History of Mount Lawley College

Structure – Theory – Practice

Interview with Charles Staples

3/2/1982

I came to teacher education so late at Graylands at the beginning of 1965. I did not know anything about teacher education except what I had heard, when I was a teacher. Between 1965-1957, I focused on survival in the college. I remembered that there was to be a new primary college and that Bob had been selected as the Principal. I was not aware that this new college would be at Mount Lawley, though this was announced fairly early.

**College Site and Planning**

The selected site was part of a pine plantation and rubbish tip, which was partially burnt out. They began testing the foundations. I think there was a dump in between the actual college site and the road. Every now and then Bob would disappear in consultation with people, to plan the design of the building. One of the people involved with this was the architect, Stan Hewitt, who had imaginative ideas as to what the actual structure should look like and how it should be put together.

They decided on a distinctive external style, which looked more functional than aesthetically pleasing. It always struck me as being a minimal cost construction, very cleverly designed for educational purposes. The real stroke of genius was that almost unbelievable carpet, which caught everybody’s attention, so they didn’t notice the grey walls and ceiling.

Bob asked Glen Phillips to work on aspects of the project. Bob used him as a programmer and ideas man for college operations and courses. Glen was prepared to work for hours on these plans, drafting preliminary statements for Bob to review.

**The Principal Bob Peter and Neil Traylen**

Bob Peter was Vice-Principal and had very strong support from “Blue” Robertson, the Director General of Education. There was somebody in the background that guaranteed, that in spite of what Neil Traylen may think, bob had an open brief in relation to the planning of Mount Lawley.

Bob was ideal for the role of Principal on Mount Lawley as he had done theoretical work on the selection and training of students. I don’t know whether that was the subject of his MA or not, but that really wouldn’t have earned him any great credit in teacher education, because that was run by Neil, who could do anything.

Neil knew everything. He knew where every comma should go and where the full stop should be, and how to teach needlework to students in the Junior Primary Course. He knew the lot.

I was in that early period, acting Vice-Principal, trying to run a college that had run for many years on a most particular transition that had been established by Neil, when he was young and imaginative, as the first Principal of Graylands. He was the master of dramatic entrances and greatly appreciated student acclaim, even when organised.

Bob was determined to break the traditions but gradually. The wearing of gowns to lectures was discontinued. Young men were allowed to wear beards and casual clothing. Bob’s wider outlook no doubt resulted from his long period in Indonesia on a UNESCO assignment. He would get requests from UNESCO to do another 6 months, or to be a committee member.

**College Character**

In terms of innovation, Mount Lawley had distinctive equipment. As to the buildings, apart from the purple carpet, there was nothing much there. The building was a bare structure, with walls supporting an upper floor and roof. The ceilings and interior walls were unpainted. The carpet was the king hit. It fascinated everybody including the thieves, who stole that magnificent strip of carpet.

The week the college was to open, they had just put in the carpet from Bob’s office, down the long corridor, to where the present lecture theatre is, a very wide corridor. Came Monday morning and it had vanished. They took the carpet from the principle’s office, rolled it down the corridor, hoisted it onto a truck, and away it went. It was never recovered. A replacement was laid immediately.

The design of the rooms was another matter, which was the result of Bob having many discussions with other staff. There was an interest in designing a college with rooms of differing sizes. A partition would be moved in place to create two rooms. Right from the beginning, Bob Peter got a lot of support from staff, for the idea that desks must never be arranged in formal rows. They were to be grouped to accommodate the theory of learning in groups, so the college was designed for that.

Also right from the beginning, induction loops were set into the floors of some of the rooms. A large room was designed to accommodate a teacher and a class of children. At one end was a one-way screen behind which a group of students could sit to observe a lesson. The teacher could carry a small radio receiver and microphone, connected with the observers, through the induction loop in the floor, without the need of dragging a lead behind him. That loop was provided when the concrete for the floor was poured. Channels for video distribution were also panned before the floors were poured.

Bob Peter had visited the Eastern States, looking at other colleges and tried to implement the latest technology. The lecture rooms were distinctive in their variable sizes; a variety of blackboards and whiteboards; grouped seating plans; carefully designed “lecture seats” in the lecture theatres; video production; channeling and display units. Also air conditioning was another feature, as all windows were fixed closed.

It was really quite an education to move around under the floor, and walk about in the endless corridors and the dungeons, which provided the channelling and air conditioning. The idea of using educational technology, primarily video tapes and communications, was one of the aims that Bob had in mind. Everybody was quite enthusiastic about it.

Bob developed a multitude of ideas in the early stages. Everyone was engaged on different aspects, working on what was going to be a great leap forward. I got caught up chiefly on the side of the instructional and administrative side. He had committees working on designing courses, if possible to obviate the weaknesses that he saw in the teacher education courses that were then in existence. One of his favourite “straw men” that he loved to destroy at every opportunity was the “Mickey Mouse” course.

Bob made such an intensive study of what went on at Claremont, particularly the way Traylen had established himself there, that he was quite confident, that in the end Traylen would rubber stamp his propositions. This was one of the overall administrative features and had effect right down to the present. Traylen, as far as I could tell always sought to deal with the principals one at a time. He feared that they might combine against him in a meeting. The result was that each principal came to believe he could outsmart Traylen, who never seemed to exert himself to enforce curtailment of the expansionist plans of each principal. The plans were therefore forwarded directly to Canberra. Passing the buck took the pressure off Traylen, but the Commonwealth Commission became convinced the WA principals were an irresponsible lot, though it was Traylen’s responsibility, which created the situation.

I always had the impression that Bob provided the ideas to Hewitt, who contacted people, who would know about TV and all the rest. The proposition would be put up and they persuaded Neil to agree.

**Mount Lawley Teachers College – Early Days**

There was something distinctive about the financing of Mount Lawley Teachers College. I believe it was built by the State, unlike Secondary Teachers College. Because Graylands was a temporary operation, Mount Lawley was the first primary teachers college built in WA since Claremont, in 1902. It was said that Western Australia will show what a primary teachers college can look like. You don’t have to train primary school teachers like lower quality people.

At Graylands, I had been Acting Vice-Principal, since 1966, though my permanent position was Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences, appointed January 1965.

During 1969, the last year at Graylands, much time was taken up with the many committee meetings and informal discussions. It was a very thrilling time, and I think it went to everyone’s heads.

The Mount Lawley staff was appointed in 1970. Bob got his expected Principalship. I was appointed as Vice-Principal; and the core of staff came from Graylands. Because the new building was not ready for February 1970, the Mount Lawley staff and students were accommodated in the grounds of the Subiaco Primary School. We could fit into Subiaco as we only had a first year intake.

The Teaching Aids section, where we were housed, was altered. Temporary lecture rooms were set up on the tennis court and we had the use of part of the adjacent church building. The staff accommodation was just fantastic. Everybody had to fit into just one classroom and we had temporary partitions put up in the room.

**Staff Involvement and Transition Period**

At Subiaco, Bob Peter announced that a scheme of continuous assessment would replace examinations. The minutes of a staff meeting on 2nd February read: “… Mr Peter announced the policy of continuous assessment …”. Discussions surrounding this had taken place the previous year, when many aspects had been considered. Papers were produced by people, such as Glen Phillips. Then Bob Peter announced this and then made it work. The details were worked out through a series of staff meetings, for which I as Vice-Principal, was the Convenor. Staff included: Alison Aldridge, Messrs McKenna, McDiven, True, Phillips, McKercher, Fred Marsh, Alan Jones and Jeanette Connolly.

We argued and argued around the meeting about how continuous assessment should work. At the end of the meetings, I wrote the minutes and distributed them. At the next meeting the details would be reviewed and accepted, or revised, or referred back for further discussion.

Subiaco continued in the Graylands makeshift tradition. Graylands people had always taken their crisis situation as one of their main inspirations. The fact that even though things were improved physically, the obvious temporary nature of Graylands was rather trying, but the kids really appreciated the challenge and they responded. At Subiaco, this spirit continued but they were a bit more advanced. It was thrilling to work under difficulties when you were triumphing over them. But when they went into marvelous comfort at Mount Lawley, then we had to think primarily about the lecturers, the staff who became much more prominent in the students’ lives.

One of the initial problems with Mount Lawley was a difficulty in talking to assembled students. There was no hall, so we were continually having assemblies out on the grass. It was thought that students and staff saw value in such gatherings.

**Administration and Staff Selection**

The physical structure depended on Bob Peter, who was concerned with his building and the negotiations at the planning stage and all sorts of relationships with the Tertiary Education Committee and people outside the college. He left he internal matters of the college to be largely managed by Alison Aldridge and me. Bob was quite satisfied that staff with relationships to one another and the students could run the college. Only later did he have doubts about this.

Bob did a lot of talking to heads of departments to see what they were doing, but he interfered very little with the college at all. The picture of himself was of the chap, who was available to all as he walked around the college.

Formerly, college staff were virtually selected by Superintendents, when going around the schools. Superintendents tended to believe that anyone they regarded as a good teacher, was well qualified to be a college lecturer. The selection of teacher education staff is a matter that requires careful consideration. It is not enough for a good teacher to require students to imitate his practice.

He is required to discuss the principles governing the interaction of teacher and pupils and the principles of teaching, which sustain his practice. Selection commonly consists of two parts: firstly the consideration by the selection panel of the candidate’s record of qualifications and achievements in theory and practice; and secondly, consideration of the impression made during the personal appearance of the candidate before a selection panel or its agent. Of recent years, doubts have been cast on the significance and effectiveness of the personal interview.

I didn’t have enough continuous connection with selection procedures. This was a disappointment to me, but it seemed that the Principal considered that I was responsible for the college program, so selection was not a great concern of mine.

When the Martin Committee recommended that teacher education needed to be throw open widely for staff, Bob would receive all the applications. Applicants were listed with their qualifications, then a meeting would be called. I wasn’t called in, as the main thrust was to appoint someone that Bob and the head of department had agreed on. The meetings often resulted in rubber-stamping recommended appointments.

People outside the Education Department weren’t necessarily from outside the state. In many cases they were young men and women from the University.

John Sherwood is the person, who comes to mind. He was doing anthropology and sociology at the University and was qualified. That sort of person came into teacher education. On would distinguish them as people, who had no previous experience in teacher education but were taken in because fo their academic attainment. That brought in a lot of bright ideas and new ways of doing things, which had to settle down after a while and fit into the college procedures.

**Innovations 1970-1973**

Most of Mount Lawley’s innovations were set in place before November 1973 – for those three years we were still formally under the Education Department. The Department had left us free, under our Principal to introduce those changes, we thought advisable. By then we reckoned that we were running the college the way we wanted it, to result in the effective training of prospective teachers. This was based on our experience at Graylands, a Departmental college, on the aims of teacher education, which we had learned as Departmental teachers, but eliminating those operations, which we found to be outdated.

Once change happened they put the Director General and the Director of Teaching in charge. When those two old men took over, they refused to agree that we should continue our operations. Presumably the freedom allowed between 1970-1973 was merely an oversight, an example of Departmental inefficiency.

There was a real change in the intake of students, which took place when the firm control exercised by the Education Department cane to an end, when the college passed out of its control. Triennium funding made a difference. You could plan for three years ahead, and this meant that Bob Peter was off on the task he enjoyed so much: negotiating for his lecture theatres and the actual equipment for his TV; the setup for the new Phys Ed arrangement; the accommodation for the student council; and the refectory.

All that then began to develop and it was still going on when I left. They were still doing the same thing to produce the Science Centre and the Arts Centre. It has gone on down to the present with the creation of the School of Performing Arts. All that time Bob was working more or less outside the college with specialists, we saw only infrequently. How the finance was distributed was always a bit of a mystery. A few college people assisted him with the details. He had Glen Phillips at his side a lot of the time and Fred Marsh.

As soon as we went to Mount Lawley, the Department presumably was prepared to allow Bob Peter to go on with his scheme. His college actually demonstrated what was possible under the Department. This was one of the reasons why the Staff Association just denied that academic conditions were better than those at primary colleges under the Education Department. We were surprised when we compared Departmental leave and University leave in detail.

**College of Education**

We made a submission half way through 1970 about the form of teacher education. It was largely written by Glen Phillips. We sent a submission for the Senate Enquiry into teacher education. Our idea was that teacher education should be as large as possible. Our belief was that it was stupid to have little bits of it taken off to the Universities and WAIT.

The Martin report was looked at a number of people, quite critically. It has never been discovered why Martin said it was an advantage to have teachers training alongside non-teachers. There was never any argument advanced and no evidence published in its favour by the Martin Committee. Martin did not refer to any authority when making such a submission.

This assertion was denied at Mount Lawley as they reckoned that at University the only thing that the Arts students got from the Engineers, was a ducking once a year in the pond.

Whenever there was any chance of making a comment on a multi-purpose idea, we said there was no justification for it. Bob Peter took an intermediate position. He believed that there were so many occupations in the community, such as nursing, for which there was required training in the care and management of other persons: children in classrooms; sick people in hospitals; disadvantaged people in the community; all relating basically to education which the people in normal teachers college are concerned with.

The management and production of artistic and dramatic activities would fall into this category. But there was plenty of scope for non-primary training in a college of education and one of the things that Bob always resented was when we went to Mount Lawley our training of high school teachers, which we were doing at Graylands, was taken away.

Some of the most pleasant, interesting and stimulating aspects of Graylands work in the early days was the pastoral care and periodic conferences, with a few students, such as George Halleen and others, we had at the University. That was taken away from our primary college.

The education of nurses and a paramedical staff of all sorts, was the kind of thing that Bob Peter had in his mind as being quite suitable to take in. This would have resulted in more use of the educational technology and the staff, who were specialists of the transfer of educational practice in any sphere.

**Amalgamation of Colleges of Advanced Education**

We believed the multi-purpose idea embraced teachers of all grades and teachers of persons, whose work would entail dealing with other people: nurses, social workers, and teaching apprentices. With the staff in the other colleges, the Mount Lawley staff were concerned about the administrative relationship, between the colleges.

In 1970, we submitted to the local Tertiary Education Committee and to the Senate Committee our proposition that there should be set up and “Institute of Teacher Education” with five colleges. In our diagram, we showed an enclosing rectangle containing a Council, a Director, 5 colleges each with a Principal. That was more or less the plan adapted in 1973, when the Teacher Education Authority was set up.

The Colleges Act of 1979 took place five years after I left. In 1974. It was a different type of autonomy, as staff resisted the idea of teachers colleges being entirely separated from one another, even if they were geographically.

The Staff Association accepted the general structure, but wanted a more open connection between the Council and the colleges. We asked for a “Principal’s Committee”. Actually, it was in some ways back to what the staff said in 1970. That is the real problem. We suggested that this administrative group should consist of Traylen (as CEO) his principals and staff representatives. We actually got one meeting, where we all sat down at Claremont. Unfortunately Neil Traylen didn’t arrive, so that left the Senior Principal, Lloyd Pond as the Chairman, and it was a most interesting meeting.

The staff all went along with the idea that Traylen should sit down with his principals and ensure they would come to a rational decision.

The Government announced a changeover date towards the end of November 1973. The Teachers Union called a general meeting of all staff from the five colleges but it was not well attended. A resolution was carried to form a centralised staff association. Churchlands was against the idea, so we went into vacation with a four-college association. During the holidays Churchlands called a meeting and carried a resolution that they would join the Staff Association, so by 1974, all five colleges were included.

**Academic Autonomy and Staff Initiative**

At Mount Lawley, we interpreted autonomy as academic autonomy and not financial. We believed that academic autonomy should rest with the academic/professional staff. We could teach; design courses; and assess the effectiveness of our teaching. We knew what good teaching was and were just as good as selecting staff as the old gentlemen, who had not taught students for years. These old gentlemen had to ask us who were the good and bad students.

These matters could be determined within the college. But we could not arrange our finance, so it follows that we had no real control over buildings, supplies, plant or staff numbers. We had to enroll the students sent to us. We could not appoint Council members of the Executive Officer or Principal.

We knew there was much talk about college autonomy, as in a college run by a Council or Principal. Teacher education might be said to be autonomous when not run by the Director of Education. We had CAE autonomy because this rested with the Director of the CAE. But this did not mean financial authority, so there was no ultimate control over plant, and supplies. The limits on funding also prevented autonomy in deciding staff and student numbers. Autonomy was therefore limited to the things we did to students.

To begin with, everybody, including Bob Peter, thought that it meant a college run by committees. But you’ve got to discipline your committee structure and have to find some way of preventing delays. I have a feeling that the initial achievements of the committee system alerted Bob Peter to the implied challenge to his authority. I feel now, that the only way for a committee structure to operate is to have the Principal on side. If the Principal is not on side, you just go on fighting, but your don’t get very far.

The Principal has ultimate control of documents. I developed a practice of keeping only the current documents and passing them on to him. I couldn’t set up as a rival to the Principal. The stuff I had was mainly the current material we working on with the daily running of the college.

**Theories of Teacher Education**

I have an outsider viewpoint as I came into teacher education quite unexpectedly and began in Graylands in 1965. Bob Peter had only just become the Principal. He had only been Vice-Principal for a short time. In some ways, my appointment was unpopular because the tradition in teachers college, among the staff, was designed for long-serving, faithful servants of the institution. I came in from the schools, at the level of Senior Lecturer Social Sciences, in a section where there were a number of people, pretty well qualified for the job. When advertising, the Selection Board did not realise that I had a MA in history, and considerable teaching experience in leaving subjects, while the senior college staff had not completed the MA.

No sooner had I come in, when a series of untoward events – sicknesses, accidents and leave meant that the Vice-Principal’s job was vacant. There was the tragedy of old Vin Walsh, who was due for Vice-Principalship. He had a heart attack a few months before he would have been appointed. Each time he came back, he had another heart attack. This went on, so I was acting Vice-Principal there for four years.

At Graylands, I soon found that there was quite clear evidence rethinking many of the ideas in teachers colleges at the time. This was particularly true of the Social Sciences section, where Lyall Hunt was the initiator. I found it very pleasant working with Lyall, Lorraine Hale and the new people, who came in, including Ed Jaggard.

By the end of 1965, pretty well the whole group in Social Sciences was working on the idea of revising Social Studies. Is Social Studies a subject? I know this is a bit of a byline, but I think it sets the picture. I had been marking Leaving History for years before, and I had developed very definite ideas about the nature of history, and incidentally, geography. It had become pretty clear that Western Australia was not going all the way with the Eastern States Social Studies. The Eastern States, particularly Victoria, adopted an entirely new type of Social Studies, whereas Western Australia always regarded Social Studies as History and Geography, and any other social study appropriate to the topic.

This was quite a big difference. Ours was a multi discipline rather than a new structure. In the Eastern States, they insisted that Social Studies was a new structure, particularly in the schools. This carried on even after the Junior Exam was discontinued. I wrote a paper for the “Graylands Education News”, which was started by Bob Peter and encouraged by him. Staff members were encouraged to write about their issues on all kinds of topics.

One of the earlier editions had a paper from Lyall Hunt and I put in: “One Social Studies in the ‘60’s”. We were using the information that came in a very illuminating American Social Studies Yearbook. It gave an entirely new view of American teaching on that subject. It revealed that most of the children leaving school in America were doing History or Geography, not Social Studies. We were told in primary school here by our wise men, who returned from overseas, that Social Studies was the “in thing” and everybody had to do Social Studies.

This was the time that Edwin Fenton was making a name for himself in America and we seriously considered whether we should obtain his movie teaching aid material. On another subject, Ron Bell made quite a remarkable exposition of his idea of drama and artistic development and other staff members made contributions. I then decided that it would be useful for me to see what teacher education as about.

I had very belatedly fallen under the spell of Bloom and his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Previously, I wouldn’t read it because of its highfalutin title. I knew what taxonomy meant, but it just irritated me. Quite irrationally, I had not read it.

When I finally did, I discovered that it was a plain hum-drum set of suggestions for harassed examiners at upper secondary level, to be able to mark their papers without so much trouble. This was precisely what we had been doing under Freddie Alexander (History Professor and Chief Examiner Leaving History).

I don’t know whether he persuaded us, or whether we all persuaded one another, but we thought we knew what History was all about. Alexander discussed with teachers his aims as examiner and called teachers together to discuss the results and the paper. We then knew pretty well what to do. Frank Crowley, Examiner Junior History agreed that his direction to markers should be published and circulated to all the teachers, so that they knew what the markers were supposed to be looking for.

The part of the Bloom Taxonomy that was not discussed very much was that concerning the affective side of education. That seemed to me to apply directly to teacher education, where you had to take a youngster, who didn’t know what he wanted to do and turn him into a person who wanted to be a teacher; wanted to be kind to kids; wanted to make a job of education. It was for the ’68 number of
Graylands Education News” that I contributed a long article. Just picking out the most obvious ideas that could be used in teacher education.

The writers such as Krathwohl and Bloom discussed the “Affective Domain” of education, where the concern was not with the acquisition of knowledge, but with the adoption of attitudes and educational values. Persons working in teacher education might be able to turn out students, who have adopted a number of appropriate attitudes and the values you might expect a teacher to adopt. Having, by the end of college years, adopted teaching as a profession, the students would continue their reading and learn more from their experience in the school. The idea of adopting attitudes that are suitable for teachers seemed to be something that you could build a program around. At any rate, it deserved a place among the objectives of teacher education.

In administrative circles and even in industry at that particular time, the management theoreticians were preaching the idea of management by objectives. If the objectives could be set out carefully and the operatives (staff) in the enterprise understood, then the operatives (class teachers) could direct their energies to the general goal, without much direction from superior administration.

That led me to very enthusiastically adopt the idea of autonomy in teacher education. Then, of course came the argument about where autonomy should lie. There were those, who believed that the autonomy should lie with the Board of Teacher Education, which should direct the whole operation. My reply was: “No. It resides at the academic level, where the staff and the students adopt their goals and solve their problems through negotiation and cooperation”.

At this stage Bob had recently returned from overseas and was able to renew his academic interests. He was enthusiastic about getting all the staff to discuss all of these matters and threw a lot of opportunities in the way of innovators. Everybody was convinced that he was quite genuine in wanting staff cooperation, in all kinds of college plans.

The very considerable staff interest in forward planning derived from the Three Year Course Committee, which Bob Peter set up in late 1967. The progress of these discussions in in the minutes of the meetings, which show they were discussing progressive assessment, schedules of examination, the aims of the course for an additional year – was it to provide a fuller development of each of the current aims; or additional aims for year three – and the advantages and disadvantages of the semester system?

In 1970, after a first year at Subiaco; a statement was circulated reviewing our experience with progressive assessment, but also embodying our ideas of autonomy, which seemed to be working. There was plenty of evidence that these new methods of evaluation had long been supported by Bob Peter, and many other teacher education staff members.

Before staff became worried about autonomy, they knew that somewhere in the future, there was likely to be a freeing of the colleges from the Education Department, so we were concerned about how the college was going to run with a three-year course.

In terms of progressive assessment, they were building on the idea that there had never been formal examinations in the Option Courses. The work produced by student in major options was marked and assessed by staff. Students were not required to sit down to an examination. We had long experience with assessment that was not formal examination. All the staff were familiar with both assessment and examination.

From the 1971 review we read: ”the elimination of examinations found only partial acceptance among the subject lecturers, but by 1968, the three year course committee reported that the use of non-examination type assessment in the following fields is strongly recommended: Art, Craft, Music, Written and Oral English, Physical and Personal Development Activities”.

Then it went on: ”at the meeting of the Heads of Departments in March ’69, Mr Peter asked that the departments consider fewer examinations, more accrediting, and the simplification of accrediting techniques. He suggested that Heads of Departments apply a scheme of assessment for the first year of the three year course, as soon as possible, followed by suggestions for the remaining two years of the course.”

You see he was tossing up ideas to discuss. As you might expect, considerable support for the examination system remained. We never assumed that complete support for the progressive assessment was likely to develop from discussion. It was never put to the vote. Bob Peter announces at the end of 1969, that the new Mount Lawley Teachers College would conduct a full scale experiment in the substitution of assessment for examinations.

**Semester Structure and Continuous Assessment**

There is an account of a meeting in December 1969 where the main heading is the announcement of policy by the Principal, Bob Peter. Reference was made to a number of problems about going to Subiaco. The City Council was concerned about a large group of young people, gathering each day near the city centre. There were two points where changes were going to take place. One was the courses would be on a semester system. That generated a lot of discussion.

Most of the staff lamented the fact that the subjects in short courses provided for only one lecture a week. There was a whole string of subjects, where you only saw students once a week. This appeared to a lot of people at Graylands to be an almost impossible situation, because you couldn’t establish any sort of rapport.

The drive for a semester system was to create some chance of seeing the students twice a week. One half of the subjects could be take in one half of the year and the rest in the other half of the year. That was a special interpretation of the semester system. So the courses were to be arranged on a semester system. The reason for the experiment was to minimise interruptions to the course; to improve motivation and involvement; and to reduce conflict between the large number of subjects to be studied.

Continuous assessment was proposed and fully discussed. It was at the end of 1969 that Bob Peter announced they would be using continuous assessment at Mount Lawley. That meeting was titled the first staff meeting of Mount Lawley Teachers College attended by people who were then at Graylands, just before we broke up in December. I suppose it would be fair to say that Bob recognised the limits of consensus when a final decision was required.

You could declare a so-called democratic vote if you think it is going to go the right way or somebody in authority will announce it and see whether there is sufficient opposition to create difficulties. There was to be a Continuous Assessment Committee that would look into a structure for operating progressive assessment, Its name became Progressive Assessment.

The move out of Graylands signified the proliferation of committees for management. The Principal called for staff committees to be formed early in 1970. These included: Timetable Committee, Continuous Assessment Committee, Assessment and Assignment Regulation Committee, Courses Committee, Information on Teacher Education Committee, Library Committee, Calendar Committee, Publications Committee, Social Committee, and Staff Advisory Committee. This was a foretaste of management by cooperation by all staff members. Perhaps the key word should be “participation”.

I think all went well for 1970, 1971 and 1972. But then things went wrong. Probably the time had come to streamline the committee system. Perhaps we pushed the Principal too hard. Somehow he got off-side. I think he believed the Adlerian theory of the struggle for power, but did not initially see the committee system as a threat.

The structuring of an effective committee system requires sympathetic cooperation between the Principal and the staff. Unfortunately, Bob Peter retired behind the protective façade of the formal staff meeting, where it was just not done for a Senior Lecturer or Vice-Principal to lead an argument against the Principal.

It was quite destructive the way Bob would deal with people at a staff meeting. It wouldn’t be done to start an argument between the Principal and the Vice-Principal, before staff. For years Bob went along with the idea of the committees. He didn’t ever set his face against them. They just broke down. But he often confused the issues by issuing edicts. At the beginning of 1970 everything looked so good at Mount Lawley. The type of lecturing, which should take place was another topic we were encouraged to discuss.

**Lecturing, Class Sizing and Staff Time Commitment**

As early as the first meetings, in February 1970, Bob asked the staff to consider the which could result from reliance on the lecture method. He quoted the Robins Report.

The formal lecture or information session to large groups might be functional and as such should be retained sparingly. Regular personal guidance of students’ own work and the marking and returning of students’ work would best be done in small groups. Teaching aids should be utilised as much as possible. Small-group teaching methods should be investigated by all subject sessions.

This discussion developed until quite strict recommendations were agreed upon. In the notes of 20th February appears this – textbook notifications scheme.

“Mr Staples to prepare a notice to students indicating the textbooks required each week”. The students were to get as much support as we could give. That collapsed because it was impossible. The staff was asked to “attempt to avoid lecturing, but not to sacrifice the inspirational lecture method, where thought to be justified”. Staff generally reported satisfactory progress with the diversification of instructional methods. These meetings were used to find out what staff thought.

In the designing of Mount Lawley Teachers College, Bob Peter took student group sizes into consideration, and there is a reference here, a quite precise one. We were asked to consider lecture schedules for the students of a course, using the most extreme variations of class numbers from five or six students, up to 300.

Bob Peter had taken this into consideration, when he and Stan Hewitt were designing the college, so we had a large theatre, a small theatre, double-sized rooms, and rooms which could be partitioned , with moving partitions as well as small seminar rooms. The only thing they could not provide for was the very small groups of 5 and 6, but lecturers could be found with their small groups, at the head of the stairs, in passageways, in their offices, or in corners around the place. There was quite a determined effort to make use of the small group technique.

I think at one stage we actually made calculations to demonstrate, how the use of very large groups conserved lecture time for use on the small groups. We also had a multi-disciplinary presentation. For instance in Social Studies, Colin Marsh and Lyall Hunt worked out their interdisciplinary lectures so that students had lectures from sociologists, then demographers, geographers, economists and historians or from lecturers, who were familiar with two or more disciplines.

In one annual report, Bob asked various people to make submissions from the point of view of subjects’ lecturers. We thought we should deal with possible criticism, that might come back from the Commonwealth Commission. We argued that courses in teachers college must provide the full integration of teacher education courses. This integration of departments and the supervision of student achievement required extensive staff activities in additions to the lecturing responsibilities.

Most of these activities were subsumed under the operations of the active learning program, which was introduced at Mount Lawley. We argued that we introduced programs of study to provide an active learning program, which required continuous assessment of student performance. Much staff time was devoted to the preparation of active learning programs in each department. The marking of a variety of exercises, which the active learning program required and the consequent tabulation of marks, made a greater demand on staff time, than did the examination-lecturing system.

This is what we emphasised in anticipation of the criticism of those, who had accepted the fashionable argument against examinations, but who wished to introduce economies. If they don’t want us to use examinations, they must provide more time for staff. Lecturers must devote more time to their staff tutor activities, which are particular to teacher education.

There are all kinds of things in teacher education, particularly in respect to the pastoral care of students. We were using this as an argument against the idea of the multi purpose CA, where the need for pastoral care was ignored. Most of these ideas arose out of staff discussions on the nature of teacher education. Once it sparked off, Bob just left it to the staff and could expect quite sensible arguments and accounts of experience to come forward. He could then use these to meet any criticism that might be leveled by external authorities.

The variety of instructional methods at teachers colleges emphasisd the great diversity of teaching procedures, with which students must become familiar. Teaching procedures adopted by lecturers varied with the size of the class: 250 in the large lecture theatre; 140 in the small theatre; 60 in the double classroom; 30 in the single classroom; and 15 in the seminar room.

I mentioned that the college was designed to have seminar rooms. Special groups of 5 or 6 were used by a number of departments, the lecturers making informal arrangements for meeting places. I think we asked the departments to take into account the numbers in class, when requesting staff.

Audio-visual recording and projection to classes or one student at a time in a self-instructional carrel, increased the effectiveness. Instructional staff welcomed the establishment of the audio-visual education technology section. It eventually came down to the individual student sitting at his own carrel, having his own performance in microteaching played back to him.

He could see himself teaching a small group of 5 or 6 children, and make his own criticism of what he was doing, as well as listening to a group of students and the lecturer. I remember one quite fascinating demonstration of the video tape of a student in front of a small group doing a particular unit of teacher preparation with the lecturer. The student appeared on screen commenting on an ongoing video screen, showing himself teaching at the earlier session.

These were matters that all the staff were so enthusiastic about. It was the outgrowth of the earlier expectations. Bob Peter quite clearly supported the idea that staff would be implicated in the whole operation. He brought back quite remarkable alternative designs for the lecturing space, found in different parts of America.

**Assessments and Standardisation**

The actual working out of the details of progressive assessment fell to the Assessment Committee, which was my responsibility as Vice-Principal, engaged in running the internal operations of the college. It was rather ironic, because for so many years, I was a keen examination practitioner. I think the examination system was quite valid but there were weaknesses. Having been caught up in the Mount Lawley scheme, I think I excused my conscience, by attempting to build into the assessment scheme, those operations that would correct what we as examiners felt were weaknesses.

The major problem was to build into progressive assessment for ensuring the maintenance of standards, which could be accepted as valid outside the college. To avoid possible variation of standards between lecturers, the committee moved quite slowly, dealing with only a few items of the scheme at each meeting, endorsing, amending or referring pending decisions back to the next meeting before proposing further items.

It was first agreed that the marks should be expressed as A, B, C or D and perhaps E. Then the function of marking was assumed to distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory achievement. We agreed (Item 9) that all the students wanted to know was who passed and who failed, that is who was satisfactory and who was unsatisfactory. Then the college would have to decide, whether they should be sacked or whether they should be corrected.

Item 10 assumed that all students would make a satisfactory response to college courses. After all, the students were a specially selected group. You don’t fail half the students in a teachers college. Item 11 stated that of the satisfactory students a few A students, would be outstandingly good and some B students would make a creditable response, not just a satisfactory response at level C. The following scale should constitute a guide: Outstanding A; Creditable B; Satisfactory C; Unsatisfactory D.

Another grade – E might be considered. The prime decision related to the cut-off point between satisfactory and unsatisfactory, that is between Pass and Fail. It was the mathematicians, who provided arguments in favour of the validity of frequency distributions and the suggestions for cut-off points.

It was finally agreed that each department should produce lists of all students taking particular subjects, set out in rank order from the best to the worst, with an evaluation mark with each name. The Senior Lecturer should gain the agreement of his staff concerning the cut-off point between satisfactory and unsatisfactory and draw a line through the list at the point.

After much discussion and reference to past records, it was agreed that overall, there might be a failure rate of 10% +x (plus or minus +) and a distinction rate of about 15% +x: also that the Satisfactory group (Group C) should be distinctly larger than the Creditable group (Group B).

A further justification appeared, when marks were set out in the rank order, with the number of students on each mark. Very large numbers appeared against the marks in the Satisfactory and Creditable sections – bulking around the mean. The Unsatisfactory and Distinction groups were easily distinguishable above and below, with either few or no names against each mark.

Often the numbers against marks to a clear group at each extreme. Very occasionally, no tail end appeared, with quite large numbers of students on the lowest range of marks. With such results, the Department could claim no failures. I was not often a Department argued it had no unsatisfactory students.

Proceeding item by item, gradually through discussion, the committee built up the scheme, circulating the recommendations and confirming them. Bob Peter let things develop. He didn’t bother himself any more, except occasionally, he would initiate a discussion among staff to see how things were working.

**Remediation and Pastoral Care**

A number of us were particularly keen on setting up a regular scheme for student remediation/pastoral case. All lecturers came to an agreement that something regular had to be done about weak students. They agreed that identification of unsatisfactory work should be made early enough, before the end of the course, to allow time to reclaim confused students. It is an obvious weakness in the examination system, that the testing comes at the very end of the course. It was felt that any student deserved to know as soon as possible, if his performance was below expectations.

The lecturers were to send in Alison Aldridge (Women’s Warden) the names of the students, who could be identified as unsatisfactory, before the first vacation in April. They could be counselled in May and June. Then another check could be made in about August, when you had time, even then, to pick up some students and say: ”Look, if you go on like this, you will get an unsatisfactory mark at the end of the year”. Additionally, there was a procedure for dealing with the unsatisfactory ones, after the final assessment of the course. Supplementary tests were allowed, where a student might repeat assignments. The scheme was published in detail.

I made a review of a year’s operation of the remediation scheme. It was clear that identifying weak students in April and August was quite effective, because only one student appeared twice. That some came up at the end of the year proved that even so, some slipped through both surveys. We also made an effort to ensure that students were not over-burdened with assignments at particular times. There was a complicated procedure set up to ensure that not all major assignments came in during the same week.

A statement was produced looking forward to 1973, giving an overall review of continuous assessment. The college had embarked on an experimental scheme of continuous assessment in all areas from the beginning. “Continuous assessment must apply in all subjects to prevent severe disparities in the workloads between courses. There must be a system of coordination between the departments and for continuous readjustments of procedures. As much evidence as possible should be accumulated in as many areas and dimensions as possible concerning the student’s progress towards fulfilling the requirements. Assessment experiences must always promote the student’s development, especially in relation to critical and creative faculties.”

And the conclusions; “Staff work is increased in both preparation and marking but their personal satisfaction seems to be enhanced through a greater involvement in active student response patterns and earlier information concerning the success of their staff teaching. Students similarly appreciate early information concerning their own progress and are able to modify their subsequent behaviour as a result. That was a fair indication of the general experience.

**The Use of Educational Technology**

There are a few words on the instructional techniques, which perhaps would indicate where we got to. It starts off: “To lecture has long been the most commonly used instruction device in universities and teachers colleges. A concerted effort to displace it at this college has met with a fair degree of success. Staff agreed to reduce their lecturing activities to 10-15 minutes each period; to involve students increasingly in problem-solving activities in lieu of passive behaviour; to adopt teaching methods which encouraged a maximum of student discussion in tutorials; required students to make greater use of text books and other print materials during lecture periods; give greater prominence to available aids and facilities such as: TV, projectors, overhead projectors, and 16mm and 8mm loop film”.

An observation room was provided, as well as the more obvious charts and models. That developed very, very slowly and I don’t know whether it went on developing. For 1973, the recommendations were: “ At the present tome, February 1973, all staff members should review their practice, in the light of these original objectives. One of the more valuable objectives, is to permit coordination between departments, to provide for readjustment of procedures. Readjustment may be necessary, if assignment requirements overload students in particular periods of the semester”.

The instructional technique reference is: “Now that additional educational equipment is available and specialist staff have been appointed, it is hoped that teaching staff will make effective use of the Learning Resources Centre and in particular, the Multimedia section”. And it reminds them that the technology is useless unless the lecturers produce the programs beforehand. It was always a problem to get staff to assume the responsibility of going to multimedia staff and saying: “Will you produce a program, which includes this and this…”. That has to be done a month or so before the session with students.

**Issues and Student Action**

Did you ever hear anything about the Identity Week at Mount Lawley, when students took the system at its word? I have said that the scheme suggested that they should be encouraged to make full use of their text books. I know the idea was that they should be thoroughly familiar with the courses and the texts. We said: “Here are the text books. Students should discuss them. Staff should set sensible assignments, which students can do”.

Sometime in about 1975, I think the students, apparently encouraged by some junior staff, said: “OK, we don’t need you; we’ve got it all. Stay away and don’t come into the room this week”. It tore the college to bits.

It was not universally followed by the students. The majority of them were certainly not ready as it takes so long for them to grow up after being in high school for so long. They were not as adventurous as some kids could be at eighteen. It was probably organized by the Student Council, or by a group within the Student Council. There would have been students, who were active in it.

As far as the staff were concerned, if my estimates of them is correct, it would have been quite traumatic. There were some staff members, who were liberal- minded, who were keen on autonomy and cooperation, and the rest of it. However, it stopped at staff level. There were staff members, who were going as liberal-minded educators, but had the most fantastic authoritarian attitude to students. According to hem, any student who dared stand up and talk like an adult, needed to be dealt with.

It probably divided the liberal group into two sections. Of course that then meant that one section combined with the more reactionary types. I don’t know the consequences of it and don’t remember hearing any talk of expulsions. This took place after I left and I would have loved to be there, when it was on.

At the time, one of the most interesting conditions overseas, was the extreme authoritarianism of the French education system, which was even worse than ours. Once they began to discuss in some places, in Western Australia, it did not lead to violence. We never had our Vice-Chancellor locked out of his office, nothing like they did in the Eastern States. Our organisation of the university undergraduate life was much more civilised than anywhere in Australia. People don’t recognise that.

Our authoritarian system was much less stringent than in the other states and there were big differences. It is a pity that someone cannot do a proper comparative educational study due to the inability to get factual statements.