Academic background and achievement of single and married mothers undertaking tertiary study

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Currie and Baldock (1989) in a survey of mature age participation in tertiary education found that the participation rate of single women had altered over time. In the 1950s and 1960s the rate was low, but during the 1970s and early 1980s it increased dramatically while the participation rate of single male students declined. From 1973 to 1981, the number of married women increased from 35 to 101 in 1981, while the number of single women increased from 291 to 711 in 1981. Currie and Baldock suggest that this policy is an improvement. The proportion of married students who are undertaking tertiary education has increased. Currie and Baldock go on to say that this indicates that the proportion of married students has increased. Currie and Baldock's figures suggest that the proportion of married students has increased. Currie and Baldock's figures suggest that the proportion of married students has increased. Currie and Baldock's figures suggest that the proportion of married students has increased.

Initially, that mature age students are largely "recyclers", who already have a tertiary qualification and are returning to gain another. They are then seen as savers and as a way of repaying the opportunity to gain a first qualification. Currie and Baldock's figures suggest that there are many more mature age students coming from backgrounds and circumstances that enabled them to complete secondary school. They represent talent from earlier cohorts which was in danger of being wasted.

Secondly, that mature age students are a group of people maximising the time they spend as full-time students, and part-timers are supposed to have a slower success rate than full-time students. However, the figures show that it is only certain classes of part-timers who do poorly, not including well-motivated mature students.

Thirdly, that mature-age students are a poor group of students due to the length of time since they left school and the fact that many have early school leavers who enter tertiary education via special entry provisions. However, there is now substantial evidence that mature-age students are in fact an excellent investment in terms of generating higher salaries and subsequent lifelong workforce contributions (West et al., 1986).

The materials reported here concern a special subgroup of mature- age students — single and married mothers. Because of the specially vulnerable status of single parent families, a number of government initiatives have been directed to further education and training, notably the mature age provision initiatives (introduced in 1987) whereby social security recipients were able to take part in training programs while remaining in receipt of social security benefits. The aim was to make them eligible for such benefits. This was achieved by taking into account the number of hours spent in training.

Our intention was to conduct interviews with a relatively small sample of single and married mothers. However, it soon became apparent that our sample had already given a lot of thought to the issues that we would be exploring. It would be feasible to use a mail questionnaire that allowed generous room for comments. It then became possible to study a larger sample.

Some topics in the self-report questionnaires included social background, educational and employment history, reasons for return to study, university experience, social and material supports available, and experience of personal and family change. The sample consisted of married women who were at least 25 years old, and whose partners were at least 25 years old. All interviews were conducted over the telephone by interviewers who were trained in interviewing techniques.

The study was conducted in 1987-88, with a sample of 185 single and married mothers enrolled at Macquarie University (MU) and Macquarie Institute of Higher Education (MI) of the University of New South Wales (Macquarie). These two institutions were chosen because they are the largest in the University's educational system. The final sample comprised 185 single and 72 married mothers, 137 from MU (78 part-time and 51 single part-time) and 48 from MI (21 part-time and 27 single). The MU sample was somewhat older (mean age of 33.7) than those enrolled at MI (mean age of 33 years), but the ages of the single and married mothers were very similar. The University of Newcastle does not give enrolment figures for students who enroll as part-time.

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9. Which mothers turn to study? Currie and Baldock (1989) show that married age students are not a homogenous group. Some have already attained qualifications, but overall they come from less advantaged backgrounds than single students. Our sample represents this mix. Our study of the sample and the analysis of the data shows that there are differences in terms of age and marital status among the students.

Table 1: Entry qualifications of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>MU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Reasons for entering tertiary study

Reason                                    | Married | Single | MI | MU |
------------------------------------------|---------|--------|----|----|
Independence                                | 1        | 3      | 1  | 2  |
Personal growth                             | 16       | 15     | 14 | 15 |
Stimulus/fulfillment                        | 12       | 10     | 10 | 10 |
Goal/purpose                               | 1        | 2      | 2  | 2  |
Advance career                              | 14       | 21     | 32 | 12 |
Impediments/scholarship prospects           | 21       | 25     | 24 | 28 |
Approximate scholarship                      | 14       | 3      | 6  | 5  |
Other                                       | 1        | 5      | 10 | 12 |

However many married nurses were disillusioned or even outraged at nursing conditions and were hoping to use their degrees to "get away from hospitals". They considered their new education as an opportunity to use their education in a more positive way.

Table 3: Figures are for first, second and third degrees combined. Figures in brackets are percentages for the first year only.

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At the interview it was not usually said that "I want to go back to school"... but the interviewee was telling me that "You must go back to school..."... or "I want to go back to school...". It was always accompanied by a smile. One reason for wanting to go back to school was the enjoyment of doing something new. It was altruistic, brought financial independence and a sense of career training and provided the opportunity for new experiences.

As a group of "defectors" were immigrants from countries where they were unable to enter higher education for political reasons.
These of course are the feelings that Betty Friedan diagnosed long ago as women’s ‘problem without a name’. No longer ignored, it is now seen as a natural response to gender-based social opportunity. With an increasing age of forty, many married women respondents however had grown up to see erroneous educational and domestic employment as natural for women and even as romantic.

In consequence they came to experience disaffection as a personal and individual problem, which they described how she was finding it was her daughter’s school projects and housework more than others, and concluded that there was a message for her there. Others, particularly the non-single, had been pushed in their search for the household experiments of building and domesticated and by husbands and others who regarded a “wife” as by definition an inferior person.

Although frustrated abilities provided the main incentive to tertiary entry, it is important to stress the variety of age students (already enrolled) and their eldest. While many had first entered and then became disillusioned with domesticity, the sample included a group of younger women who had never been particularly disillusioned in their ideas. Some of these had gone into non-domestic work and in particular; others had run businesses, or worked in the social services, where jobs were available.

A further group of well-qualified and mainly married younger women were using their daughter’s answers in time for improving their qualifications while “at home with the children”, for example, or to improve their studying Japanese. While these women comprised only a small subgroup of the sample, they were more likely to be given the increasing participation among young women of establishing a career before motherhood is a goal (Froggatt-Sutton, 1978, p. 33).

Different and equally complex sets of reasons came from others. A group of married women had established an idea in their country of origin because of warfare and political problems, and found that, once established, their children were much happier for the way they had found, that they were working in a field they had always wanted.

In other cases it has been part of a work-related career, an early school leaver who had worked in a secretary until she developed RM. The funny thing about her heavy work commitments (including care of a severely mentally handicapped child) and dependents on her salary, having been trained by told by her that she was unemployable without further qualifications. Thus she had been able to obtain a scholarship to train as a speech pathologist to work with retarded children. Despite the fact that she was discouraged from going to separation, but later became encouraging. We want a “real job”, she “had a lot of support” from her group of men who see their wives as shallow, and elitist, and who only serve their view upwards when the prospect and proceeds in such an activity as study against their opposition.

Timing of Entry

Some one in twelve students gave as their major reason for tertiary entry the fact that for the first time they had the opportunity (Table 2). As the model age range was 35-44, this suggests that continuing unemployment in the 25-34 age group. At the same time, however, the age range of the married women was very wide. We therefore explored this area further by asking why this particular time was the most significant in their lives.

The explanations given make it clear that between the married women and families vary greatly. For some younger women, having a baby meant the chance to give up work and start studying for a better job while “at home with the baby”. More commonly married is not married; some married women; 17 married young child’s school entry, which freed up, for some time. This group sought freedom and more equal sharing of all household responsibilities, and a chance to continue their studies. The need for an equal sharing of all household responsibilities. One married man had started a course when his young child entered the school, although his wife was already employed. One married woman had studied a course when her child was school aged, but wanted to become independent of her husband and his income and decided to go to university. They have combined the family and work responsibilities and have often been very successful. The single mothers entered for reasons similar to the married group. They have had to do the courses but were already at work, and believed it might be a difficult for the married women, especially the married women who had remarried. Some married women had started a course when their child was school aged, but wanted to become independent of their husband and his income and decided to go to university. They have combined the family and work responsibilities and have often been very successful. The single mothers entered for reasons similar to the married group. They have had to do the courses but were already at work, and believed it might be a difficult for them. So I think I’m glad it turned out this way.

Enrolment patterns

Table 4 shows that the sample were concentrated in traditionally "female" areas of study and a comparison with Table 1 shows that the pattern had largely made different than younger women students.

Reasons given were that the "marriage and family" careers, especially the "marriage and family" careers, were more attractive because they involved working with people and helping people. That the amount of work would fit in with family responsibilities, and that their work in this course were sympathetic to their personal lives.

A professional science student for example commented in the all-time given, by the time she had graduated, she felt she had enough to the class that kept her from being home all the time. She had never been interested in her own community, and had not particularly.”

Only a small minority of students in the non-traditional areas, most were interested in the course and the field and the family and the family and the family. However, the need to continue was motivated to stay and succeed. This could be done by choosing courses that fitted into their family lives and organizing the future around long term goals.
Academic achievement

The academic performance of these students is not superior. Both married and single mothers obtained results well above the average for all mature age students and even above the average for all students. For the MU sample, for example, married mothers had a GPA of 2.77 (Grade Point Averages of 3.0 is equivalent to a B or credit average) and single mothers of 2.67, compared to 2.58 for all mature age students, and 2.59 for all students.

Five student mothers who had a GPA of 4.00, equivalent to straight A's and typical of only 0.1% of the total student population. MI does not convert grades to GPAs, but the same effect is evident. The married mothers averaged 7.75 A and B grades and the single mothers 6.3 A and B grades and 8 C grades.

The implications of this performance were reflected in self-evaluations of academic performance, where almost two-thirds of the sample rated themselves as "above average," almost one-third as "well above average" and only two percent as "below average." However, if it contrasts strikingly with the 66 percent who described themselves as coping "poorly" with university work and the 25 percent who thought they were coping "very poorly." There are probably two reasons for this discrepancy in opinions.

Firstly, assignments and study were often complicated under harrowing circumstances, though the night the family was in bed or in a state of guilt about shutting off the lights in favor of husband and children "righting and utlking" in the near background.

Secondly, the essay and assignments often involve topics that can be treated it at levels of tenure. Teacher-student relationships are sometimes treated as if from their senior school years, and don't usually have so much trouble finding an appropriate level at which to work.

The mature typers were however constant. They had been brought up to know what was expected and to be sure of themselves regardless. A good 50% of them had more than 10% of the others. Even though they often achieved above average grades, four in five they admitted they were not as well as they thought they were. For they had often time for study, and one in five (28% of the single) thought they would be getting "much higher" grades.

Some implications of the findings merit emphasis. Firstly, government policies have been critical in shaping the political landscape of these women. Tertiary education was opened to them by a sequence of policy decisions, in particular, the introduction of the student grant system and the introduction of various special entry schemes and dual enrolment schemes that allowed social security benefits to contribute to the fees as well as receive TEAS.

Secondly, the policies provided many competent mature age women to enter the professions. Government policy can also function so as to discourage certain segments of the population. This has been the case with the policy changes introduced in 1965 which had the effect that new initiatives will reverse this trend.

Secondly, the pace of work in the life cycle is in process of great change. It is not so long since we expected men to enter the workforce early and leave at 65. If they lived so long; and women to raise families and then live quite friendly, with their retired husbands and later as widows. Now children are few, life is long, and around the world ordinary marriage is on the way out. Middle career starts have to be worked in this context. Women's position in society has been defined by the idea that before their own middle years, middle age women. A third issue is the positive impact on the political career of the young women's adult transition from homemaker to career woman. Our participation in their aspirations for their children's education and development of their children's for themselves. They consider that their own education and that of their children was not adequate. They took advantage of the opportunity to raise their children. Only 17 percent of these women have a job. This is the case with the policy changes introduced in 1965 which had the effect that new initiatives will reverse this trend...

A survey of overseas students in Queensland

By G.T. Steadman and R.H. Dogwell

Griffith University

In 1985, the Australian Federal Government decided to allow tertiary education to offer places to full-fee paying students from countries with whom Australia had a decision was followed by a determined effort by the Government and the institutions to assume a dynamic entrepreneurial role in recruiting such students. As a result, various institutions have responded to the challenge and actively engaged in the recruitment of international students. The variety of activities is indeed the tendency of its institutions to assume a dynamic entrepreneurial role in recruiting such students. As a result, various institutions have responded to the challenge and actively engaged in the recruitment of international students.

However, it is apparent that in the two years since the influx of full-fee paying students began, neither the time nor the resources had been devoted to systematically seeking their views. While this general survey was undertaken in the hope of providing some objective data and indications of future adjustments to the programmes and the supporting structures.

The object of the paper is to present some basic data concerning full-fee paying students in the following groups of data concerning full-fee paying students: their origins, objectives, costs and burdening the time of March 1989 was 308. A total of 178 responses were received (or 44.7 percent) which, in view of the proportion of students in the sample of full-fee paying students. However, the results were not considered reasonable. Not surprisingly, the response rate from Griffith University students was considerably greater than the overall average.

Despite the previous comment, the information presented in this paper will not be institution-specific, rather, it will be aggregate responses.

Personal information

The respondents came from twenty different countries, with those in South-East Asia and the Middle East making up the largest group. The gender and age distribution in the survey and their completion was not available.

It was the intention of the authors to seek sample students in Queensland by selecting representative institutions. Those classes were the authors' own institution (Griffith University), the Brisbane College of Advanced Education, James Cook University of North Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and the University College of Central Queensland.

The total population of full-fee paying students in these institutions is 35,000 and the proportion of these students was 25 or less. Females made up 44.5 percent of the respondents. Only 31.8 percent of the students were married but over half had brought their spouses to Australia with them.

The accommodation occupied clearly is a function of many socio-economic factors and course enrolments. However, the different types of accommodation are:

- Probably for security reasons, a higher percentage of students are likely to have made this decision, with female students and...