Occupational and Institutional Socialisation in an Australian College of Advanced Education

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Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 7–9) when discussing the history of qualitative research note that in the period from 1900–1945 there existed a tradition based on the Chicago School whose accounts 'romanticised the subject [and] turned the deviant into the sociological version of a screen hero'. They observe that in the modernist phase that existed to the 1970s there was a 'golden age' that 'valorised villains and outsiders as heroes to mainstream society'. Coffey (1996: 62) writes that since the 1970s there has occurred a diversification of research subjects and settings in the qualitative tradition to include the professions and elite members of society.

This paper which is in the newer tradition to which Coffey (1996) refers, examines aspects of Australian academic life in an 'ordinary' or non-elite higher education institution during the so-called Golden Age of higher education. It focuses on the interaction that occurred between academic staff at Bendigo College of Advanced Education (one of the oldest Australian colleges) and the College itself and what happened to the academic staff and to the College as a result of this interaction. The paper thus makes a contribution to the literature on occupational and institutional socialisation and to the literature on academic careers. It also adds to previous work on institutional socialisation that focused on organisations such as 'total institutions' including mental hospitals, military academies and prisons

The Importance of Occupations

A famous saying notes that 'Manners maketh the man'. Fletcher Jones, a pioneer of a famous Australian clothing chain used the slogan 'Clothes maketh the man'. It is probably more correct to say that 'Occupations maketh the person'.

Go to any social occasion, meet someone for the first time and the conversation invariably turns to 'What do you do'? which translates to 'What do you work at'?, 'Where are you employed'?, 'What profession do you belong to'? Work, employment, careers are central to our lives—leaving aside for a moment the problems of changes in the nature of work and the fact that many people are unable to find work and a career. Our career gives us a sense of who we are and gives meaning to our life. For those of us in professional work our career is 'our central life interest'. Academic careers in particular are 'greedy professions' which take over our lives and make it

increasingly impossible to draw a line between work and none-work hours.

Work, occupations and careers have always been of interest to the academic community and to the wider public. In the United States the study of careers—widely interpreted—extends back to the University of Chicago's School of Sociology in the 1920s. The Chicago School and its study of occupations has continued to this day, with refinements and new developments, and remains influential in the United States, Great Britain and Australia.

Why Study Academics?

Raphael Samuel one of post-war Britain's most notable historians who died in September 1996, stressed the importance of 'the lived experience of ordinary people of the past ... the ordinary and the everyday. His was not a history of great battles or titanic class struggles ... his patriotisms were small and local' *(Daily Telegraph* cited in Schumpter, 1997:2). Commenting on Samuel's death, the editorial in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* of 27 December 1996, noted that it was Samuel who introduced the notion that research into 'everyday' lives 'should be as rigorous as that of monarchs and parliaments. The Editorial went on to note that:

> History and sociology are converging in their output if not their methods ... [and] while it [sociology] is learning to be more accessible, sociologists could profit from being reminded of the value of data and data analysis ... but if it does not find a way to say something useful about how people interact, somebody else will.

Midgley, (1996:20) predicted that historians would turn their attention to 'questions of identity—be it of individuals, groups or nation states'. Evans (in Midgley, 1996: 20) believes that there will be an emphasis to 'put ordinary individuals back into history'.

Having argued for the importance of the study of occupations and careers we face a curious anomaly when we look at those who do the research on others. Academics, especially those who inhabit the less prestigious institutions and disciplines, are like the ordinary people who have been ignored in favour of the rich and powerful. Altbach and Kelly (1985: 42 and 34) claim that:

> The research on the academic profession is remarkably limited given the importance of the professoriate ... for many nations, there has been virtually no analysis of the academic profession ... studies seem to be limited to largely three countries [the United States, Britain and the German Federal Republic] ... Key aspects of the profession, such as patterns of academic work, have not been studied in most countries.

Clark (in Halsey, 1992), the noted America writer on higher education, encapsulates why we should study academics when he writes:

> For many reasons the academic profession ought to arouse our curiosity and elicit serious study. It trains the members of an increasing number of leading fields outside the academy; its leaders speak to economy and politics, to social order and culture ... in so many ways, and more than before, it touches the lives of the general public. Yet, in the face of such importance, how much do we know about the development of this profession in other than simple numerical terms? ... academicians study everything but themselves, a remarkable failing in an estate composed of scholars and researchers devoted to the task of assisting others to understand the natural and social phenomena that make a difference in shaping the modern world. Of this we can be sure...We can hardly know too much about [the academic profession]...we still know little.

The Nature of this Study

This paper is part of a larger study of the world of 'ordinary' academic staff. The focus is the occupational socialisation of academic staff at what was one of Australia's oldest Colleges of Advanced Education with links extending as far back as the famous gold rushes of the nineteenth century.

Australian Colleges of Advanced Education were established by deliberate government policy. Crucial to their success were staff sympathetic to their aims. The present study examines individual and institutional interaction among a group of academics from the Schools of Business, Science, Engineering and Arts and how this helped staff adapt to the occupational world in which they found themselves. In this work, the chief interests of study are the frames of reference or perspectives of the academic staff. How did academics respond to working in a tightly controlled government institution set up to achieve specific economic and educational aims. Likewise, what effect did the academics have on the government institution?

The time frame is the period 1965–1982. This period encompassed the so-called Golden Age of Higher Education when there was strong growth in the whole higher education system and the period following when the system started to undergo drastic restructuring and curtailment of growth. Thus the work is a significant historical investigation with implications for contemporary academic careers, and wider issues in higher education policy in general.

Methods Used

The methods used were those of the life history. The aim was to describe the world of this group of academic staff as they themselves experienced it. Intensive interviews with thirty-three full-time academic staff supplemented with documentary analysis form the core of the study. These methods were supplemented by participant and non-participant observation. Thus the study used methods employed in both sociology and history. This approach is controversial but as Spaul (1981:6) noted, it was feasible for historians of education to study 'the ordinary or anonymous' by drawing on other disciplines and their concepts and methods. However, Simon (1983: 11) suggested that such an approach 'could hardly be a better recipe for confusion'. In similar vein Becher (1989: 35 and 148) noted the view of many that 'sociologists are a difficult lot to defend—their own worst enemies'. However, Heinemann (1996: 185) in a paper entitled 'Shifting from Individualisation to Socialisation: Historiographical and Methodological Comments' argues that 'history of education not only depends on other scholarly subjects but also on general ideological and cultural concepts'.

Individual and Institutional Interaction

> The group of academic staff interviewed stressed that they had a relatively large degree of freedom to define their role while working at Bendigo CAE. However, as Goffman (1961: 4) points out, institutions have encompassing tendencies, i.e. they capture some of the time and interest of their members. Garnier (1973: 334) alerts us to the fact that while many socialisation studies have highlighted the resistance of those being socialised to the socialiser's goals, conformity to the latter's goals is also achieved. Garnier (1973: 334) found that institutions could so order their activities as to reduce the alternatives to those being socialised. Thus, while those undergoing socialisation keep control over their own lives, this control is curtailed by the socialiser
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> (Garnier, 1973: 344).

This is what occurred at the Bendigo CAE. The staff indicated that they had very great academic and personal freedom but the institutional record showed examples of the institution restricting that freedom. However, socialisation was not simply a one way process as the institution did not obtain total control. Members of the College were not simply passive in the process. In their response to the socialisation pressures they altered the character of the institution itself. The following discussion looks at some examples, taken mainly from the College's written record, of areas where a system of rules and regulations were used to socialise staff and define their perspectives.

Rules and Regulations

The College had rules and regulations that were designed to socialise the people who worked there. They were designed to facilitate the adoption of the institution's 'on the job perspectives'. These included regulations governing the level of staff appointments and promotions. These rules were effective agents of occupational socialisation as they guaranteed that individuals looking for appointment or promotion had the correct kinds of occupational socialisation. The rules and regulations produced the desired kinds of individuals, with the appropriate types of socialisation. Consequently, some positions required a higher degree at either masters or doctoral level, and successful teaching or industrial experience. The rules and regulations detailed the actions the person used in dealing with the problematic situation (Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss, 1961: 34) of how to obtain appointment and promotion.

Similarly, there were rules and regulations governing professional experience program leave, termination of employment, the rights and obligations of College staff, attendance at graduation ceremonies and College open days, the refund of removal expenses, long-service leave entitlements, the offer of redundancy money, absences due to illness, fitness for duty, holiday salary arrangements, the taking of holidays, the duties of supervisors of higher degrees and regulations concerning disciplinary action. These rules and regulations were important in forming lecturers' 'on the job perspectives'. They knew for example, that professional experience programmes were more likely to obtain approval if the programme was shown to have direct relevance to the individual's department or, to the College, and would contribute to furthering occupational socialisation, occupational productivity and commitment. The regulations were, therefore, important agents of institutional socialisation. They outlined the correct ways of behaving, the 'actions a person uses' (Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss, 1961: 34) but staff were not simply passive in response to these rules and regulations as the following illustrates. The College Council, in expressing its concern at:

> the failure of the School of Engineering and Sciences to reduce its staff to the establishment level agree [d] and require[d] that the Head of School in consultation with the Deputy Director establish appropriate procedures to reduce staff and present recommendations to the next meeting of Council.
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> (Council Minutes, 19 May 1982, p.5).

Similarly, the Council Minutes of 21 July 1982, reported that the Deputy Director was experiencing:

a fair degree of resistance in his attempts to negotiate the transfer of one member of staff from the School of Education to replace a possible departure from the Humanities Department.

In the latter case the academic staff member was resisting efforts to resocialise him, i.e. to alter the definition of his occupational self. The implementation of these rules and regulations was not simply left to members of the College's administration, for under the College's Discipline Regulations, students could report any staff to the Director or the Registrar for misconduct. On receipt of the report alleging misconduct, the Director or the Registrar could decide to 'set in motion' the 'regulations governing disciplinary action'. (Disciplinary Regulations [Third Draft] attached to Academic Board Agenda for 30 May 1983). Thus College students were agents of socialisation with the ability to influence the various components of a lecturer's perspective, namely a definition of the situation, the types of activities that lecturers were involved in and the standards against which they were evaluated (Becker, Geer and Hughes, 1968: 29–30). Student use of the Disciplinary Regulations against staff could be likened to the use of gossip and criticism by colleagues (as mentioned by Pavalko (1971)) as an informal agent of occupational socialisation.

Miscellaneous Controls

The institutional record also revealed a host of what were miscellaneous bureaucratic controls over lecturers. These included regulations concerning the use of College vehicles, submission of work to Media Services, the disposal of College records, telephone calls, professional indemnity insurance and worker's compensation, unscheduled classes, security, transportation and collection of money. The following example, taken from the College Newsletter of May 16 1983, p.3, illustrated the nature of these controls:

Unscheduled Classes and Security
Staff are requested to observe the following College requirements.

Unscheduled Classes
Any class that has not been timetabled must be booked with the Facilities Co-ordinator, to ensure that rooms required are not otherwise booked. Problems have arisen when legitimate additional classes and weekend or vacation courses have clashed with external bookings. College use takes priority provided reasonable notice has been given. Where an additional class has been approved by the School Board, the School Administration Office is expected to make the appropriate arrangements with the Facilities Co-ordinator. Staff acting independently are responsible for making their own arrangements.

Security
Staff are requested to lock all external doors after them or their students in
the case of additional classes, no matter how brief you think your visit may be.
Staff who have been given the privilege of a key that gains access to a part of
the College are reminded that the key is for their use—NOT for students, NOT
for friends, NOT even for family use.

Again these regulations served to socialise staff. They provided the 'co-
ordinated set of ideas and actions a person used in dealing with some
problematic situation' (Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss, 1961: 34). These
rules and regulations assisted people to follow the correct courses of action
whilst employed at the Bendigo CAE.

A further set of miscellaneous controls also contributed to the 'on the
job perspectives' of staff and their occupational and institutional
socialisation. Staff required approval from the relevant School Board,
Academic Board and College Council in deciding what to call themselves
in their collective group identity. Thus the Academic Board accepted that
'Schools' would henceforth be called 'Faculties' (School of Arts and Social
Sciences, School Board Minutes 21 July 1982 p.4). Any visits to High and
Primary Schools were to be arranged through the Development Manager. The
actual days the College operated were determined by the Academic Board.
This Board attempted to standardise the College calendar despite resistance
from certain Faculties (Academic Board Minutes, 5 July 1982, p.2). All
student admissions to College courses also had to go through the relevant
Admissions Committee The size and design of buildings were also subject to
strict control by outside government bodies. Some staff found the physical
facilities of the College were a handicap in the discharge of their duties. One
academic expressed 'grave concern with the situation whereby 160 first year
Bachelor of Business, 50 first year Bachelor of Applied Science (Computing)
100 GDEC [Graduate Diploma in Electronic Computing] and first and third
year Engineering students were expected to do computer assignments on
only 19 terminals' (School of Business Studies Minutes, 8 March 1983, p.1).

Internal bodies such as the Academic Board and College Council
involved themselves in matters concerning the use of space and facilities
down to the level of the location of overhead projectors (Academic Board
Minutes, 3 May 1982, p.4).

Staff qualifications were listed in the College Handbook according to the
convention agreed to by *the Commonwealth Universities Handbook*. As
a consequence the Handbook did not state whether staff degrees were at pass
or honours level. Some staff requested unsuccessfully that staff listings in the
College Handbook show the level of award of their qualification. After further
requests by staff, the Director agreed to put a statement in the College

Handbook stating that 'honours degrees had not been included in keeping with
current convention'
                                    (School of Arts Board Minutes, 22nd September, 1982, 4.2).

The purchase of books and periodicals and borrowing rights of staff from
the College library were also governed by rules and regulations drawn up by
various committees and boards. As a consequence only a certain number of
texts could be purchased, books borrowed, and approved journals ordered.
There were specific sanctions for infringements of library rules such as
suspension of borrowing rights. Finally there were regulations concerning
staff involvement in consultancy and private practice. Staff required Council
approval to engage in private practice and all staff consultancy was co-
ordinated through the Community Service Unit. (Council Minutes,
Wednesday, 17 November 1976, p.4, and Planning Committee Minutes, 11 May
1982, p.1). These regulations restricted the occupational skills of academic
staff to use inside the College, thereby limiting the use to which the results
of occupational socialisation were put. In short, the College did not want
other organisations competing for the time and interests of its members.

While staff believed that they possessed a large measure of academic and
personal freedom as lecturers at Bendigo CAE, the institution curtailed that
freedom. The structure of the College assisted in the socialisation of staff
and enabled them to function within the institution, but the College also
helped to form each lecturer's 'on the job perspective' or frames of
reference.

Situational Adjustment

Over time institutional pressures generally cause an individual to adjust.
If so, institutional socialisation is said to occur. Becker describes this as
situational adjustment — 'the individual turns himself into the kind of
person the situation demands' (Becker, 1964: 44). However, Lacey (cited
in Woods, 1983: 114, 159) believes that Becker's discussion of situational
adjustment does not give the individual sufficient power over the situation
and that there are two kinds of situational adjustment—strategic compliance
and internalised adjustment.

The fact that the majority of academic staff believed that their current
work situation was now the most important influence on their role
as lecturers was evidence of situational adjustment. The passage of time
combined with occupational and institutional socialisation meant that the
individual had to change. This was due to the nature of the subjects that
staff were required to teach as highlighted below:

I must say that because of the area that I teach, which is computing, that a lot of
what I had in the past is changing so rapidly that it is becoming irrelevant. A lot

> of the experiences that I would have been able to share with the students, say if I was a historian or mathematician, I can't really because I can't talk to them about the problems of trying to programme on a machine with only this amount of memory because now you can buy that amount of memory on a home computer so it doesn't apply (No. 19).

This particular academic aptly illustrated one of the key issues in occupational socialisation, namely the challenge of remaining competent in the face of change (see Moore, 1969: 876). This academic also used reference groups, in a comparative fashion, to illustrate personal situational adjustment.

Other staff believed that after an individual had spent a period of time in an organisation the current institutional pressures became important. The passage of time brought about changes in one's occupation and in one's self. It also opened up new career possibilities. The past receded, even if it did not completely disappear, as the following academics illustrated:

> I think once you have been in a place like this for twelve or thirteen years or so there are a number of people at this place who have had far more influence on me and the way in which I present work and approach topics and that sort of thing. Those other people are now in the distant past really (No. 4).

> Very much has happened in the years since I have been here ... one I gained an interest in research and second I did go out and spend a year with a chartered accounting firm in Melbourne on the first study leave so that was quite a big influence in the first four or five years. Made me more up to date (No. 16).

> After twenty years I am not drawing on my past work experience. I think it is the experiences that you get on the job (No. 17).

> I think the job has changed me to some extent. I probably look towards getting more enjoyment out of research and that type of thing (No. 13).

In Kronus' (1976: 324–325) terms these staff identified with the groups in the institution who possessed the most power. They were being controlled by the power and status arrangements of the institution in which they worked.

However, as Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss (1961: 430–432) point out, original values are not completely dissipated. They may be dormant, 'ready to be made use of as soon as an appropriate situation presents itself'. The following members of staff illustrated this:

> At the moment my prime objective is to teach well and it comes first as far as I am concerned. So it would come from my experience as a teacher (No. 12).

> I think a great deal of me is still reliving those years. A great deal of influence is from my background. I can see that from time to time (No. 10).

The influence of past experiences, as a counter to situational adjustment was also evident in the links it provided with outside groups. This highlighted Hill and Howden's (1975) observation that in secondary socialisation one enters new reference groups but still maintains something from the past. In some cases previous socialising experiences provided links with aspects of present careers. Thus one academic noted how he hoped that past experience would lead to collaborative work:

> I don't know if you know but the University of Melbourne has appointed or is appointing a professor in extractive metallurgy. Consequently they are liaising with us here to build up a giant research facility because we are the only other people in the region that run extractive metallurgy (No. 49).

The Acquisition of New Skills

Gross (1975: 40) believes that in occupational socialisation people are both socialised by the occupation and secondly socialised to the organisation and its demands. He believes that in institutional socialisation the members of the organisation are required to learn technical skills, tricks of the trade and social skills that will enable them to achieve the goals of the organisation (Gross, 1975: 41).

> The majority of staff believed that in response to working at the Bendigo CAE they had undergone further occupational and institutional socialisation. They had situationally adjusted by turning themselves into the kinds of people the institution and their occupations demanded. These staff believed that in response to working at the College they acquired a range of new skills that enabled them to perform their role more effectively. Three of these believed that in response to occupational and institutional socialisation they continued their formal occupational socialisation by means of undertaking further academic courses. This reinforced Pavalko's (1971) statement that occupational socialisation occurs in both the formal training institution as well as in the actual practice of the occupation itself. The problem of remaining competent in the face of rapid advances in knowledge is further highlighted (Moore: 1969). Two of these staff undertook courses designed to assist them in their teaching techniques. This provides an indication of their perceptions of the College's perspective in this area. Indeed, one of these academics recalled being informed at the hiring interview that the role of the lecturer consisted essentially in teaching. The other individual completed a postgraduate course to enhance his subject specialisation. He was employed to establish a research group. This represented an interesting comment on how an individual's perspective shaped socialisation experiences. The following academics illustrated how occupational socialisation operated at Bendigo CAE:
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> I think my lecturing has improved a hell of a lot in the last thirteen years. I have actually done a Dip. Tertiary Ed. I have actually picked up things myself

through my own experience ... I found the Dip. Ed. enormously useful (No 45).

The Diploma in Education [that I undertook] helped in self-criticisms of lectures and that sort of thing (No. 44).

Since I've been here I've taken a postgraduate Diploma in Computing. I took that fairly early on. Since then I've developed my knowledge of that area particularly in terms of computer control of plant and operation and in process modelling ... that is what I think probably I regard as a major area of interest that's developed here. In terms of teaching skills no. In terms of teaching skills you sort of do the best you can and hope that the best feedback comes from the students, mind you (No. 49).

A small number of staff, in response to institutional and occupational socialisation pressures at Bendigo College of Advanced Education, developed the ability to construct and repair equipment and facilities. Being a small, institution, Bendigo CAE was not able to employ a large number of technicians to maintain equipment. The only meaningful response was to socialise one's self to fix the faults. Often the only way to obtain an expensive piece of laboratory equipment was to build it. The pressures of the institution meant staff underwent further socialisation. They acquired new skills and abilities. One staff member even went so far as to learn bricklaying to enable the building of kilns for the College's Art Department.

A number of staff learnt to use teaching aides such as the overhead projector and audio-visual equipment. Some became proficient in the use of computer-assisted learning packages. Others learnt how to operate an array of sophisticated equipment, whilst others found that they had to develop competency in advanced procedures and processes in their particular discipline. The following were staff responses to whether or not they had acquired any new skills as a result of working at the College:

Yes. I was very much into the overhead projector when I came here but I didn't know much about audio-visual things and the use of visual aides so I made use of the media services here and have made widespread use of the audio-visual material ... and I think it has increased the students' appreciation of various aspects (No. 9).

Technical skills I have. I use the overhead more frequently now, partly because it is more readily available and the software is more readily available. The use of computers. I didn't have that prior to coming here so I have picked all that up. And the other is some of the more advanced accounting techniques that were not part of my everyday usage because they were not necessary whereas now they are. So therefore I picked those up or refreshed them, whichever it was, but a lot of it is new since I did my original and basic degree—it has to be (No. 13).

> Nearly all of them. Before I came here I hadn't used equipment to any great extent and I believe I'm now fairly expert in most sorts of general equipment and I have a specialty in vacuum physics and optics which doesn't by any means put me in the front rows of guys in Australia but it certainly puts me a long way above most of the people here in my field of expertise (No. 50).

These staff, in the light of institutional and occupational socialisation pressures, underwent the process of situational adjustment. To a certain extent they turned themselves into the kinds of people their occupation and the institution required.

Other staff, in response to their working situation, learnt social skills such as being able to relate effectively to large and small groups of people when lecturing and taking tutorials. They acquired the skills associated with confident and comfortable public speaking. Some learnt how to manoeuvre politically within the institution. Being able to manage people was another skill that was learnt by staff in response to the pressures of working within the College. Staff also believed that they had learnt how to teach and carry out research more effectively. The following staff comments highlight these new-found skills:

> Yes. Basically I found it very difficult to be a public sort of figure which you have to be as a lecturer. When I first came I found it fairly difficult to break down the barriers when you meet a new student group and I've had to learn how to do that fairly quickly and I think fairly effectively now (No. 47).

> Oh certainly. I can still remember my first lecture (laughs) and the terror and the inability I had to think on my feet in front of a large group so that if a question came from a group at the end of a lecture I found it very difficult to answer because I was so nervous. That faded fairly rapidly. I think even by the end of the first semester I was reasonably comfortable. But yes the ability to speak on my feet and to speak publicly with, you know some element of clarity and cohesion has certainly developed a great deal. That is the main one (No. 15).

> Well, I think I have learnt to manoeuvre politically within the place ... (No. 12).

> I suppose dealing with people who come in. You get so many parents coming in with their children who want to know something about tertiary education. I think you learn to be something of a child psychologist ... putting people at their ease is probably one of the things I have learnt from being in this job (No. 17).

> I think I have become a bit more proficient in terms of organising and research inquiries and things like that and there has been certain contacts with the new technology which has made it easier to carry out research even in terms of

preparing for a lecture, for example the on-line retrieval system, and that sort of thing which helps you (No. 4).

Lots of teaching skills (No. 9).

The Acquisition of a New Self Image

Gross (1975: 143) argues that in occupational socialisation members of an organisation may need to acquire a new self-image. Eleven of the staff believed that in response to working at Bendigo CAE they adopted a particular self-image, some to a greater extent than others. How they defined their role as a lecturer influenced the particular self-image they adopted. Some looked at the situation existing at Bendigo CAE and defined themselves as teachers. They situationally adjusted to the institutional socialisation demands of the College that saw itself primarily as a teaching :

I see my role as a teacher and not as a researcher (No. 7).

Well, I see myself as someone who can help the students and as one more inclined to help those who are not well equipped for tertiary education (No. 10).

Others wished to be recognised as professionally competent people in terms of their own preparation, knowledge of their discipline(s) and the kinds of occupational socialisation experiences they provided for students. This was important in maintaining credibility in the eyes of their students. A professionally competent self was also important to external employers. The latter would only employ graduates who had undergone satisfactory socialisation by proficient staff. Thus the College teaching environment was made as congruent as possible with the external world of work. Here it was the occupational socialisation process that fostered the particular self image perspective by defining the situation for staff, informing them which activities to engage in and the appropriate self-image to adopt:

Oh the aim here has always been to adopt a professional image. We try to create an image which is very similar to the workplace and working situation (No. 1).

I suppose if anything I try and project a professional image in how I present material. Well, if I present notes I expect them to be as well as near to perfect. In that respect I suppose there is a professional image probably tempered by a business interpretation of professional image so that I sort of dress in an image that students will later find in business (No. 13).

I stress the image of a practising accountant. I believe the students respect you more as an accountant than as a teacher given a certain minimum level of teaching ability (No. 11).

Some staff mentioned trying to create a self-image that created rapport with the students. The following person clearly exemplified this:

> I try and develop some sort of empathy with students in the sense of now I never wear a tie and I often wear jeans and that's part of the deal. It seems to me that while that might be frowned upon in Business Studies sometimes it enables the students I think to relate to you. I have difficulty I think maintaining a youthful image when your bloody hair has fallen out. But I think that is the sort of area that I try and do something about (No. 12).

> Other academics tried to adopt the self-image of others in order to control large lecture groups. Here the 'problematic situation' was how to maintain effective class control. The answer was to pretend to be someone else who was effective and could deal with large inattentive classes by using group management techniques. A number of staff stated that the self-image they adopted depended on the group of people they were working with. They changed the self-image to suit the class. One person believed that after a year spent working for an outside business as part of a professional experience programme, he would change his self-image to being less 'bohemian' (his word) because he now saw that a lot of attention was paid to personal appearances in the outside business world. These academics situationally adjusted. They turned themselves into the kinds of people that the institution and the occupation demanded.

Alteration of Values

Gross (1975: 144) argues that under the influence of occupational and institutional socialisation some individuals will adopt the values of the organisation while others may remain indifferent to them. This is similar to situational adjustment. A small number of staff believed that due to institutional pressures emanating from the College they changed their values. One believed that through interaction with colleagues at the College a re-examination and an alteration of values occurred:

> I don't know if the college has changed me but my colleagues have changed me. Now if that's the same thing, I have changed considerably since I have been here. Strangely enough despite the fact that it is a country college, I say strangely enough because many people don't believe it, we have a very highly intellectual, capable, competent group here, many of whom have challenged me intellectually to a great extent. And I think not only have I had to re-think my own value system but I've actually found my own value system, changing, adapting, being more flexible as a result of having people challenge me (No. 8).

In a similar fashion a group of staff reported that due to pressures from the College, and people in it, their academic standards were lowered. In the

end their perspective became one of 'if one is going to continue to work here then there will have to be a lowering of expectations of students'. This was another example of situational adjustment. This case was clearly one of strategic compliance because staff complied with the restraints of the situation but experienced grave reservations about doing so:

> Yes, I think the college has changed me. I would say certain elements of my standards have dropped as a consequence of well not only peer pressure, although peer pressure is not a big thing but certainly through superiors, people up the hierarchy, immediate heads of department. In most cases it is covert and overt. Certainly in terms of marks there are things like if you are marking or assessing a student and you say this student is not passing on the present level of mark there is an attitude from—I have served under two heads of department and both of them have a similar sort of attitude—which is well you can give them some extra work or require further assessment from them and then you can pass them can't you? (No. 15).

Yet other staff believed that in response to working at the College aspects of their personal and professional selves altered. In these instances the situational adjustment was somewhat different. In one case the person changed in order to facilitate working at the College. Another person regretted the changes working at the College caused him to undergo. Thus, these individuals did not turn themselves into the kinds of people the College necessarily demanded. In the first example, it was strategic adjustment to cope with the College. In the second it was a change in spite of desires to the contrary. These staff described the changes in themselves as follows:

> My husband says, that I have become much more determined, much more self-assured and self-asserting and I think that is true (No. 17).

> I think the reduced opportunities for research and those sorts of things ... I think that's changed me in so far as I haven't developed as much personally as I'd have-liked (No. 52).

What was more important from the institution's point of view was that the majority of the staff accepted, in a general way, the aims of the College. In Gross's (1975) sense they adopted, at least superficially, the values of the organisation. These staff did have some reservations about the implementation of the College's aims and its management but they did not necessarily want to alter the fundamental nature of the institution. Thus there was further situational adjustment. Staff did not turn themselves completely into the kinds of people necessary to fulfil the aims of the College, but on the other hand they did not wish to alter its underlying

character. When asked whether they agreed with the aims of the College, they responded thus:

> I think given the constraints that they are under, financial and otherwise, that the aims are realistic which is all you can ever hope for I think. Whether they're fulfilled or not is another matter I guess. But I think they are not unrealistic (No. 51).

> I think in real philosophy I guess, yes. I can't think of an example but at one stage there were a couple of things which I certainly would have liked, but in general, yes (No. 16).

> I think in regional Victoria, or regional anywhere, a multi purpose tertiary institution is most probably a fairly basic need. That is not to say that I haven't got a lot of complaints about it (No. 4).

The minority were to some extent unable to adopt some of the values of the organisation. Their perspective centered on their belief that the College was not sufficiently clear or realistic in formulating its aims. The perspective was that the College was not engaging in adequate long-term forward planning. In their view it also needed to develop more liaison with the outside community and consider its wishes and needs. Situational adjustment, turning themselves into the kinds of people the College needed by adopting the College's values, was difficult for these people. This was due to the fact that they either did not have a clear understanding of the College's aims, or disagreed about them and their implementation. According to these staff, the College did not define the situation succinctly or alternatively defined the situation incorrectly. Thus one commented on the College's aims as follows:

> Well, I don't know what the real aims of the college are to be honest. I mean the things that are expressed in the handbook are about as meaningful as the syllabuses that are here. I have the feeling that the College doesn't really have an aim. I think we're reacting to circumstances more than teaching, or trying to develop anything very consciously. There's a lot of lip service paid to the idea of regionalism and catering to regional interests but in my own area that's a nonsense (No. 48).

While the majority of staff were institutionally socialised, to the extent of accepting the aims of the organisation, the socialisation process was not completely one way. Gross (1975: 147) refers to 'counter-socialisation' where members of an organisation may bring about changes in the values and aims of the organisation. A number of staff reflected on how they had brought about changes in the College. For one, the courses taught, and the teaching underwent change:

> One's improved the programmes that have been taught here I suppose, quite significantly would be the phrase. The quality of the education, the material, the content, the relevance of the content of the programme, yes I've done all that (No. 52).

Another related how, due to personal efforts in teaching ceramics, a temporary teaching building and a kiln became a permanent feature of College courses. As a consequence other staff, visiting lecturers and visiting craftsmen became involved. When a new Fine Arts building was opened a new and improved ceramics section was incorporated. The latter owed much to the efforts of this lecturer establishing what in essence was initially no more than a 'bush shed'. When asked if she had changed the College in any way she described her efforts as follows:

> In ceramics I started off with the 'bush shed' as a temporary facility. Then I wrote a letter arguing that we had to advance our situation. Well, [the 'bush shed'] has become a permanent facility now involving other staff members, visiting lecturers and visiting craftsmen (No. 2).

A number of staff believed that they had improved the College from the students' point of view. The College had become much more student-centered. Students were provided with more 'caring' treatment. In this sense the clients of the institution benefited from changes that individuals made to the organisation.

One lecturer when asked if she had changed the College in any way said:

> I think I have made quite a number of changes within my own department. The students are much more outgoing than they used to be in days gone by. They are not afraid to come in and talk to me. I think I have probably got a fairer deal for the students than what they used to get—the way they are treated and the fact that they can go and speak to any lecturer or tutor in the department without getting their heads bitten off. I believe in freedom of speech for students (No. 17).

Others believed that extra-curricular organisations they organised for students added an extra-dimension to, and enriched, their education. The following staff member illustrated this:

> I would like to think that the Gun Club has had a significant impact on the life of individuals. Certainly over the course of the three years that we have captured members, I think we have not quite made men of them or women of them but we have certainly broadened their social horizons a bit and that has been quite good (No. 15).

Conclusion

This study of the world of 'ordinary academics' is a good illustration of Samuel's approach to the study of places, people and work processes. It illustrates that (Samuel in Howkins, 1997:141):

> There is no necessary disjunction between the particular and the general; on the contrary there is—or ought to be—a dialectical interplay between them ... No subject in history is intrinsically 'micro' or 'macro,' mainstream or marginal, big or small. Everything depends on the way it is studied. The local study may be myopic, but then it is possible to hold eternity in a grain of sand.

The so-called golden age of Australian higher education, in which this study was located ended in the 1980s. Since then stronger government control over higher education has become evident in most western countries and the erosion of university autonomy a worldwide phenomenon. The Commonwealth Government now exercises ever greater control over most Australian universities. This same government that advocates economic rationalism and free market economics continues to control and regulate many activities within the university system. Australia's unified national system of higher education stresses national needs, funding based upon pursuing those needs, vocationalism, applied research, competitively funded research, a focus on disciplines such as science and technology, concentration of research effort in fewer universities and university/industry co-operation. The key mechanism in the pursuit of these objectives is the use of educational profiles covering teaching, research and enrolments.

What current Australian government policies have meant for individual academic staff, in their respective universities can be gauged from a recent paper by Kissane (2000:1–2). The title of the argument captures the essence of the article. It is called simply 'Sold'. The article observes that since the end of the golden age of higher education, institutional pressures on individual academics in Australia's universities have intensified. Kissane notes that the academics she interviewed, in a range of institutions, spoke of institutional pressures that forced academic staff to lower teaching and grading standards. Other pressures have also led to: the demise of particular subjects, especially in the arts and pure sciences; the dominance of commercial concerns in teaching, learning, research and governance; an overly bureaucratic university system; alienation of academics; a difficulty in recruiting academic staff; an exodus of top staff overseas; dilapidated and outdated university infrastructure; pressure from university administrators on academic staff to pass failed students; shorter degrees; publications of doubtful repute; concentration on commercially profitable research; universities less willing to share the results of their research

because of commercial considerations; students having much greater say over the content of courses, resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum; and finally academics reporting that they were forced to be less than truthful when advising prospective students about what their university could offer.

However, just as the Bendigo CAE academics of some twenty years ago were not simply passive in the face of institutional pressures Kissane observes that today's academic staff, while able to recount unwelcome institutional pressures, also believe that the situation is slowly changing. Kissane notes that at one university three positions in philosophy are being advertised as a way of protecting the humanities; another recently appointed Vice Chancellor (of a technology university) is also questioning corporate management approaches, while other writers are calling for more creative styles of university management and a return to university-style collegiality.

There are implications for academics, universities and for governments arising from this study of a small College of Advanced Education. For academic staff one of the attractions of an academic career has been the relatively large personal and professional freedom that such a career allowed. This study suggests that in the changed world of higher education now confronting academic staff and higher education institutions, staff will have to change. Academics, like all organisational workers, are constrained to some extent by the occupation that engages them and the organisations that they work in. Governments will not, however, have unfettered control because academic staff will undoubtedly influence the institutions that they work in. Similarly, governments should not overestimate their power over academic staff and their institutions. Universities and governments, like many other formal organisations such as hospitals, gaols and military academies, have limits on how far they can direct and control individuals. Moreover, 'counter-socialisation' may to some extent thwart official government policies and directives.

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