors and publishing companies will increase to an extent that improved designing occurs.

Clearly, the responsibility for producing better and more effective textbooks rests with textbook writers and publishers. It is they who need to make use of current research findings about effective texts.

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## Appendix A

### Alphabetical List of Textbooks Assessed (including Checklist score)

- Ausubel, D., Novak, J. and Hanesian, H. (1978) *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston. (11)
- Biehler, R. (1978) *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Co. (16)
- Bigge, M. and Hunt, M. (1980) *Psychological Foundations of Education*, San Francisco, Harper and Row. (12)
- Biggs, J. and Telfer, R. (1987) *The Process of Learning*, Sydney, Prentice-Hall. (22)
- Blair, G., Jones, R. and Simpson, R. (1975) *Educational Psychology*, London, MacMillan Publishing Co. (14)
- Charles, C. (1976) *Educational Psychology: The Instructional Endeavour* Saint Louis, The C.V. Mosby Company. (11)
- Cronbach, L. (1977) *Educational Psychology*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (22)

- Du Bois, N., Alverson, G. and Staley, R. (1979) *Educational Psychology and Instructional Decisions*, Georgetown, The Dorsey Press. (25)
- Gage, N. and Berliner, D. (1988) *Educational Psychology*, Dallas, Houghton Mifflin Company. (20)
- Gibson, J. (1976) *Psychology for the Classroom*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall. (25)
- Glover, J. and Bruning, R. (1987) *Educational Psychology: Principles and Applications*, Toronto, Little, Brown and Co. (20)
- Goodwin, W. and Klausmeier, H. (1975) *Facilitating Students Learning: An Introduction to Educational Psychology*, London, Harper and Row. (21)
- Johnson, D. (1979) *Educational Psychology*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall. (16)
- Kagan, J. and Lang, C. (1978) *Psychology and Education: An Introduction*, Chicago, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (22)
- Lefrancois, G. (1988) *Psychology for Teaching: A Bear Always Sometimes Rarely Never Always Faces the Front*, Belmont, California, Wadsworth Publishing Co. (21)
- Linskie, R. (1977) *The Learning Process: Theory and Practice*, Toronto, D. Van Nostrand Co. (16)
- Magoon, R. and Garrison, K. (1976) *Educational Psychology: An Integrated View*, Columbus, Charles E. Merrill. (24)
- Smith, M. (1975) *Educational Psychology and its Classroom Applications*, Boston, Allyn and Bacon. (19)
- Travers, J. (1979) *Educational Psychology*, Philadelphia, Harper and Row. (25)
- Woolfolk, A. and Nicolich, L. (1980) *Educational Psychology for Teachers*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall. (26)

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