Progressively, advanced foreign studies might then ensure that an in-depth study of whatever focus would not fail to account for the broader cultural and institutional setting in which it occurs. Comparative awarenesses could be made explicit aims of such studies and could be developed intra- and institutional setting in which it occurs. The departure point for such studies might vary; it might, for example, be political rather than literary, the present rather than the past, Austria rather than Germany, provincial rather than Parian. It is important, however, that we ensure that whatever the initial perspective, it comes to be seen as an integral part of a more complex whole, the most advanced studies of which would require a battery of inquiry drawing upon and confining a range of disciplinary perspectives. Initial topics would be chosen with at least some references to their potential for leading into and developing more general perspectives. Such integration could help to safeguard against texts being seen as arbitrary and hence unplanned in relation to language development programmes or as pretentious in that they form a kind of specialised addenda to a generalised language learning approach. More importantly, except for the philologist, a language would come to be seen as a tool for something beyond itself. In this respect it may be seen that the implementation of the principles outlined here, without being specifically vocational, would nevertheless ensure that each student could develop a more vocation-oriented profile of studies than the traditional courses concentrating on literary scholarship have permitted to date. Moreover, such studies should provide students with a more flexible range of perspectives of "use" in their private as well as their occupational lives. Modern language studies would then achieve their more proper broader aims, and the tyranny of the traditional improper understanding of "culture" would be reduced accordingly.

Let us stress that we are in no way suggesting that the university abandon its cultural role for a purely instrumental role. The university remains for the foreseeable future perhaps the last resort where pure inquiry may take place in a spirit of independence and the "philosophically" based departments must continue to educate towards a liberal culture, free of economic, political and social demands. At the same time, they are doing everyone a grave disservice by attempting to ignore or disparage the students' own desires and interests. Accountability and flexibility, realistically based on current and projected staff levels are vital to the future of all "traditional" university departments but to none more so than departments of modern languages.

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Changes to the regulations of various educational institutions have probably had less impact on the composition of the university student population than the major social changes occurring outside them. The average family size has fallen and childbearing is completed by a younger age now than it was 30 years ago. Younger, comparatively young mothers may then wish to begin or return to tertiary studies. The pressures on them to remain at home with their children have relaxed to some extent so that they may feel able to undertake tertiary studies even before their children begin school. The coincidence of a decline in the average age at which people first become parents and an increase in the average length of time that women stay in education may have produced a number of students who begin families before graduating. More young single mothers are keeping their children and these women may be strongly motivated to acquire professional qualifications in order to support themselves and their children. As single mothers are comparatively rare in the population it is unlikely that this change in social practices would have had a major impact on the composition of the university student body.

Several issues have already arisen concerning the provision of care for the children of university students. Federal and State policies on child-care provide for the establishment of neighbourhood centres to accommodate all those children living in the area. "Free of these centres have yet been constructed" so many parents have to travel considerable distances to reach one and compete with full-time working parents for scarce places. If parents work or study in suburban remote from where they live, neighbourhood centres can involve them in arduous journeys, anxiety over the welfare of their distant children and unnecessary curtailment of breast feeding for infants. The provision of on-campus child-care has been advocated in order to reduce the amount of travel and to provide "good quality" care which is not a student service. Very poor students may have to pay the charges. The presence of on-campus child-care would have a major impact on the number of parents who can continue their studies. The absence of these data has had serious consequences for child-care planning, as no university can know whether a creche is likely to be full-time working parents for scarce places. Although several has already been offered to parents who may be unable to afford the rates charged at on-campus child-care are not a student service. Even when the need is recognized and centres established, few universities have provided direct grants to parents, although some have offered prenominations at nominal rents. The necessary funds have been obtained by activities of co-operatives and limited companies among the parents.

Establishing an effective university child-care service can be seriously hampered by difficulty in determining the extent of the need. No Australian university asks questions about the number of students' dependent children and only 20% record marital status. These items are omitted on the grounds that students might find them "intrusive". As most Australian universities ask their students questions about age and national background, both of which are seen as intrusive by many people, their reluctance to ask about parental responsibilities seems difficult to accept on these grounds. The absence of these data has had serious consequences for child-care planning, as no university can know whether a creche is needed. The reasons are keeping their children and these women may be strongly motivated to acquire professional qualifications in order to support themselves and their children. As
Marked differences in both demographic and enrolment patterns also occurred within the parent group. Most of the differences between parents and childless students were revealed by the responses of mothers, while the responses of fathers resembled those of non-parents.

Survey Design and Response Rate

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 50 parents and 50 non-parents. Four demographic and four enrolment questions were asked of every student; parents answered another seven questions on the children’s ages and their current and prospective child-care arrangements and needs. Ninety-three per cent (N=14.730) of the enrolling students completed the questionnaire and 11% of them (N=1550) reported that they had dependent children. Information from every tenth non-parent and every parent was coded. The chi-square test was used to examine associations between variables and the level of significance was set at 0.02.

Results

The four demographic variables studied were sex, age, marital status and responsibility for dependent children. The sex ratio of student parents did not differ from that of non-parents (i.e., 61% of both groups were male and 39% female). However, the proportion was markedly over-represented, while in non-parents. Forty-three per cent (N=14.730) of the enrolling students completed the questionnaire and 11% of them (N=1550) reported that they had dependent children. Information from every tenth non-parent and every parent was coded. The chi-square test was used to examine associations between variables and the level of significance was set at 0.02.

The four enrolment questions covered graduate status, part-time versus full-time enrolment, faculty and year of course. Student parents differed from non-parents in all aspects of their enrolment patterns; they were more likely to be postgraduate, to be in faculties other than those of their students and to be in the second year of their course. Eighty percent of parents but only 18% of non-parents were postgraduate students. Part-time study was comparatively rare among non-parents (22%), but frequent among parents (72%). In some faculties and boards of studies (e.g., Education and Social Studies), parents were markedly over-represented, while in others (e.g., Architecture, Engineering, Medicine and Science) parents were enrolled in only half the proportion that would be expected from the overall distribution of students across faculties.

The most alarming finding was the large number of children currently in unsatisfactory child-care arrangements. This figure is likely to be an underestimate as parents are unlikely to admit that they are unsatisfactory. In a survey of a smaller sample of parents; however, the results were alarming. Eighty percent of children in unsatisfactory arrangements, presumably because parents have not been able to afford to hire a child-care worker. The most frequent problems were lack of available child-care spaces and high costs. School-age children were involved in problems which directly affected them, e.g., child-care workers frequently going on leave and high costs. School-age children formed a large proportion of those in unsatisfactory arrangements, presumably because this age group is largely neglected in child-care programmes and the need for after-school or holiday care is forgotten.

Clearly a survey of this type can only be viewed as a preliminary approach to an understanding of the lifestyles of student parents and it has raised more questions than it has answered. Do mothers have a more limited concept of family roles than fathers or non-parents? What is the effect of responsibility for dependent children on academic achievement? What methods do tertiary institutions assist them? These questions will be answered. Again the picture is complicated by the greater tendency of mothers to enrol in humanities courses which are not as likely to be postgraduate or to have a child-care needs. Mothers were more likely to be postgraduate students, and the effects of the fatigue and worry caused to their parents by long travelling times and high costs. The greater proportion of parents who used unsatisfactory arrangements, presumably because of their greater child-care responsibilities? What is the effect of responsibility for dependent children on academic achievement? What methods do tertiary institutions assist them? These questions will be answered. Again the picture is complicated by the greater tendency of mothers to enrol in humanities courses which are not as likely to be postgraduate or to have a child-care needs.
at greater risk than pre-schoolers because of the absence of facilities for the older group. As dissatisfaction was far greater among parents using local neighbourhood creches than those using university centres, local creches seem to be an unsuitable form of care for tertiary students' children. The problem of on-campus child-care has received attention only comparatively recently and both knowledge of parents' problems and provision for them is inadequate. There is no reason to suppose that the numbers of student parents will decline. Indeed, as the proportion of two-career families increases, there is every reason to suppose that the problems will become more pressing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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