STAFF EXCHANGES: A FLEXIBLE APPROACH
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'Between the State University of Euphonia (colloquially known as Euphonic State) and the University of Rummidge, there had long existed a scheme for the exchange of visiting teachers...'

In its triennial report for 1982-4, the Tertiary Education Commission (as it then was), called for a 'degree of flexibility and responsiveness' in staffing policies in universities to meet the changing academic demands of the 1980s. The Commission endorsed the Universities Council's recommendations on flexibility, and made the following statement:

'There are, however, some (staffing policies) which the Council considers might be given greater emphasis. These include the increasing use of secondments between tertiary institutions and staff exchanges with the private sector and public authorities. The sharing of staff between universities and other employers could be used to greater advantage. While there are many obstacles to such arrangements, the principal one being perceived loss of scope, exists universities to explore them more actively.'

FIGURE 1 A HYPOTHETICAL BILATERAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution A</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
<th>Period 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Away</td>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Economist</td>
<td>Philosopher</td>
<td>Mathematician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting</td>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Mathemati­can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution B</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
<th>Period 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(mirror image)</td>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Econom­ist</td>
<td>Philosopher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visiting</td>
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<td>Physicist</td>
<td>Mathemati­can</td>
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Programme Types

Two general types of staff exchange schemes seem possible. The easier to operate, is of the bilateral variety, i.e. either between two universities, or between a university and another employer. The second is a multilateral and might involve several universities and other organisations in the exchange of personnel. This type might potentially offering a wide range of benefits to participating individuals and institutions may involve significant cost savings

In both classifications one could conceive of exchanges of the 'carbon copy' variety, i.e. academics in the same discipline, exchanges between academics in quite different discipline areas, or even exchanges between academics and administrators. Exchanges might occur simultaneously. Alternatively they may have some overlap of presence by participants in each location, or they may be totally overlapping in each location.

The configuration in Figure 1 illustrates how a bilateral scheme might possess several of the above features, viz. a 'carbon copy' exchange between historians in period 1, a 'carbon copy' swap between physicists in periods 2, 3 and 4 with overlap in each institution, between philosophers in periods 2 and 5 with overlap, and an interdisciplin­ary exchange in periods 4 and 5 between an economist and a mathematician.

A simple multilateral scheme involving three institutions operating over three periods is illustrated in Figure 2. For simplicity in this example no 'carbon copy' exchanges take place. As with the hypotheti­cal scheme in Figure 1 there is a balance between staff on leave and visiting staff at each institution over the time in which the programme operates

For multilateral schemes, and indeed for complex bilateral schemes, there would be a need for a 'balancing of the books' from time to time. During the currency of the scheme each institution in turn would face periods in which extra costs would be incurred for the temporary replacement of absent staff in a form of short-term contract which is acceptable to FAUSA. If there was a net deficit at the end of the accounting period this should be adjusted. Of course, at other times the institution would have surplus staff who could be used to substitute for an extra member of staff of virtually no cost, assuming that participants receive only salary to cover their own time.

Benefits

It is convenient to classify benefits into those flowing to institutions and those to individuals. From an institutional viewpoint when staff are given the opportunity to work in a new and different environment, their knowledge and teaching expertise should be enhanced. Their home institution stands to gain from this upon their return. Non-participating staff members also gain from interaction with the visiting staff member. Students may benefit from a more cosmopolitan and varied learning environment.

Well planned exchanges can assist in matching staff workloads in participating departments. Where variations in student enrolments temporarily distort departmental workloads within a school or faculty, an exchange between staff in different discipline areas may remove this problem. This argument can similarly be applied between schools or faculties though implementation will usually be a more politically formidable task.

Benefits also accrue directly to the participants in a number of ways. An exchange may present the opportunity to depart temporarily from a job environment in which the academic or administrative function is not performing at full potential. This may have arisen in part because of a perceived imbalance between academic and administrative functions. As with other academic leaves, a staff exchange will remove administrative burdens. In a new environment more time can be devoted to academic pursuits.

Where exchanges have an interest in departmen­tal administration, experience at another institution can be useful in a rather different way. By observ­ing operations in a new environment they will be able either to suggest or implement new administrative measures or both when they return home.

Where universities of different sizes agree to exchanging staff a type of personal benefit is likely to arise. Staff from the smaller institution will appreciate the opportunity to move into a larger department with the associated intellectual stimulation which it usually involves. Lecturers from larger universities, in contrast, may enjoy a break from the 'pressure cooker' atmosphere to contribute in the quieter setting of a small depart­ment. When exchanges occur between universities and industry the opportunity to experience the alternative environment should be welcomed by both parties. The academic can observe the business world at first hand and appreciate the con­straints faced by executives in operating firms in the present economic conditions. The executive has an opportunity to reflect on his or her business problems in a setting conducive to clear thinking, and to impart to students a first hand appreciation of the business environment.

Costs

From an institutional viewpoint the costs of support­ing staff exchanges are relatively small. The
only cost in addition to a normal salary package which needs to be met to facilitate a programme's operation, is a contribution towards travel and relocation costs by participants.

An obvious strategy is to set such grants on a scale equivalent to that offered to participants in Outside Study Programmes. If a university wishes strongly to encourage international exchanges, however, more generous financial arrangements may be advisable e.g. complete coverage of all economic class air travel by the academic and her or his immediate family or, at the least, facilities such as this might cost a university the equivalent of a month's salary per individual or a little more. Because of the effect of taxes, an individual would face a much greater burden in financing travel.

Programme Operation

There are several potential problem areas which must be addressed before a programme can commence successful operation. Staff exchanges probably require more careful planning and monitoring if participants can live at the standard to which they are normally accustomed without financial embarrassment. This is more likely to happen if most of the following conditions hold:

- Costs of living are similar in participating locations.
- Salary levels are similar for participating academics.
- Participating institutions are willing to maintain superannuation arrangements, annual leave arrangements (if applicable) and similar entitlements. This can be achieved without difficulty.
- Employers provide travel support to offset out of pocket expenses of participants and their families (mentioned above).
- Personnel involved are willing to exchange housing and motor vehicles. This requires flexibility from both parties. In international exchanges, particularly, neither the quality of housing and furnishing nor of automobiles is always similar. There is, however, great potential cost savings from the pocket expenses of participants and their families. Provision of information on schools, churches, recreation facilities, health services and so on will aid this process.

Two Exchanges

During 1982 two members of Deakin University undertook staff exchanges under the arrangements established by the exchange between the University of Melbourne and the University of Tennessee. In late 1981 Philip Scott, head of the Department of History at the University of Melbourne, left, to take up a part-time position at the University of Tennessee for the academic year 1982-83. He was replaced by Ian Donnachie, a Senior Lecturer in the History Department at the University of Melbourne.

Maxwell's exchange was of the "carbon copy" variety taking place with Dr George A. Spiva, Professor of Economics in the College of Business Administration at the University of Tennessee. Maxwell and Spiva, both senior staff at their respective institutions, were able to employ their sabbatical leave in 1980. The two participants were economic historians with overlapping, though not identical, interests. The arrangement did not bring any financial benefits by way of relocation costs by participants.

During the first half of 1982, Roy Hay of the School of Social Sciences at Deakin University exchanged with Dr Ian Donnachie, Staff Tutor in History at the Scottish Regional Office of the Open University for a period of one year. Hay was able to leave Deakin under discussion for over a year, following a brief visit to Deakin by Dr Donnachie, while on study leave in 1980. The two participants were economic and social historians with overlapping, though not identical, teaching and research interests in the history of modern industrial societies. They both had experience of off-campus teaching methods and course preparation and had contributed substantially to a range of courses in their home universities. They also had direct experience of visiting each other country to which they were going. Dr Donnachie through his 1980 visit while Hay had been a part-time tutor-counsellor at the Open University during 1975-77. Hay had been born and educated in the United Kingdom. There were, of course, no language difficulties, familiarity with the administrative procedures was easily established and both participants were able to become productive in courses very quickly.

Maxwell's exchange was another 'carbon copy' type but this time taking place with Dr George A. Spiva, Professor of Economics in the College of Business Administration at the University of Tennessee, into Knoxville, from January to June, 1982. Despite significant differences in the size of each school involved — 20 staff and 450 students at Deakin's School of Management compared with 120 staff and 6000 students in Business Administration at the University of Tennessee — the exchange proceeded without difficulty. The need to arrange house and car exchanges with the department allocated duties to each visitor to operate effectively to pursue his major academic interests. Spiva, who specialises in Principles of Economics teaching, conducted the first unit in Deakin's on-campus Bachelor of Commerce programme. He received unanimous acclaim from students for his efforts. Additionally, he addressed off-campus Master of Business Administration students and gave a series of lectures in other institutions with the School's blessing. Maxwell conducted second and third year classes in one of the schools concerned.

He also devoted significant time to research into his major academic interests and, it was possible for the participants to establish which of the problems each had been encountering were specific to the institution he had left, and which were common to off-campus Universities. Opportunities for future collaboration and the exchange of resources were established. If the benefits from this with not be felt immediately, each participant's research and teaching benefited from the stimulation of a new group of colleagues, while, once initial apprehensions about the loss of a known contributor were overcome, the existing members of the department gained from the different approaches of the newcomer.

This 'carbon-copy' exchange proved relatively easy to accomplish. Participants were at the same point in the lecture cycle in both institutions, while salaries were not wildly out of line and exchanges were normally organised so that the exchange were not dramatic. If they had been, then some form of cost supplementation by one institution may have been necessary. Such a contingency for remaining on the home institution's payroll, problems of pay and superannuation were avoided. The domestic arrangements for the exchange which involved swapping houses, cars, and responsibility for services worked smoothly, thus removing a major potential source of anxiety. Time spent before the exchange in reaching agreement on all such issues proved to have been well spent. No major problems were experienced by either participant, either domestically or academically. Nor indeed of the institutions feel that they had sufficed while certain small, though tangible immediate benefits were obtained and the long-run gains from further activities set on foot during the exchange and the example set by a successful exchange should be of value for the future.

Conclusion

It would be unwise to generalise too much from only two successful exchanges but the personal experiences of the participants tend to reinforce the major points raised in the earlier sections of this paper. The individuals concerned did gain most of the benefits outlined, while the costs, though significant, were tolerable. The institutions benefited from a modest expenditure and a relatively small number of activities. Some, though not all of the advantages of an exchange scheme can be obtained from the well tried activities of study leave or outside studies programmes. But exchanges allow for or encourage greater continuity, ensure greater institutional involvement and hence the possibility of more direct institutional benefits and ensure a greater equity between institutions over the life of a programme. For institutions which do not have a scheme of outside studies, exchanges can be an effective additional resource for the reasons already outlined.

Footnotes

3. Ibid, Volume 1, Part 2, Advice of Universities Council, p. 79.